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OTHERNESS AND THE ABSURD IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S AND
ALBERT CAMUS'S FICTIONAL WORKS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

In my research work I have chosen to look at four texts by two writers with a worldwide readership: Joseph Conrad and Albert Camus. Both Conrad and Camus are considered revisionist imperialists because they are caught in the contradiction between the orthodox Eurocentric view of Empire and their own –rather liberal-humanist. Their *malaise* lies in their intellectual predicament as well as in their spiritual instability both stemming from their civic status (one is an adopted Briton and the other is a reclaimed Frenchman).

I have followed in this comparative study a Postcolonial and a neo-Marxist (Macherey) approach; two approaches that have revealed the political stands of Conrad and Camus.

My comparative study is concerned with two of each writer's fictional works: ***Heart of Darkness*** and ***L'Etranger*** on the one hand, and ***Lord Jim*** and ***La Chute*** on the other. In my thesis, I insist on the fact that Conrad and Camus were both fully aware of the negative impact of imperialism. Yet owing to historical and personal circumstances, they were caught in ambivalent stances. In order to resolve this dilemma, Conrad and Camus resorted to flight into metaphysics (the absurd in particular) yet without much conviction. I therefore attempt to shed light on the essential ambiguity that pervades their (unwitting) colonial discourses, laying emphasis on the ideological 'strife' within their minds.

My outline comprises five chapters. The first chapter examines the socio-political background of both authors. It investigates their resemblances and differences in terms of biography and ideology. In the second chapter, I investigate Conrad's and Camus's stereotypical representation of the other in ***Heart of Darkness*** and ***L'Etranger*** respectively. At the same time I argue that their texts owe much to the colonial discourse, a discourse fraught with containment and condescension. In the third chapter, I attempt to show that Conrad's and Camus's discourses are characteristically ambivalent. This chapter further explores the tortuous complexity of the two writers' worldviews through the analysis of some formal fictional aspects. Chapter four is concerned with Conrad's and Camus's escapism as appears in ***Lord Jim*** and ***La Chute***. It also focuses on the ideological quandary faced by the two authors. Chapter five stresses the narrative strategies deployed by Conrad and Camus in their attempt to resolve the dilemma of the colonizer-colonized binary opposition.

In the conclusion I argue that the kinship between Conrad and Camus can be accounted for by thematic similarities which, in a sense, are determined by nearly identical backgrounds. More explicitly, Conrad's and Camus's refusal to recognize –against their intellectual grain– the other as an equal, led them to adopt diversionary schemes. In other words, by escaping history, Conrad and Camus turn a blind eye on the struggle for recognition of the colonized as full-fledged human beings. As a result of their ideological muddle, Conrad and Camus fall back on artistic expressiveness, a saving grace which makes their readers overlook their political shortcomings. It is precisely their esthetic achievements which postcolonial critics and writers use as a stepping stone in their re-appraisal of Conrad's and Camus's works.

Key Words: absurd, affinity, ambiguity, ambivalence, otherness, dialogism, equivocation, ideology, influence, imperialism, novel, colonial discourse.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely the result of my own investigation and that due reference and acknowledgment are made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

Dated: June 26th, 2011

Signed: Mameche Fadhila

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this work with gratitude and love to:

-My beloved parents, Moussa and Zohra, whose love and deep affection, I shall never forget so long as I live.

-My brothers, sisters, brothers in-law, and sisters in-law.

- My nieces and nephews, in particular Assil, Khalil, Waeel, Mallak –the nearest to my

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

"To be a writer and a political and cultural revolutionary, to pursue contradictions to the ends of the earth, to stand fast with the Third World against the powers of imperialism –that is to be the artist-hero in the twentieth century. It is to destroy the old and build the new."

Jonah Ras kin*The Mythology of Imperialism*

In recent times, there has been an increasing interest in rethinking fictions written in the modern period from a postcolonial perspective; i.e. an interest in undertaking a postcolonial reading of a text in order to highlight the effects of colonization on both the 'centre' of Empire and the 'margins'. This undertaking reveals how such a text openly or covertly exhibits colonial ideologies.

While appreciating works of Joseph Conrad and Albert Camus, for example, as popular fictions, a contemporary reader cannot fail to ignore their relationship to Western narratives, which on the surface seem uninterested in the issue of imperialism actually took part in the imperial machinery.

Books such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness (1902)* and Camus's *L'Etranger (1942)* have been the subject of much critical attention. Among these we can mention Karima Ait Youcef who has undertaken a comparative study of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness (1902)*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890)*, and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North (1960)*. The three works, according to Ait Youcef, interact with each other in dialogical, inter-textual relationship (Ait Youcef 01). Another comparative study has been carried out by Aicha Bouranane involving *Heart of Darkness* and *Moby Dick*. This study accounts for Conrad's and Herman Melville's literary kinship (Bouranane 01). Likewise, *L'Etranger*, and other works by Camus, have been compared, by Abdelhamid Zoubir, to William Faulkner's works. In this exhaustive study, Zoubir links Camus with Faulkner by reference to the similarity of their respective backgrounds; i.e. the South of the United States of America and Colonial Algeria (Zoubir i). Michael David Yates, for his part, has undertaken a comparison between Camus's fictions and Dostoyevsky's, a study based on the two writers' use of the anti-hero and the ironic mode of writing (Yates 01).

Indeed much has been written on Conrad and much more on Camus. However, quite surprisingly, Camus has never been compared to Conrad. So far as we know at least, no thoroughly documented study has touched upon or addressed the possibility of comparing the two writers, though, in our view, they share many features. Therefore we felt that we needed to dwell upon it in a more thorough manner. In other words, there is an astonishing critical neglect of Conrad's relation with Camus. Indeed there are some hints at Conrad's link to Camus. For example, in the area of philosophical approaches, some critics point to existentialist elements in Conrad's works. Otto Bohlmann's **Conrad's Existentialism (1991)** argues for Conrad as *"proto-existentialist"* (Bohlmann 33), considering Conrad's works in light of a number of existentialist thinkers, including Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and others. J. Hillis Miller, for his part, places Conrad within the tradition of modern writers and includes him in the canon of existentialist writers as Camus, Dostoevsky, and others (Miller 21).But the studies of Bohlmann and Miller still suffer from the lack of a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of Conrad's and Camus's literary kinship. Most typical in this respect is the absence of an exhaustive study of the possibility of Camus's indebtedness to Conrad.

Therefore, we propose to explore the resemblances and differences between Conrad's and Camus's literary texts in the light of Postcolonial theory and contemporary Marxist literary theory. The postcolonial reading of the novels is based mainly on Edward Said's **Orientalism (1978)** and **Culture and Imperialism (1993)**. The Marxist approach focuses principally on theories of ideology; mainly Pierre Macherey's the 'unsaids' as they are developed in his **Pour une Théorie de la Production Littéraire (1966)**. This means that the focus will bear not only and exclusively on the intrinsic dimension of the texts but on their extrinsic dimension as well.

We also intend in the present research to study, from a postcolonial perspective, how both Conrad and Camus have revisited the ideology which determined and still determines the representation of the East in Western literature. In other words, we aim at clarifying Conrad's and Camus's political stands towards imperialism. Furthermore, we hope to unroot the causes of Conrad's and Camus's literary kinship because the analogies are striking enough between them and between their works especially **Lord Jim** and **La Chute**. We have not found concrete evidence of Conrad's influence upon Camus. Yet we have been impressed by the convergence of their worldviews. Therefore, our investigation of the similarities and differences between the two writers' works is grounded upon affinities.

The two writers have not been chosen at random. There are several reasons why our choice has fallen on Conrad the Pole and Camus the *petit blanc*. These reasons include the fact that their works can be related to the context of imperialism of two European nations, Great Britain and France, during a period of history that goes from the late nineteenth century up to the mid-twentieth century. Both had resemblances in their lifetimes and both managed to be integrated –on the surface at least– in the cultural Establishment, Conrad in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain and Camus in *L'Algérie Française*. But paradoxically, they experienced, in their lifetimes, a feeling similar to that of colonial subjects. The colonial subject experiences un-homeliness, i.e. a sense of cultural incompleteness. Conrad and Camus underwent this experience because they felt they did not belong to the dominant culture. Last but not least, both writers are interesting because their works are structures of ambiguity and as such have triggered off postcolonial responses.

The corpus of this dissertation comprises Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** examined along Camus's **L'Etranger**, and **Lord Jim (1900)** examined along **La Chute (1956)**. By comparing

these works, we intend to make a re-assessment of the two writers' *"authorial ideologies"* (Eagleton 58) (1) in the light of postcolonial literary theory. This reading, we attempt to demonstrate, reveals how Conrad and Camus, whether willingly or unconsciously, have been able to question the grand narratives of colonialism. As postcolonial critics, our role is limited to the search of those seeds and use them to show that the ambivalence of Conrad's discourse as well as Camus's reflect in reality their mindsets. Both writers, we aim to show, are escapist because they overlook the historical reality of colonialism. Their evasiveness appears in their ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions. Hence we shall focus on the salient features that illustrate such ambiguities and the like. More precisely, our focus is on the 'unsaids' of the texts. Thus we study Conrad's and Camus's novels for what they fail to say and for the obscurities which we find in them. Coherence might not be there as is the case in both **Heart of Darkness** and **L'Etranger**. The 'unsaids' are considered as a deviation, a refusal on the part of the two writers to deal with the burning issues. Our role is to unveil those 'unsaids' and bring them to the surface to account for them.

For the purpose at hand and throughout our analysis, we shall try to answer the following questions: are Conrad and Camus really escapist writers? To what extent do they inscribe their works within the tradition of colonial discourse and to what extent do they diverge from it and could be considered as forerunners of postcolonial writing?

Despite their realistic import, Conrad's and Camus's fictional works are mostly allegories. Allegory is *"a symbolic narrative"* (Ashcroft *et al.* 09) that stresses a-temporality and timelessness. Both writers resort to allegory in order to escape history. For Conrad, the allegorical dimension is a sort of an escape route. In other words, Conrad's oblique denunciation of colonialism is covered by allegory in the form and philosophical

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ratiocinations in the theme. Camus, for his part, avoids referring explicitly to colonialism in his fiction. Instead his two novels simply flesh out his philosophy of the absurd. In other words, and as we hope to show, both authors escape the colonial man-to-man confrontation by swerving into a convenient metaphysical 'no man's land', adorned by unquestionable artistry.

Otherness, an important concept in our dissertation, is a process of cultural practice whereby the other is constructed, created not so much out of the reality which he belongs to but out of *l'imaginaire collectif* which is part and parcel of the culture of imperializing powers. Furthermore, otherness is the refusal to recognize the other as an equal. This refusal leads both Conrad and Camus to adopt an evasive attitude; an escape into the philosophy of the absurd. Philosophers of the absurd (notably Sartre and Camus) consider that, as there is no transcendental force or intelligence that governs the world, our life is purposeless; hence the feeling of the absurd. At the same time, we realize that we are free from any determinism. Therefore man should affirm his freedom-in-action through transcending this absurd. By so doing, he gives shape and meaning to his existence and thus re-conquers his humanness. It must be pointed out that the absurd in its down-to-earth meaning as experienced by Conrad's heroes as a result of the contradictions of colonialism is different from the absurd as a philosophical doctrine as illustrated in the behaviour and thinking of Camus's heroes.

But if Conrad's and Camus's protagonists are victims of the absurd, it is because they are unable to conciliate between their liberal-humanist yearnings and the overbearing imperialist ethos to which they feel themselves bound. From a Marxist viewpoint, all these heroes are alienated; they situate themselves elsewhere. They refuse their historicity and by

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refusing it, condone the colonial enterprise. These enlightened heroes (with the exception of Clamence in *La Chute*), playing their parts on the colonial stage, are concerned with a sort of Euro-European ideological warfare. Though they question the inhuman treatment inflicted upon the natives, they stop short of the logical conclusions of their questionings as a result of some insuperable 'blockage'. Consequently, they foreground metaphysical or supposedly ethical ratiocinations while the 'othered' natives are made to recede in the background.

From another perspective, it is obvious that for the dominant ideology, these heroes (Marlow, Jim, Meursault, and Clamence) are others; i.e. they do not belong to normalcy; to imperial orthodoxy. Other here means marginal, peripheral; *"the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse"* (Ashcroft *et al.* 170). Paradoxically, in the colonial setting, our heroes become, in a way, the representatives of the imperial ideology which they reject. Even if they criticize imperialism's monologism in their *for intérieur*, they do not question it when they are confronted with the colonized others. Rather, they inscribe themselves within this imperial monologism.

In *The Wretched of the Earth (1961)*, Frantz Fanon thinks that the colonized is alienated as a result of the colonial experience. By alienation, he means a loss of bearing, both social and psychological. The cases of mental illnesses which Fanon discusses are examples of the extremes to which the colonial predicament can bring the natives to. The same could be said of the heroes of Conrad and Camus, who are certainly alienated from their own European societies. They all experience an existential anguish. But it is an anguish which is more metaphysical than historical.

For the colonized native, alienation is the result of a historical experience. But the four heroes of Conrad's and Camus's fictions find themselves in an alienation which is

triggered off by their sense of moral/philosophical superiority *vis-à-vis* their own societies. It is probably the result of an exacerbated form of liberal-humanism. For their own vantage point, they prefer to situate themselves above the *mêlée*, unconcerned as it were. For them, the 'Other' is the imperial Establishment. They resent this Other as a threat to their own i ntegrity.

Conrad's and Camus's four heroes do not seek integration in the European Establishment. They swerve from the general ideology and this swerving is the result of their philosophy of the absurd (empirical with Conrad, rationalized with Camus).

If Conrad's and Camus's heroes had considered the colonial other as a fellow human being, they would have escaped their own alienation by committing themselves to the struggle for dis-alienation of the colonial other. This would have enabled them to engage with history. But they have not been able to do so. To the dynamics of history, they prefer the stasis of philosophical, not to say, metaphysical, 'disputations'. Is it their non-recognition of the other that has resulted in their absurdist posturing? We shall answer this question throughout our analysis.

Postcolonial theory aims at revealing the monolithic discourse of imperialism, on the one hand. On the other hand, it aims at pointing to the counter-discourse developed by the formerly colonized writers to oppose the monolithic discourse. But in **Heart of Darkness** and **L'Etranger**, we do not have any counter-discourse because the whole discourse is monolithic and therefore we have no other choice but to resort to the Machereyan theory. This theory points to the various gaps and silences. These silences and gaps help us to know about the ideology which was prevalent at the time when the books were written. More explicitly, in Macherey's view, the task of the critic is to make vocal those silences and expose the text's

unconscious content. As he himself explains, *"Ce qui est important dans une œuvre, c'est ce qu'elle ne dit pas. Ce n'est pas [...] ce qu'elle refuse de dire. [...] Mais plutôt; ce qui est important, c'est ce qu'elle ne peut pas dire."* (Macherey 107). Furthermore, the silences and gaps in the text, as Macherey contends, not only conceal but also expose ideological contradictions (Ibid., 109).

Our study of colonial discourse compulsively leads us to apply the method of Macherey's approach which we find particularly suitable for our subject, demonstrating how deconstruction, to borrow the Derridean term, is a powerful critical tool in our reading. To deconstruct the text, according to Pierre Macherey, is to open it, to display the omissions which the text displays but cannot describe, including those which reveal the partiality (in both senses) of the ideology inscribed in the text (Ibid., 129). Ideology means *"the system of cultural assumptions, or the discursive concatenation of beliefs or values which […] provide a coherent structure of thought that hides or silences the contradictory elements in social and economic formations."* (Robbins *et al.* 53). In other words, ideology is *"pseudo-events"* (Eagleton, **Marxism and Literary Criticism** 74)*,* pseudo-real facts that help to legitimate the interests of a ruling class specifically by distortion and dissimulation. Ideology is an important concept in Marxist criticism because

> a work is tied to ideology not so much by what it says as by what it does not say. [Furthermore,] it is in the significant *silences* of a text, in its gaps and absences, that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt. It is these silences which the critic must make 'speak'. (Ibid., 32)

Crucial to Macherey's theory is the relationship of the literary text to history because for him the latter is central to the understanding of the former. Therefore, Macherey proposes to move outside the work to the network of the socio-historical forces. According to Macherey, the text in fact cannot detach itself from the conditions of its production

(Macherey 104). It alludes to history through inclusions and exclusions. The role of the critic thus is to allude to the ideological forces to understand the socio-political dimension of the text. On the other hand, history, particularly ideology, leaves traces in the text by what is not said (Ibid.). Absences are necessary strategies to make the text coherent. Criticism then reads the 'not-saids' of the text as indications of deep contradictions. Therefore, we shall read **Heart of Darkness**, **Lord Jim**, **L'Etrange**r, and **La Chute** through Machereyan criticism where we shall essentially focus on the text's relation to the ideology it proposes. This, we aim to do by relating the historical conditions that determine the text to the writer's narrative strategies. Our concern then is the way in which the text transforms the historical 'detail' of colonialism. It is Macherey's theory that enables us to get to the knowledge of colonial Algeria; precisely through the routes which Camus could not/did not want to take. Furthermore, one wonders if the whole business of the trial in **L'Etranger** is not simply one of those evasive strategies used by Camus in order to erect a sort of smokescreen about the real problems of colonial Algeria.

As we have stated earlier, our second theory which we shall rely on in our analysis of Conrad's and Camus's texts is postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory/criticism is concerned with how the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonized as inferior. The creation of binary oppositions establishes the relationship between the Self and the other. For imperialism, the inferiority of the Oriental is used to justify Europe's vocation to rule the colonizer. This is what Rudyard Kipling terms 'the white man's burden'.

The theoretical basis of postcolonial theory started with the publication of Edward Said's **Orientalism (1978)**. Said's study *"is a devastating critique of how through the ages,*

but particularly in the nineteenth century –the heyday of imperialist expansion, Western texts have represented the East." (Said 202). Using British and French literary works, Said examines the vast tradition of the Western 'constructions' of the Orient. This tradition is based on misrepresentations, stereotypes, and distortions. In other words, Said shows how the Orient is contrasted, fabricated, by the Western world. The image given is not derived from the reality of the Orient but is the representation of the other in terms of prejudices, ideas about the other, acquired from the "library of Orientalist literature". Racism is one of the most devastating features of the ideological weapons wielded by the Western discourse about the Orient. In postcolonial criticism, the focus is based on colonial discourse and the political ideology behind the literary text. By colonial discourse, we mean *"the complex of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationships."* (Ashcroft *et al.* 42). The Orientalist knowledge that provides a colonial discourse or a mode of representation of the other is not true. It remains a fabricated worldview that constructs the Orient through imaginative representation. In it, the voices of the dominated are represented entirely by their silence, their absence. This is quite evident in the texts of Conrad and Camus as we shall further argue.

Our dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is devoted to the biographical, socio-historical, and political backdrops of the two writers' lives and works. We endeavour to show that Camus's marginalized and repressive childhood inescapably led him to pledge allegiance to the colonial Establishment. Similarly, we emphasize that Conrad's early background and experiences formed his mature views of imperialism. In chapter two, our analysis is devoted to a comparative study of **Heart of Darkness** and **L'Etranger**. We explore questions of otherness in the two texts. Furthermore, we attempt to reveal that the discourse in both texts is a monolithic one, built on the same connotative prejudices towards

the other. For this purpose, we rely on Said's observations as exposed in ***Orientalism*** and ***Culture and Imperialism***. Our aim in so doing is to show that the revisionist colonial discourse (as we shall argue in chapter two and three) in Conrad's and Camus's respective texts perpetuates the same Orientalist knowledge and representation of the other. In the third chapter, we deal with the same works relying this time on formal features which prevent both Conrad and Camus from articulating their positions towards the colonial situation by resorting to cover up devices or discursive strategies such as unreliable narration. Chapter four lays the finger to a comparison between ***Lord Jim*** and ***La Chute***, a comparison meant to throw light, once more, on the thematic similarities that can be found in the two texts. It must be pointed out here that the reason why we have added these two texts in our comparative study is that in both ***Lord Jim*** and ***La Chute*** one expects to find a follow-up and deepening of the ideas and worldviews expressed in the first two works. Instead, they are marked by ruptures in terms of style and philosophy. These departures stem from circumstances in the authors' lives or pressures exerted by the dominant ideologies. This shift can be construed as an attempt to move out of the imperial sphere. In chapter five, we investigate the discursive arsenal (of stylistic deviations) which both Conrad and Camus deploy to lenify the reader for the purpose of concealing their political stands.

Our dissertation will be closed with a conclusion restating the main results of our work. Furthermore, we shall tie together facets that Conrad and Camus share in terms of political attitudes and philosophical visions. In addition, our conclusion includes a brief look at the legacy of Conrad's and Camus's fictions in the postcolonial world.

What we hope, throughout this comparative study, is to get deeper in the appraisal of the relationship between Conrad and Camus.

Notes

(1)-Eagleton identifies three kinds of ideologies: general ideology, authorial ideology, and aesthetic ideology. As opposed to general ideology, authorial ideology means *"the effect of the author's specific mode of bio graphical insertion into general ideology, a mode of insertion determined by a series of distinct factors: social class, sex, nationality, religion, geographical region and so on."* (Eagleton 58). General ideology is, according to Eagleton, *"that particular dominated ensemble of ideologies to be found in any social formation."* (Ibid., 54). Thus authorial ideology is the general ideology as lived, worked and represented from a particular standpoint. Aesthetic ideology means *"the specific aesthetic region of general ideology."* (Ibid., 60). See in particular Eagleton's **Criticism and Ideology** for more information.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Writers and their Times

"L'être humain n'est pas une abstraction inhérente à l'individu isolé. Dans sa réalité, c'est

l'ensemble des rapports sociaux."   Karl Marx

This chapter delves into the socio-political background of both Joseph Conrad and Albert Camus. It examines their reactions to imperialism and determines their ideological stands. It also 'places' them among existentialist writers. The comparative study of their lifetimes will hopefully prove that the preoccupations of both are strikingly similar. The endeavour then is to highlight the common ground which both writers tread on and investigate the literary and philosophical influences that Conrad and Camus may have yielded to.

It seems to me that little has been written on Conrad and Camus, paired off, in connection with the colonial question. Our intention is to highlight their ingrained ambivalence on the subject, not so much in their extra-literary pronouncements as in their works. In other words, we will emphasize Conrad's opposition to and acceptances of British imperialism while stressing Camus's equivocal stand *vis-à-vis* the *Metropole*. Our conclusion stresses the fact that the two writers are particularly interesting because of their liminality in the encounter between East and West.

Undoubtedly, there is a relationship between the writer and the social/political *milieu* in which he grows up. Thus the lives of both Conrad and Camus are shaped by politics. Exile is another experience shared by both writers. Uprootedness and a desperate quest for a sense of belonging surely explain the Polish writer's communion with the Algerian *petit* blanc's mindset.

1-Conrad and Camus: Children of Turmoil:

In what follows we shall see that both Conrad and Camus experienced, as children, the pain of displacement and alienation, the outcomes of which took on psychological as well as political colourings.

a-Con rad

Conrad wrote in a language that was not native to him. His real name was Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski. He was born on December 3, 1857 in the Polish part of Ukraine that was under Russian domination. Because his father was a revolutionary nationalist, Conrad's family was deported to the North of Poland. Thus Conrad had quite early in his life, first-hand experience of Tzarist imperialism. As one critic commented, *"Conrad's birth, therefore, coincided with a time of deep depression in his country; and every circumstance of his early years conspired to make him aware of the political tragedy to which he and his compatriots were heirs."* (Warner 02). Suffering from destitution, Conrad's parents died early, leaving him orphaned at the age of twelve. He was cared for by his maternal uncle Bobrowski. His early life was thus of enormous importance as it played a role in the making of Conrad's character and in his skeptical outlook upon the world: *"he was born and nurtured in an atmosphere of sorrow, bitterness and some actual hardship."* (Ibid., 08). This was to follow him in Poland, France, Russia, the Orient, and England (1). Consequently, his childhood under Russian oppression, his wanderings as an expatriate and as an English subject, were to provide him with a close experience of colonialism/imperialism the effects of which were to breathe through his literary works.

As early as 1872, Conrad expressed a desire to pursue life at sea. In 1874, he moved to Marseilles where he trained as a sailor. Later, because of financial difficulties, he attempted suicide. He eventually joined the British Merchant Marine service to seek naturalization. His ship travelled throughout different regions of the world such as the Malay Archipelago. His sojourn there was his first experience with the East; an experience which was to become valuable material for much of his later fiction (as was the case in ***Lord Jim***

(1900)). In 1886, Conrad obtained British citizenship and changed officially his name to Joseph Conrad.

Conrad went to Brussels where he was hired as steamboat captain. Thus in 1890 he set on one of the most important voyages of his life when he travelled up the Congo River into the heart of Africa. His experience there would become the basis for his most widely known tale, *Heart of Darkness* (1902). During his trip, Conrad experienced the atrocities that occured in the Belgian Congo. As one critic comments: *"[d]espite the colonial enterprise being depicted in Europe as a humanitarian endeavour, Conrad found a great deal of greed, waste, and chaos."* (Peters 03). During his command in Africa, Conrad met a sick agent, George Antoine Klein who died *en route*. Klein became one of his models for Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*.

Months later, Conrad appeared to suffer from ill-health and was therefore forced to stay at home in 1891. His Congo voyage had an enormous impact on him. In fact it was to affect him for the rest of his life and as much as anything else influenced his outlook on civilization and human existence itself. His criticism of the abuses and disorder he witnessed about the imperial enterprise was unrelenting, as evidenced in his various writings on the subject. Later, he returned to London and ultimately left his life at sea behind him forever. The same year (1891), he lost his uncle whose influence had been unmistakable.

Conrad started a new life. In 1894, he finished *Almayer's Folly*, which signaled the beginning of his literary career. In 1898, he started working on *Lord Jim*. Yet, while working on it, he began and finished *Heart of Darkness*. When the Second Boer War broked out, Conrad revealed his extreme skepticism towards politics. Although he felt an allegiance toward his adopted country, he was, at the same time, extremely suspicious of politics and

patriotic chauvinism (Warner 67). However, he did not remain untouched by the tragedy of wa r.

Because financial and mental health troubles plagued him, Conrad continued to meet with difficulties in writing **Lord Jim**. In 1900, the novel appeared in book form. In 1901, he finished **Under Western Eyes** that grappled with problems of betrayal, politics, revolution, and Russian autocracy. These were issues closer to Conrad's own personal experience. In 1914, World War One broke out. Conrad's British citizenship prevented him from opposing the war. But his Polish background could not keep him out of trouble (2). In fact Conrad's stance towards the war was ambivalent:

> [H]aving seen too much of life and being too skeptical, he [Conrad] certainly could not get caught up in jingoism. At the same time, though, he felt loyal to his homeland and to his adopted country, both of whom were significantly affected by the war. (Peters 14)

We would suggest that this ambivalence on the part of Conrad is the key to some of his ambiguities, to the thematic and structural problematic of his works; in particular **Heart of Darkness** and **Lord Jim** which both seem to be riddled with contradictions (as we shall expound later). On August 2, 1924 Conrad had a relapse and died some time later.

b-Camus

Camus's Algerian origins profoundly shaped his attitudes. He was born in Mondovi (now called Drean), a small *colon* village in the Eastern part of Algeria, on November 7, 1913 into a poor French *pied-noir* family. His father, Lucien Camus, was a cellar man in a wine-making farm and died a year after Camus's birth, in the Battle of the Marne, during the First World War. His mother, Catherine Sintès, of Spanish descent, worked as a charwoman to support her family when she moved from Mondovi to Algiers. Camus lived thus in poverty

during his childhood in the Belcourt (Belouizdad, today) district of Algiers. Later he was released from the deprivation of his origins thanks to the education made available to him as a State grant. Thus, in 1923, he was accepted into the Lycée Bugeaud (now Emir Abdelkader) and eventually into the University of Algiers, where he was taught by the philosopher Jean Grenier. He married in 1934 but this first marriage broke up after a year.

Having been poor and early-orphaned, Camus was sensitive towards the plight of the downtrodden. Social injustice which he had experienced in his childhood made him an ardent advocate of social equality. He stood on the side of the poor, the unfortunate, and the oppressed who suffered, like his mother, but were unable to voice their suffering. At the age of twenty, he was attracted to the Communist doctrine of justice and equality. Revolted by the wretched state of the Algerians and disgusted by the abject attitude of the European democracies *vis-à-vis* Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco, Camus joined the Communist party in 1934. But he soon left the party when he realized that the latter was not primarily concerned with the fate of the wretched Algerian Arabs but rather with the means of gaining access to power.

Nevertheless, he worked, in 1938, in the communist daily **Alger Républicain** as a journalist. He was committed to denouncing the French colonial injustices in Algeria. Thus in 1939, he published in this *Journal de gauche* a well known series of investigative articles entitled "*Misère de la Kabylie*" in which he exposed the French administrators' harsh treatment of the natives of the Kabylia region of Algeria and their deprivation of basic human rights (3). The articles aroused the 'interest' of the French *Gouvernement Général* of Algeria and brought him to the attention of the general public. But because of his reports, he was considered suspect by French authorities. He was thus forced to go to German-invaded

France in 1940. There he married Francine Faure and finished his first novel *L'Etranger* which opened, for him, the doors of the French literary Establishment. Meanwhile, he worked for the newspaper *Paris-Soir* but he had to leave Paris because of the German occupation, and in January 1941 he returned to the Algerian town of Oran where he finished his philosophical essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Like Conrad, Camus suffered from illness (tuberculosis) and solitude. In 1943 he went back to France where he settled in Paris and visited Algeria for short periods. During this period he became an active member of the French Resistance and, acting as manager, he directed the famous resistance newspaper, *Combat*. After the war, he carried on speaking publicly and writing against all forms of totalitarianism (from Fascism, Nazism to Stalinism).

Indeed Camus adopted daring positions on behalf of the Algerians even in exile. After the massacres in Sétif and Guelma in 1945, he declared that France had to take responsibility for the rights of the 'natives'. He denounced the use of torture and the methods of collective repression by the French administration by making an even more extraordinary comparison: *"The fact is there, clear and hideous as the truth: we are doing in these cases what we reproached the Germans for doing."* (Qtd.in Bowker 310). After the Nazi defeat, the French people wanted to constitute a truly democratic state. Consequently, it is the failure of France to recognize the injustices of colonialism and to uphold the same democratic principles in Algeria that urged the Algerians to revolt (Carroll xvi). Thus the Algerian war for independence was perceived as a personal tragedy by Camus. As he himself stated: *"ma seule qualification est d'avoir vécu le malheur algérien comme une tragédie personnelle."* (Qtd.in Chavanes 22). A year earlier (1953), Camus's wife had attempted suicide. Thus he experienced a double tragedy. He found himself entrapped in a kind of *impasse*. Or, put in other terms, with the outbreak of the Algerian revolution and the

demands made by *FLN* (*Front de Libération Nationale*) for a free national state, Camus was caught in a situation of perpetual anguish. His reaction to the Algerian issue and France's colonial past was quite ambiguous and remained so until his death in a car accident on Jan uary 4, 1960.

We see thus that tragedy (both personal and communal), solitude, and divided loyalties overshadowed Conrad's and Camus's lives. We shall try now to throw light on some salient aspects of Conrad's and Camus's responses to the colonial issue. These aspects will help us clear the way for a better understanding of their thoughts and convictions.

2-Conrad and Camus: History and Politics

Wars, political uprisings, colonial rule and unrest all played a part in the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Furthermore, the changing political climate had a definite impact on the literary, philosophical, and artistic movements of this period. In what follows, we shall examine these contexts and show how Conrad's and Camus's works were influenced by political environment.

a-Im perialism and Con rad's *Valse-Hésitation*

Conrad, more than most British novelists, was affected not only by important historical events in imperial Britain but also by those on the European continent which began to be felt in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century and culminated at its close. As we have seen, his childhood and youth were to colour his skeptical view of civilization and of humanity. World War One did reinforce his already dark perception of the world.

Much of Conrad's time was spent in South-East Asia experiencing first the role of the conquering European nations in the non-European world. Furthermore, Conrad's briefer experience in Africa should not be discounted, in that it affected him and resulted in a masterpiece, *Heart of Darkness*.

Tzarist Russia's rule of Poland would be of particular and long-lasting effect on Conrad. Throughout his life, he remained suspicious of all political activity, and his dark, skeptical outlook on the world can be traced to his early Polish and Russian history and politics. Although he wrote little that directly related to Poland, the latter's fate affected Conrad both directly and indirectly. The 1863 Polish uprising and its aftermath affected Conrad's view of Russia and also coloured his view of revolution, revolutionaries, and politics in general (Warner 76).

From about 1875 until the beginning of World War One, Western countries engaged in an unprecedented race to divide up the non-Western world. The Poles (among them Conrad) had seen competing European nations (Russia and Germany in particular) divide and conquer their territory. Conrad was greatly influenced by the effect that imperialism had on Poland's fate. This dismembering of Poland was to remain in the background of Conrad's works. The unique situation of colonized Poland made Conrad ill-at-ease towards the British Empire, whose culture he claimed to share. He, who had witnessed the harsh realities of Western imperialism in the Malay islands and the Congo, was unambiguously critical of imperialism as a policy of dispossession and exploitation. Yet his skepticism in *Heart of Darkness* (as we shall expound later) showed his reluctance to engage in a frontal attack on imperialism. In this respect, Hye Ryoung Kil comments:

[Conrad's] reservation in addressing the oppressed East in the colonies of the European Empire is the very symptom of his resistance to imperialism. [...] [But this] is accompanied by his covert admiration of the Western ideal. (Ryoung Kil 01).

In this regard, Conrad makes a good case for Homi Bhabha's theories of colonial 'ambivalence' and 'hybridity' as we shall later investigate.

Indeed Conrad's 'mixed' experience allowed him to look at colonialism much more objectively than many of his contemporaries. Along with his experience in the non-Western world, Conrad had unique perspectives that allowed him to look at the colonial process differently from his contemporaries. His own background was not unlike that of the colonized peoples he encountered. Conrad was actually in *"the comprehensive but incoherent position of being both Same and Other, a thoroughly English gentleman who was also an oppressed Pole."* (Harpham 50). This unique background allowed him to see colonialism through the eyes of both the colonizers and the colonized.

Colonialism, which means the conquest and direct control of other peoples' lands, is a particular phase in the history of imperialism (now best understood as the globalization of the capitalist mode of production). Late nineteenth-century Britain in particular witnessed a phase in history known as the colonial phase because of the rapid acquisition of territories through what came to be known as the 'Scramble for Africa'. Yet the domination of new territories had to be justified at home and outside. For example, the 'means' the British Empire used to legitimate its presence in Africa were missions and pseudo-scientific expeditions. Missionaries were strongly tempted to exaggerate 'savagery' and 'darkness' in order to rationalize their presence in Africa. The 'darkness' of Africa was an established myth in Victorian England. The 'light' was refracted through an imperialist ideology that urged the abolition of 'savage customs' in the name of civilization. As a constituent of that ideology,

the myth of the Dark Continent developed and dominated the final quarter of the nineteenth-century British society: *"The British tended to see Africa as a center of evil, a part of the world possessed by a demonic 'darkness' or barbarism [...] which it was their duty to exorcise."* (Brantlinger 180). Thus missionary propaganda emphasized Africa's *tenebris* to justify its invading lux/'light'. The European scientists, for their part, believed the African to be "unimprovable". As Brantlinger sums the views of the time,

> He [the African] is inferior to the active-minded and objective [...] Europeans, and to the [...] subjective and reflective Asiatic. He partakes largely of the worst characteristics of the lower Oriental types –stagnation of mind, indolence of body, moral deficiency, superstition, and childish passion. (Qtd in. Brantlinger 183)

The development of anthropology and ethnology strengthened the stereotypes propagated by missionaries and explorers. Cannibalism, which represented the nadir of savagery, was stamped on Africans. This belief in the bestiality of Africans was calculated to legitimize imperialism by hook or by crook.

Conrad clearly saw that imperialism was an alibi to gain power and wealth under the pretence of 'civilizing missions'. The Kiplingian 'white man's burden' took the form of economic exploitation in the name of the 'idea' Marlow held up in **Heart of Darkness**. Conrad took up his own burden, that of the historical literary representation of a period of European history that witnessed the emergence of a new 'voracious' imperialism through colonial expansion in Africa. Although he was deeply complicit in the imperialist project as captain in the Merchant Service, his fictional works expressed the disillusionment that prevailed as a result of the crying discrepancy between the humanitarian ideals and the reality of colonial exploitation and dehumanization. This signified in fact the British-Polish author's ambivalent attitude towards Western imperialism.

b-Camus's Liberal Dilemma and *Angst* in Algeria

Our purpose in this section is to understand in what direction, and under which influences, Camus's thought was moving during the 1950s. Camus's attitude during the Algerian war for independence was quite controversial. As a journalist, moralist and novelist, he was keen to discuss the political, cultural, and social plight of Algeria. He denounced the injustices done to the Algerians. His reports on the destitution of Kabylians remained the most insightful and thoroughly documented testimony of the situation in Algeria in the late thirties. He was very attached to the Algerian land as he himself stated: *"J'ai avec l'Algérie une longue liaison qui sans doute n'en finira jamais, et qui m'empêche d'être tout à fait clairvoyant à son égard."* (Qtd.in Bouzar 40). However, as soon as the war broke out in Algeria, he was forced to take sides. He refused to support the *FLN* though he attempted to bring peace to Algeria through his courageous initiative that proposed a civil truce. Camus thus felt he had to prefer his mother to justice. With obvious uneasiness, his final withdrawal was marked by an eloquent silence.

This attitude, on the part of an *ex-R esistant*, was a turning point in the life of Camus. In his early articles, before the Revolution, Camus advocated the rights of the Algerian people:

> I want to point out that the Arab people also exist. By that I mean that they aren't the wretched, faceless mob in which Westerners see nothing worth respecting or defending. On the contrary, they are a people of impressive traditions, whose virtues are eminently clear to anyone willing to approach them without prejudice. These people are not inferior except in regard to the conditions in which they must live, and we have as much to learn from them as they from us. (Qtd.in Carroll xviii)

Hence Camus seemed to recognize from this pronouncement that Algerians were people different from but equal to the French. He refused to accept racist hostility of both metropolitan French and French Algerians towards 'Arab people'. He advocated political as well as economic improvements in Algeria. At this pivotal moment Camus was one of the

very few French intellectuals who defended the rights of Arab Algerians and their demands for freedom and justice.

After the massacres of Sétif and Guelma (1945) Camus wrote about the injustices inflicted by French colonialism and considered those as a threat to democracy in France and an obstacle for the advent of a truly democratic world. It seemed to Camus not only illogical and incoherent but, more importantly unjust, for the French, who had regained their own freedom at the end of the war, to continue to deny that same freedom to those living in the various French colonies, some of which had in fact fought alongside France in the war against Germany. It was for Camus not just hypocritical but, strictly speaking, impossible to attempt to create an authentic democracy within France if France continued to deny social justice and democratic rights to its colonies. In **Actuelles III**, a collection of his Algerian reports, he wrote:

> L'Algérie de 1945 est plongée dans une crise économique et politique qu'elle a toujours connue, mais qui n'avait jamais atteint ce degré d'acuité. Dans cet admirable pays qu'un printemps sans égal couvre en ce moment de ses fleurs et de sa lumière, des hommes souffrent de faim et demandent justice. Ce sont des souffrances qui ne peuvent nous laisser indifférents, puisque nous les avons connues. (Qtd.in Ait Dahmane 127)

Camus demonstrated the Algerian predicament but did not draw political conclusions about the future status of Algeria. In other words, as a man of justice, Camus advocated a justice within a French continuum. In spite of statements like that cited above, Camus was reproached for defending the *status quo*. His attempts could not overcome the Liberal problematic that viewed Algeria's suffering in terms of a failure of human brotherhood rather than the outcome of the colonial system. The writer's insistence on the need for 'justice' in Algeria appeared in this light to be little more than the author's preferred

alternatives to what the nationalists were actually demanding after the outbreak of the Algerian war: the full independence of Algeria.

It was during the Algerian war that Camus was criticized for taking an odd position and announcing that if he were forced to choose between defending justice and defending the life of his mother, he would choose to defend his mother first. After receiving the Nobel Prize in 1957 and during a discussion with a group of students in Sweden, one of whom was Algerian and who repeatedly interrupted Camus with questions about democracy and justice in Algeria, Camus made the following rejoinder:

> I have always supported a just Algeria, where the two populations must live in peace and equality. I have said and repeated that we have to bring justice to the Algerian people and grant them a fully democratic regime. E...] I have always condemned terror. I must also condemn a terrorism that is practised blindly, in the streets of Algiers, for example, and which one day could strike my mother or my family. I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice. (Qtd.in Carroll xvi)

These words were pounced on by critics as well as by Algerian intellectuals. While many commentators condemned Camus's hurting words with regard to his native land, David Caroll condoned him by stating that Camus's words

> did not in fact, as has often been argued, reveal that he was a supporter of colonialism in Algeria and an opponent of freedom and justice for all Algerians. It rather constituted a statement of principle: that priority should always be given to human life, which had to be defended before ideals, no matter the legitimacy of the ideals and the cause being pursued. (Qtd.in Carroll xvi)

Unlike Carroll, the Algerian journalist Amar Belkhodja indicted Camus's speech for being far from the ideal of justice which he often advocated in his essays. He vehemently refused to let Camus off the hook:

> Côté guerre de Novembre, Camus est absent à l'appel. Celui qui a préféré sa mère à la justice avait complètement oublié que la violence –illégitime– fut d'abord d'essence colonialiste pour avoir engendré la contre-violence –légitime– des Algériens. (Belkhodja 09)

Likewise, Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi, who was an *FLN* leader, wrote an open letter to Camus while in prison expressing his bitter disappointment towards the 'man of justice' who wanted to establish an egalitarian balance between oppressors and the humiliated. Among what he wrote: *"Camus a manqué de courage et de lucidité à l'heure des choix décisifs."* (Qtd.in Chavanes 142). Yet Taleb-Ibrahimi and others who rebuked Camus were blind to the fact that Camus found himself cornered between an allegiance to preserve the legitimacy of French Algeria and a sincere desire for reform. Furthermore, Camus was aware of the peril of losing his newly acquired position if he supported the Algerian national uprising (Carroll 18). This was the crux of Camus's liberal dilemma. As a liberal, he could not choose in the conflict between the colonialist *'bourreaux'*/executioners and against the colonized 'victims'. He sought to bridge the gulf between colonizers and colonized but could not imagine an alternative to *Algérie Française*; and so, as a *pied-noir*, he continued to express his faith in the settlers' prospects in Algeria Accordingly, he and his fellow *pieds-noirs* writers (just like Jean Pélégri and Jules Roy) advocated a more humane form of the 'pacification' *programme* designed to preserve French Algeria (Kritzman 567). Thus he came back to Algiers in 1956 to call for a civil truce. He advocated a 'dialogue' in the antagonistic relationship between the French and the Algerians. *"Il était mon devoir"*, claimed Camus, *"de venir répercuter auprès de vous un appel de simple humanité, susceptible, sur un point au moins, de faire taire les fureurs et de rassembler la plupart des Algériens, français ou arabes, sans qu'ils crient à rien abandonner de leurs convictions."* (Qtd.in Kritzman 560). Yet Camus was not given heed by both sides because what he proposed was in fact a utopia that could never be realized. A political truce between such enemies was impossible. This was an exercise in liberal self-delusion.

Indeed Camus was one of the literary defenders of *Algérie Française* who so loudly trumpetted the so-called Mediterranean fraternity between the indigenous inhabitants of Algeria and the *pieds-noirs.* He always viewed Algeria as an integral part of the French Republic. Therefore he often favoured the policy of assimilation, and continued to express faith in the reformability of French Algeria, explaining its injustice in terms of abuses and errors, rather than as the very foundation of the colonial system. For Camus, the daily humiliation and chronic poverty of the Algerian population of the colony was an accidental rather than a substantial feature of the French colonial presence; something in short, that might have been avoided. Such thinking was implicit in Camus's political writings and was sometimes made explicit. What he was able to suggest was only an ideal fraternity as a practical alternative to independence. Algerians, he believed, would eventually merge into a common Franco-Algerian culture. Camus carried this belief until his death. One theme seemed to recur in his thought: *"The question is not how to die separately but rather how to live together."* (Qtd.in Bowker 310). Camus, therefore, could not understand the Algerians' demand for severance from the French state. As he maintained:

> An Algeria made up of federated settlements and linked to France seems to me preferable to an Algeria linked to an empire of Islam which would bring the Arab peoples only increased poverty and suffering and which would tear the Algerian-born French from their natural home. (Qtd.in Harlow 40)

But Camus's solution of a long-term republican association between France and Algeria, of an *"Algeria made up of federated settlements and linked to France"* (Ibid.), was widely criticized on both sides of the political divide. Camus thus was thought by his contemporaries to be either unwilling or unable to rise above the mindset of a liberal, "well-intentioned colonizer", to use Albert Memmi's phrase.

Indeed Camus felt that Algeria was a 'native' soil for its French inhabitants who were born there, and some of whose parents and grandparents had been born there. He occasionally defended his position with reference to a mythical 'Mediterranean culture', shared by North Africans and South-Europeans. In his 'Letter to an Algerian Militant', Camus wrote to his friend Aziz Kessous that, like Algerians, the French in Algeria were also *"attached to the soil of Algeria by roots that are too old and too vigorous for us to think of tearing up."* (Camus 127). Elsewhere, he stated:

> You and I, who are so much alike –having the same background, sharing the same hope, having felt like brothers for so long now, united in our love for our country– know that we are not enemies and that we could live happily together in this soil that belongs to us. For it is ours, and I can no more imagine it without you and your brothers than you can probably separate it from me and those who resemble me. (Camus 127)

Camus and all the French Algerians never imagined that they would leave Algeria some day, because to leave meant to be ousted from their 'own country'.

Camus ultimately became an outsider, caught in a psychic unrest. He was like his protagonist Meursault in ***L'Etranger***. Depressed by the inability to resolve the Algerian conflict, he was forced in the last years of his life to opt for silence:

> C'est pourquoi, dans l'impossibilité de me joindre à aucun des camps extrêmes, devant la disparition progressive de ce troisième camp où l'on pouvait encore garder la tête froide [...], j'ai décidé de ne plus participer aux incessantes polémiques qui n'ont eu d'autre effet que de durcir en Algérie les intransigeances. (Qtd.in Kritzman 567)

Camus's proposals remained – in Edward Said's terms– those of *"a moral man in an immoral situation."* (Said 174).

3-Philosophical Milieu

Late nineteenth-century England witnessed the rise of doubt and skepticism about the legitimacy of the British Empire. Joseph Conrad seemed to have been familiar with the works of the nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (Peters 12). Yet the major philosophical debate that was to have a direct effect on Conrad's writing was Positivism (4). With the growing scientific discoveries, people gained unprecedented confidence in science's ability to provide certainty. Thus science achieved a place that had previously been reserved for religion only. However, some thinkers questioned the use of the scientific model to explain all phenomena. They questioned Positivism. Among these thinkers we can cite Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche.

In fact Conrad questioned the ability of science and facts to provide certainty. In **Lord Jim**, Marlow the narrator realizes that knowledge is impossible (as we shall argue later). Conrad's questioning of Scientific Positivism appears more clearly in **Heart of Darkness**. In the novel, Marlow presents the Belgian Doctor who measures the heads of his patients as a fool.

In addition to Scientific Positivism, Conrad was influenced by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's primary contribution to the history of philosophy was his **The World as Will and Representation (1818)**. Schopenhauer argued that *"the physical world is a representation of reality and not reality itself."* (Qtd.in Peters 16). He refers to *Will* as the reality that human beings cannot apprehend as phenomena. This *Will* is the will to be, the desire to exist. *Will*, however cannot be fully satisfied except by no longer desiring to exist. Hence, this *Will* can only lead to despair because it desires to be something it cannot be; that is, a desire to exist that does not desire to exist. Furthermore, our *Will* to exist can only prevail at the expense of others' *Will* to exist. Therefore, this world can only be one of

misery. According to Schopenhauer, the only permanent solution to the world's misery, though, is through the loss of wish for existence.

Schopenhauer's generally pessimistic outlook, that human existence is primarily an existence of pain in which human beings constantly search for ways to alleviate the pain, manifests itself in Conrad's works in a number of ways: from Marlow's view that humanity's position in the universe is absurd in **Heart of Darkness** to the absurdity of events that wreck Jim's life in **Lord Jim**. Like Schopenhauer, Conrad had a tragic vision of the universe. His vision can be summed up by a phrase: *"L'homme n'est qu'une faible lueur dans la tempête, mais cette lueur résiste et cette lueur est tout."* (Qtd.in Charbonnier 212).

Conrad was also influenced by the Nietzschean outlook and his conception of a chaotic, fragmented, and meaningless reality. Nietzsche is most often associated with his announcement of "the death of God". Indeed Nietzsche, who proved to be a common influence on both Conrad and Camus, anticipated many philosophical thinking such as Existentialism. According to Nietzsche,

> [N]ot only do we have no predetermined essence, not only is there no providence directing the course of human history, but it is in the very dimension of unreality, of illusion, of mechanisms of distancing ourselves from reality, that human development unfolds. (Qtd.in Habib 511)

Jean Paul Sartre's **Nausea (1938)** elaborated on the concepts of liberty and human existence. Roquentin, the protagonist, experiments the nauseating consciousness of his existence. The novel marked the outbreak of the philosophy of existence and consciousness. Likewise, Camus, on the path of Nietzsche and Sartre's view of human existence, launched his philosophy of the absurd. For Camus, the absurd is an experiential reality not a final conclusion. The absurd man claims a total freedom, *"a liberty completely devoid of regulative principles or boundaries. If God is dead –if there is no discernible transcendent*

order of things– everything is permitted." (Qtd.in Fred & Willhoite 48). The absurd rises out of contradictions, contradictions of human existence and human condition. In other words, the absurd is the disjunction between man's desire for unending happiness and the inescapable fact of death. Yet despite the final futility of life, Camus stresses the necessity of rebellion against death and absurdity.

4-Literary Movements

Modernism was the predominant artistic movement that emerged in Conrad's time and it was significantly illustrated in his work. Modernism came to question the artistic forms of previous movements. Its emergence coincided with the questioning of the Western civilization in the late nineteenth-century.

Modernist writers were not exclusively concerned with formal aspects. They were interested in philosophical issues, too. Indeed modernist literature is known for its insistence on the conceptions of the self and the alienation of the individual in the modern world. Furthermore, it emphasizes the indeterminacy of knowledge. All those aspects came out of that atmosphere of uncertainty regarding traditionally held truths that arose in the late nineteenth century. As a result, modernist writers were forced to confront an indifferent universe in which no transcendent truths were available and yet still try to make sense of human existence.

Conrad is known primarily as a proto-modernist writer. In a way, he may be the first modernist. His works clearly evidence both the modernist experimentation with form and the modernist view of the world. Formal concerns in modernism include: a-chronological narratives, multiple narrators, stream-of-consciousness narration, fragmented narratives, inconclusive endings, and unreliable narrators. Characteristics of this modernist writing are

quite visible in Conrad's fiction with the flashback and flash forward techniques he employs. The shifts in time and space that occur in **Lord Jim** are examples of Conrad's experimenting, as are the two narrators he employs in relating the tales told in **Heart of *Darkness***. Furthermore, the alienation, solitude, and uncertainty that so many of his characters experience speak of Conrad's modernist outlook.

For Conrad, this position of a modernist outlook is particularly difficult given his age and maturity at the time he began his literary career. Although the philosophical subtext of his works is thoroughly modernist, Conrad was still largely a product of nineteenth- century Naturalism (Peters 34). Consequently a tension existed between his view of a modernist world and his wish that it were otherwise. This ambivalent attitude appears in Conrad's fiction prominently in the way various characters see the need to recognize the ultimate absurdity of human existence and the indifference of the universe, but at the same time they shelter themselves from such knowledge.

Albert Camus has always been regarded as an essentially French writer whose fiction is placed in the context of mid-twentieth century with its political upheavals and philosophical movements such as existentialism which did influence his writings. Camus aspired to universality and drew on the same line of thought of 'fine writing' or *Belles Lettres* of *littérateurs* such as Malraux and André Gide.

Aesthetically, the 1950s was the period of the appearance of new narrative techniques in France. The novel, using the first person narrative, becomes an essay. Philosophy itself becomes narrative. The '*école du Nouveau Roman*', the most representative of which writers was Alain Robbe-Grillet, influenced Camus's literary writings. **La Chute** (and to a lesser degree **L'Etranger**) is written using the techniques of this school.

These changes in writing forms reflect the chaos and disarray of the world in the 1950s such as the aftermath of World War Two.

Conrad and Camus have similarities that are more striking than the differences. They always look back to their native upbringing (Poland and Algeria). Therefore they have double identities whose central theme has been

> the plight of those who are torn between motherlands and mother tongues, the 'not quites', as the Indian writer Bharati Mukherjee calls them. Looking both ways at once, neither here nor there, they end up citizens of nowhere, or somewhere in the mind. (Ashcroft *et al.* 49)

From this it follows that Conrad's and Camus's liminal positions throw them on the frontiers of Europe with a hyphenated status. Because they sought integration, they were unable to fully transcend the racial and cultural prejudices of imperialist Britain and France respectively. Paradoxically, despite their deliberate rejection of totalitarianism in all its forms, Conrad and Camus remained deeply complicit in the imperial project. This is what we shall demonstrate in the next chapter through the analysis of ***Heart of Darkness*** and ***L'Etranger***.

To conclude this first chapter, we may say that the contemplated analogy between Conrad and Camus has led us to refer to the historical and political background of Poland and Algeria. The chapter certainly sheds more light on the themes both writers treat in their works, and even on their ideological stands. Accordingly, this chapter has been devoted to a survey of political and historical events that occurred during the two writers' lifetimes. We have particularly referred to events having a direct relevance to the works under study. Furthermore, our discussion of the life experiences of both Conrad and Camus will help us to see the part played by these experiences in shaping their texts.

Notes

(1)-Talking about self-exoticism, Charbonnier describes Conrad's status as follows:

> Sans parents, sans patrie, entre plusieurs langues, et même conduit à se choisir un nom, Conrad incarnerait parfaitement la figure du bâtard fils de lui-même, si, comme le batârd romantique, il revendiquait hautement sa bâtardise. Ce n'est pas le cas: il est l'homme du malaise de vivre, une conscience malheureuse hantée par une culpabilité originelle et ineffable. (Charbonnier 20)

Charbonnier, D. « Joseph Conrad, Marin des mers intérieures », in *La Littérature Anglaise au xx=ème siècle*. Paris : Armand Colin, 1998.

(2)-In this regard for example, Robert Conrath explains Conrad's double belonging:

> Conrad l'Anglais se dissimulait perpétuellement aux yeux de Conrad le Polonais, non parce qu'il brisait l'unité intérieure [...] mais parce que leurs présences simultanées auraient troublé l'unité extérieure, c'est-à-dire l'unité sociale, observée par autrui. Conrad aurait été perçu comme [...] un vrai schizophrène. Sans doute [...] ceci explique-t-il le côté 'plus British que British' de Conrad. (Conrath 130)

Conrath, Robert. « La Vitre de l'Auto-traduction: Quelques remarques sur l'entre-deux-langues.» *Europe :Revue Littéraire Mensuelle.* 758-759 (juin-juillet., 1992).

(3)-Camus stated:

> Mais je suis forcé de dire que le régime de travail en Kabylie est un régime d'esclavage. Car je ne vois pas de quel autre nom appeler un régime où l'ouvrier travaille de 10 à 12 heures pour un salaire moyen de 6 à 10 Francs. (Qtd in. Abbou&Lévi-Valensi 280)

Abbou, André. Lévi-Valensi. *Cahiers Albert Camus n° 3. Fragments d'un Combat.1 938-1940. Alger Républicain. Le Soir Républicain.* Paris : Gallimard, 1978.

(4)-Scientific Positivism is a school of thought that proceeded upon the premise that all knowledge could be determined by employing the scientific method. As a result, Scientific Positivism influenced many disciplines whose primary assumptions were basically scientific as means of inquiry (Cf. Peters 13)

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CHAPTER TWO

Heart of Darkness and *L'Etranger*:

Self-Other Encounter and Imperial Monologism

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.

Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat."

Rudyard Kipling 'The Ballad of East and West'

This chapter will explore the representation of the other –the colonized other as opposed to the colonialist Self– in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Camus's *L'Etranger* (*The Outsider* in its English translation). The purpose is to show that the representation of the Orient/Africa belongs to the vocabulary of a previous legacy of *idées reçues* about the other (Cf. Edward Said). *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* are placed side by side in this analysis in order to better highlight the resemblances between the two texts. When the two novels are brought close together, there generates a friction despite some disparity in subject. Our primary target in this analysis is the essential opposition between Self and Other and the pervasive power of the colonial discourse in both novels. Thus we will suggest that the two texts are based on the dichotomy of 'them and us'. More generally, our emphasis will be on the strong affinities between *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* as part and parcel of the hegemonic Western discourse which Edward Said has dubbed Orientalism.

1-Colonial Discourse, Otherness and the Representation of Race

Both *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* focus on an individual experience placed/sited in a colonial context. Yet whereas Conrad shows an explicit interest in colonial ideology, Camus's text remains dumb. This difference does not prevent both texts from sharing similar effects, effects achieved primarily through themes, characterization and setting. Indeed, *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* undoubtedly belong to the realm of colonialist literature. As defined by Abdul R. JanMohamed, colonialist literature is

> an exploration and representation of a world at the boundaries of 'civilization', a world that has not been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology. That world is therefore perceived as uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable, and ultimately evil. (JanMohamed 64)

Thus, *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* are considered as colonialist novels that confirm the stereotyping of the natives and the inequalities of the colonial relationships. The stereotype

is and remains the principal mechanism of such inequalities, based as it is on ideologies of

discrimination and domination at work in colonialism: *« Porteur d'une définition de l'autre, le*

stéréotype est l'énoncé d'un savoir minimum collectif qui se veut valable, à quelque moment

historique que se soit» (Pageaux 63). In the tale of Marlow's journey up the Congo River,

Conrad –through Marlow's voice– reinforces the stereotyping of the black 'savages'. Marlow

commenting on the Negroes he meets along the African coast says that *"they had faces like*

grotesque masks" (Conrad 20) (1). The expression 'grotesque masks' is de-humanizing and

pejorative. Naturally, Marlow constructs –physically– the natives from the vantage point of

the British gentleman nurtured in Apollonian aesthetics. Their Negroid skin colour and

features contrast singularly with the marble white smoothness of the Greek canons of

beauty; hence the grotesqueness. Furthermore, the word *mask* connotes insensitivity,

lifelessness, and dehumanization as the natives are presented as nothing more than 'black

shadows'. In most of Marlow's encounters with them, black Africans are denied speech.

Marlow is content with describing their attempts at communication as a *"violent babble of*

uncouth sounds" (27) or *"short, grunting phrases"* (58). They are given few English words to

utter. The two occasions on which the natives are granted speech only further serve to

marginalize them. The helmsman's cry, *"catch 'im...Eat 'im!"* (58), suggests that the natives

are cannibals; thus further estranging them from civilized humanity. Marlow naturalizes the

Africans as strange, evil, and superstitious creatures. He calls them *'dark things', 'raw*

matters', 'savages', 'shapes', 'phantoms' who are reduced to ghastly unidentifiable beings –

if not objects. In this connection, Marlow's description of the natives is reminiscent of

Shakespeare's **The Tempest.** Speaking of Caliban at the end of the play, Prospero states,

"This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (Shakespeare 45).

In **The Wretched of the Earth (1961)**, Frantz Fanon writes that *"the colonial world is a Manichaean world"* (Fanon 31). Such Manichaeism dehumanizes the native, or to put it emphatically, turns him into a non-human. The colonizer uses the colonial *koine* (vocabulary) to describe the colonized. As Fanon pointedly reminds us, Africa under Western eyes is outrageously reduced to:

> Those hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or end, those children who seem to belong to nobody, that laziness stretched out in the sun, that vegetative rhythm of life. (Ibid., 33)

Indeed all this forms part of colonial parlance. These are terms pejorising the natives and used by the colonizers to project an otherness steeped in barbarity; thus providing a 'philanthropic' and 'scientific' justification for the 'civilizing mission' undertaken by Kurtz on behalf and at the behest of the 'Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs' in Africa.

In colonial discourse, *"la marque du pluriel"* (Memmi 104) is what singles out the colonized in the eyes of the colonizer. This is exactly what Albert Memmi emphasizes: *"le colonisé n'est jamais caractérisé d'une manière différentielle; il n'a droit qu'à la noyade dans le collectif anonyme [...]. Il est ceci...ils sont tous les mêmes"* (Ibid.). This means that Westerners often refer to the native people of a colonized land in the all-encompassing term *'they'* rather than as individuals of their own. This is what we perceive in particular in **Heart of Darkness**. There is no individual Caliban. Marlow sees only a collective figure of the natives for whom the chief accountant admits his hatred: *"When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages –hate them to the death"* (27). Here it must be noted that the chief accountant in fact hates the natives not only because they remain for him quaint and 'others' but also because they simply disturb him in his accounting.

Likewise, in **L'Etranger**, Meursault's Algerian antagonist is never named. He is referred to throughout as *'l'Arabe'.* Furthermore, as the narrative progresses, this emblematic figure of the indigenous population of Algeria emerges not as a concrete individual, but rather as a type, or more accurately, as a stereotype. The unnamed Arab represents his race as a whole. His identity is blurred and he is ignored as a man of flesh and blood, with sense and sensibility. He does not have a family history, a language, or even a background. He is portrayed in the novel as hostile, aggressive, and as a potential criminal. When Meursault enters the jail, he is surprised to find the majority of detainees are Arabs:

> On the day of my arrest they put me in a biggish room with several other prisoners, mostly Arabs. They grinned when they saw me enter, and asked me what I'd done. I told them I'd killed an Arab, and they kept mum for a while. (Camus 75) (2)

The implied meaning of the quotation above is that: first, Meursault has killed an Arab, not a man; second, if the Arabs are quasi-absent from the general setting of the story, it is because their congenial habitat is prison; third, these 'jailbirds' fall silent because they feel threatened by the *colon*, the arch-enemy. At this point Camus touches, unconsciously; as it were, upon the political issue. The 'unsaid' at this stage is further compounded by the occultation of the murdered Arab during the court proceedings. This means, among other things, that Arabs are excluded from French colonial citizenry (just as the Negro slaves were excl uded from the post-Revol ution American Constitution).

Conor Cruise O'Brien, in his perceptive **Albert Camus**, comments on the anonymity of Arabs in **L'Etranger**. He states that *"les Européens dans le livre, ont des noms –Meursault, Raymond Sintès, Marie, Salamano et d'autres personnages mineurs. L'homme qui est tué n'a pas de nom."* (O'Brien 35). Similarly, Amar Belkhodja, an Algerian author and journalist, in an article entitled "A Propos de Camus", attacks Camus for his neglect of the Algerians and

accuses him of being a 'literary criminal': "*Camus ne nous a jamais reconnu la qualité d'Algériens, en préférant répéter à l'infini le mot 'Arabe' pour nous désigner.*" (Belkhodja 18). What O'Brien and Belkhodja emphasize is that the Arabs with whom Camus grew up and the Arabs in his fictional works set in Algeria remain nameless, faceless, simply 'they' or 'him', or named collectively/lumped together as 'les Arabes'. They are just aliens, strangers – *étrangers*– in their own land!

Indeed, the Algerians in **L'Etranger** are associated with idleness, prostitution, and prison, or else are assaulted and murdered. Or they live on the periphery of the *pied-noir* community as is the case with the nurse. In the novel, the nurse does not speak, avoids looking at Meursault who, twice, is unable to look at her fully: *"one saw hardly anything of her face except that strip of whiteness"* (17). The second time she sits with her back to him and he speculates –*"by the way of her arms moved"* (19) – that she was knitting. On the first occasion, he cannot see her eyes because of the white bandage she is wearing over her face. Therefore, Meursault associates her with death; her face is disfigured by a cancerous growth – probably a veneral disease– which will certainly kill her. But rather than making her an object of social oppression like Raymond's mistress –as we shall see later–, her disease takes her outside of history; after the first few pages she slips out of **L'Etranger** and is banished from the narrative altogether and consequently, from colonial society. The nurse's marginalization and her disappearance in the novel points to the other Algerian characters, i.e. her alienation prepares us for worse as regards the fate of the other Algerians. Moreover, she hints at the carefully-concealed reality of colonial society. In this connection, it is worth mentioning what Patrick McCarthy writes in an article entitled "The First Arab in **L'Etranger**":

Since the colonial system does not allow even a writer as penetrating as Camus to lay bare its inner workings and to bring the Arab inside of history, the political component *must* remain submerged. (McCarthy 26)

Thus the absence of contact and communication between Meursault and the nurse reveals a latent conflict between the Algerian community and the *pied-noir* community, a conflict masked by the myth of *L'Algérie française* to which Camus adheres naturally (3).

This social dichotomy is the core of Fanon's analysis of the colonial relation in ***The Wretched of the Earth***. Fanon speaks of the alienation of the native Algerian in the divided world of French Algeria. It is in the psychiatric hospital at Blida-Joinville (now re-named Frantz Fanon) that he discovered the impossibility of his mission as a colonial psychiatrist. He explains:

If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization [...]. The social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he belonged. (Fanon 76)

The depersonalization of the Algerians which Fanon witnessed in the reality is present (factually) in almost all of Camus's fictional works. The most poignant instance occurs in the short story entitled "La femme adultère" ("the Adulterous Woman"). Janine, the heroine, projects a process of othering on her Algerian neighbours. Confronted with their presence, she experiences estrangement from both their disturbing silence and the alienating force of their unfamiliar language which disrupts her hold on existence:

L'autocar était plein d'Arabes qui faisaient mine de dormir, enfouis dans leur burnous. Quelques-uns avaient ramené leurs pieds sur la banquette et oscillaient plus que les autres dans le mouvement de la voiture. Leur silence, leur impassibilité finissaient par peser à Janine. [...] Elle remarqua qu'ils semblaient au large, malgré leurs amples vêtements, sur les banquettes où son mari et elle tenaient à peine. (Camus, "La Femme Adultère" 1562)

This is the stereotypical perception of Arab physicality in one of Camus's colonial texts: objectif ication tainted with racial and cultural mistrust. The Oriental 'object' is viewed as an 'intruder' who must be ousted from his 'usurped' territory. Hence, in our symptomatic reading, to borrow Althusser's expression (4), of Camus's **L'Etranger** we hope to demonstrate that the text is a continuum of mis-representations that perpetuate the same Orientalist thought.

The Palestinian-American literary and cultural theorist Edward Said has an essential concern with the assessment of the historical motivations behind the production of the Western discourse about the Orient. In **Orientalism**, Said examines the vast tradition of Western 'constructions' of the Orient. This tradition of Orientalism has been a

> corporate institution for dealing with the Orient –dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient. (Said 03)

Said argues that the discourse of Orientalism works to create 'knowledge' about a supposed 'racial' group. This knowledge is created from the perspective of dominant and dominating Western culture about the colonized culture. Yet this knowledge, as Said explains in **Orientalism,** refers to the set of practices that European cultures used to produce, and hence control, in the East/Orient encounter. However, Said draws attention to the fact that Orientalism as a Western discourse of hegemony has little to do with the actualities of life in the Orient –wherever it be. In the same line of thought, Frantz Fanon stresses the fact that the condition of the colonial subject is always *"over-determined from without"* (Fanon 67). In other words, the colonial condition is evoked through a fantasy about or a mis-representation of the Orient and the Orientals. This fantasy constitutes a created body of theory (and practice) that has always claimed European progress over Oriental

backwardness. Furthermore, such discourse, for Said, is partial and prejudiced; it is based on generalizations and stereotypical attitudes. Thus the knowledge of the Oriental comes from the *"bibliothèque des idées reçues"* (Cuddon 622).

Indeed most European writers 'recycle' the ideas and views of their predecessors. The aim is to create a repertory of prejudices in a bid to embody a 'truth'. In the case of Rider Haggard's ***King Solomon's Mines (1885)***, the discourse is an Africanist one; i.e. it depicts the black 'savagery' of sub-Saharan Africa. 'Africanist discourse' is a term that has been forged after Said's ***Orientalism***. It represents the relation between Europe and Africa, a relation marked by the dichotomy of light-dark, white-black, civilized-primitive. It is based on the negative representation/perception of Africa in European literature. More precisely, Africanist discourse stresses binary oppositions in which one element dominates: light-dark, Self-other, presence-absence, and male-female. In this distinction the African is associated with darkness, difference, and absence. Furthermore, he is portrayed *"as being ugly, weak, cowardly and scheming"* (Ngugi 92). In other words, Africanist discourse is a pattern of concepts and rhetorical strategies that are repeated in a series of texts that span hundreds of years about Africa and Africans before and after the actual contact with Africa. That is to say, this discourse is not based on the study of Africa as a 'real' place or Africans as 'real' people, but a tradition of European writing that claims knowledge of Africa from a Eurocentric perspective. The West constructs traditions of stigmatization to legitimate colonialism or to create legitimacy for acquisition and domestication. This theory of Africanist discourse is unsurprisingly akin to Edward Said's analysis in ***Orientalism***.

What is important for our purpose is the way in which such an Africanist discourse, in Haggard's novel in particular, is determined to provide a historical justification to its

operations in the mines of Zimbabwe. The 'cover story' that hides/conceals the vicious intentions of exploitation in **King Solomon's Mines** is the sham of the civilizing mission, i.e. the Europeans' endeavour in Southern Africa was to save the barbaric Africans from their backwardness and solve the mystery of the mines. Haggard's novel explicitly reveals the covetousness of imperialism through material practice (JanMohamed 34). Moreover, it testifies to constituting Africa as a site of colonial pastoral fantasy (to be taken up by Joyce Cary's **Mister Johnson**, for example).

Kipling's **Kim (1900)** also belongs to Orientalist discourse. The stereotype is the principal mechanism used by Kipling to legitimize the ideology of domination in colonial India. Kipling provides invariant 'truths' about Orientals as irrevocably backward human beings. They are seen as products of their eternally unchanging Oriental society (Ibid., 45). Therefore, they behave exactly the same as they have behaved from times immemorial.

The allusion to Haggard's and Kipling's novels (the former an Africanist discourse, the latter an Orientalist discourse) aims at showing the strategies used by the Western writer to legitimize colonialism. Haggard's and Kipling's texts are Western literary contributions whose primary purpose is the defence of the European imperial ascendency. They consist in ideological manipulations of the Self-other relationship which is based on the superiority of the (European or Western) Self over the (non-European or non-Western) other. This relationship is at the very heart of colonial othering.

In the case of Algeria, the essential basis for the settlers' faith in their own *mission civilisatrice* justifies, through moralistic pretexts so to speak, French colonialism. The belief in 'Arab' backwardness could easily persuade both colonizers and colonized of the rightness of the colonialist venture in Algeria. We cannot say that such thinking is by no means specific to

Albert Camus; it is ingrained in fact in the minds of many of his predecessors of *L'Ecole Algérianiste*. Louis Bertrand in **Le Sang des Races (1899)** exhibits the *pied-noir'* s aspiration to eternally settle in the new-found land of Algeria. Bertrand was convinced that a *peuple neuf* had come into being in Algeria, and that it should begin to voice its own values in a new 'national' literature (Dine 53). Bertrand, as many other French settlers or *pieds-noirs* of Algeria, believes in total coalescence with the Algerian soil:

> En Egypte...il y a 'accumulation de richesses', et il est certain que les Anglais enrichissent beaucoup plus les Egyptiens qu'ils ne s'enrichissent chez eux. Nous avons fait la même chose pour nos Algériens..., qui sont en train d'acheter et de conquérir la plus grande partie du sol créé et fertilisé par nous. (Bertrand 32)

This will to belong on the part of French settlers leads them to develop a system of myths in an attempt to reassure the *pieds-noirs'* 'legitimate' usurpation of the natives' land. Bertrand reinforces in his fiction the continuous process of myth-formation, i.e. he was a literary defender of *Algérie Française*. Bertrand's view was taken up and developed by the *Algérianistes*. Robert Randau's novel, **Les Colons (1909)**, for instance was intended to be a celebration of the new Algerian homeland of the *petits- blancs*. Hence the glorification of the European settlers of Algeria (Dine 168).

Camus indeed follows in the footsteps of his European/French predecessors. This European tradition of misrepresentation is re-instated in **L'Etranger**. Camus reproduces the common colonial emphasis on the laziness, filth, dishonesty, and general incompetence of the colon ized population. Town Arabs (Algerians) are described as wearing *"bleu de chauffe graisseux"* (Camus, **L'Etranger** 89) (5). Elsewhere, they are portrayed as cowards: *"Les Arabes, à reculons, se sont coulés derrière le rocher"* (Ibid., 91) (6). Such stigmatization is in line with the *colons'* views of the 'Arabs'. As Philip Dine forcefully comments:

> Whether or not they were overtly likened to animals (bicots, ratons) or even to vegetable forms of life (melons, troncs de figuiers), the native Algerians were typically comprehended by the European settlers of the territory as an essentially passive and homogeneous mass: ils, les Arabes, les bougnoules. (Dine 179) (Emphasis added)

Such racism is one of the ideological weapons wielded by colonialism. Thus, it provides some sort of legitimacy for oppression and domination. It is worth recalling again that in the Western mind, the Oriental/African has to be less than human because such is his irremediable nature. In **L'Etranger**, Camus makes, albeit not plainly, the important distinction between the privileged Self and the impoverished other on the basis of racial segregation. Raymond's ill-treatment of the *Mauresque* is emblematic of the colonial system that supports the exploitation of the body of the colonized other. Meursault does not have any contact with the indigenous population. There are barriers (social/cultural) between the two communities. The only possible relationship is based on hatred, threat, and fear. This is the conviction of Louis Bertrand who confirms:

> Ils ...[les Arabes] détestent l'étranger,....C'est une haine du barbare contre le civilisé. Ils sentent trop cruellement leur infériorité, ou, tout au moins, leur condition misérable, devant ces étrangers, qui traversent leurs quartiers sordides et fétides, qui passent, en voiture ou en auto, bien lavés, bien vêtus, bien nourris,[...] avec une foule d'engins compliqués et mystérieux, dont le prolétaire oriental ignore l'usage. Oui, qu'on s'imagine, devant tout ce luxe, la rage du Mouslim pouilleux, qui patauge, pieds nus, dans la crotte. (Bertrand 43)

This quotation alludes to the colonial relation that exhibits a *"Manichean delirium"* (Fanon 176) where the colonizer is enslaved by his superiority, whereas the colonized is enslaved by his inferiority. The shadow of the colonized man splits/distorts the outlines/contours of the colonizer. Moreover, it disturbs his existence. Consequently, the phobic image of the native/the colonized is deeply woven into the psychic pattern of the West. The colonizer thus projects all forms of otherness onto the colonized. This is particularly true in Camus's creation of the Algerians in **L'Etranger**. As opposed to the *Français d'Algérie*, the Algerian is,

and must always be, perceived as a permanent affront to the Self's individual and communal identity. It is as if Meursault were angrily saying about the Arabs in **L'Etranger**:

> 'Ce chancre, cette crasse, cette saleté, l'Arabe!' Cette obsession légendaire, transmise de père en fils ! Avec, pour toile de fond, cette crainte latente de leur ressembler, à eux, ces bouniouls. Tout doux, tout bons, quand ils ne bougent pas et qu'ils baissent la tête. Insupportables, littéralement insupportables comme une vermine, dès qu'ils se mettent à remuer, à montrer qu'ils existent. (Qtd in. Dine 199)

Camus has been attacked by many Algerian writers and intellectuals for his latent racism and for his neglect of the native Algerians in his fiction. Belaid Abane condemns him for being a typical colonialist writer who reproduces the same clichés, the same *idées reçues* about colonial Algeria. He vehemently/resentfully comments on Camus's Orientalist assumptions as follows:

> L'écrivain *pied-noir* [Camus] a incontestablement participé à la fabrication de cette imagerie réductrice et caricaturale de 'l'Arabe', et à l'incrustation dans l'imaginaire du Français métropolitain de ces représentations coloniales dévalorisantes ou négatives qui résistent encore à l'usure du temps: l'indigène, tantôt burnous ou djellaba en toile de fond, tantôt individu impénétrable et louche, toujours potentiellement dangereux. (Abane 19)

This means that the 'Arab' is always portrayed as an enigmatic shifty, mysterious, and dangerous creature. Camus fails to describe the Algerian figure in sufficient depth and detail: the anonymous victim of a European gratuitous violence in the Algiers of **L'Etranger**, ignored in the Oran of **La Peste**, the colonized is mysterious and unconvincing in "*La Femme Adultère*" and "*L'Hôte*". As depicted by Albert Camus, the native Algerian is essentially unknowable: a permanent puzzle for the author, for the narrator-protagonist, and for the reader alike. Thus the colonized finds himself denied what is perhaps the most fundamental constituent of his humanity.

By the same token, Conrad in **Heart of Darkness** stresses the stereotypical image of the Africans as savages*, "strings of dusty niggers"* (26) and a *"whirl of black limbs"* (30).

Moreover, they are not given voice. The only words uttered are those by a Westernized servant 'boy' who announces: *"Mistah Kurtz—he dead"* (100).

The Africans are indeed associated with supernatural evil. Near the Inner Station, *"a black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms, across the glow. It had horns [...].Some sorcerer, some witch-man, no doubt; it looked fiend-like enough"* (94). In fact, it is through Marlow that Conrad conveys the degeneracy of the natives who accompany Marlow into the interior of the continent. In this regard, Frantz Fanon provides an interesting description of the natives in the eyes of *colons*:

> The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is [...] the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. (Fanon 55)

The colonial encounter perpetuates the image of Africa as an 'unknown', a 'dark' continent, an incomprehensible and an alienating presence to the baffled and suffering Marlow. In **Heart of Darkness** and **L'Etranger**, actual geography is transformed into a typically colonial *mise en scène*. In the paragraphs that follow we shall focus on the description of the colonial landscape in both texts, a description constructed according to the ideological conventions of colonialist discourse.

Edward Said's **Orientalism** shows that otherness is projected on the landscape as it is on the natives. He explains how the Orient is a place of otherness, an area of mystery and 'exoticism': *"The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes"* (Said 01). Hence, to Conrad as to most Europeans at the time, Africa constituted an unfamiliar or 'hostile' space, a place of darkness, physically located well beyond European *limes*. Even in Marlow's

childhood memory, Africa, *"the biggest, most blank"* (11) space, is designated as a place *"out there"* (11). The repeated and emphatic use of *'out there'* draws a tacit link with the far side where lies the *'not here', 'not us'*, and the unfamiliar other.

In **Heart of Darkness**, Africa clearly occupies this spatial beyond, this hostile space that *"imaginative geography"* (7) f ills with a river *"resembling an immense snake uncoiled [...] its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land"* (12) and with other images of native darkness and horror. For most of the book, Conrad describes the landscape as silent, refusing to yield up its *"unspeakable secrets"* (89). Marlow stresses this enigmatic indigenous locale when he says*: "The woods were unmoved, like a mask –heavy, like the door of a prison–they looked with their air of* hidden *knowledge, of patient expectation, of unapproachable silence"* (81). The coast is 'featureless', 'formless', 'monotonous' and the jungle for Marlow seems *"so dark green as to be almost black"* (19). Repeatedly, the African coast in Conrad's novel is described as a malevolent force. In Marlow's words:

> Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma. There it is before you—smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, 'come and find out'. This one was almost featureless, as if still in the making, with an aspect of monotonous grimness. The edge of a colossal jungle, E...], fringed with white surf, ran straight, like a ruled line, far away along a blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist. The sun was fierce, the land seemed to glisten and drip with steam E...]. Nowhere did we stop long enough to get a particularized impression but the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder grew upon me. (Ibid.)

The landscape here is shown to be as so hazy as to evoke a sense of confusion in Marlow's psyche. He finds it difficult to grasp what is essentially foreign to him. Marlow's difficulty in describing the African landscape was common in Victorian travel and ethnographic literature. John W.Griffith accounts for that as follows:

The sense of disorientation in Conrad's writing like that of travel writing and Victorian anthropology in the Victorian period has been linked to racism. This writing on Africa may be too easily stereotyped as racist and culturally imperialist. While many works undoubtedly partook of racist beliefs, they also represented an attempt, however flawed, to *see*, and to impart these sights to others. (Griffith 35)(8)

This is exactly what Conrad does in **Heart of Darkness**. In Marlow's narrative, Africa functions as an *"exo-cultural* symbol" (Shetty 472); that is, as an image towards which its audience already held powerful, culturally determined attitudes; i.e. Marlow's storytelling in fact relies on his audience's 'knowledge' of Africa and its acceptance of certain postulates: Africa as the *locus* of primordial darkness.

Chinua Achebe, in an article entitled "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**", launches a diatribe against Conrad calling him 'a bloody racist'. He states that the novel *"projects an image of Africa as an 'other world', the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality"* (Achebe 02). According to Achebe, Conrad sets Africa up as a foil to Europe to manifest Europe's own state of spiritual grace. He cites many 'exhibits' that condemn Conrad for being too prejudiced against Africa. He illustrates this, for example, with Conrad's instance of the Congo River as the antithesis of the Thames River –the tranquil waterway resting peacefully *"at the decline of day after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks"* (06). Unlike the Thames, the Congo River has rendered no service to civilization. We are told that *"going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginning of the world"* (48) (9).

As regards the natives of Africa, Achebe finds Conrad's description of Africans downright racist. In Marlow's eyes, the black people are *"savages clapping their hands and stamping their feet"* (Achebe 07). For Achebe, Conrad has dehumanized the Africans. Thus

Achebe poses the question of *"whether a nove! which ce!ebrates this dehumanization, which depersona!izes a portion of the human race, can be ca!!ed a great work of art"* (Ibid., 12). Conrad, according to Achebe, has done nothing to correct the West's misconception of Africa. Instead, Conrad's text re-activates the Western stereotypical image of Africa and Africans which lies dormant in the European psyche as a long-running historical saga. What we notice in **Heart of Darkness** is that Marlow's description of the African landscape is re-enacting what has become a recurrent, ritualistic tradition of colonial narrative: the intruding Self stands fascinated before the other's inexpressible '*habitat'.*

It must be pointed out that the myriad images of darkness that make up Conrad's picture of Africa should be considered as elements of an ideological construction rather than a socio-historical and cultural reality. In other words, there exists an ideological 'screen' that masks the reality of the African landscape. John W.Griffith explains:

> Conrad's Marlow, like contemporary travel and ethnological writers, reproduces a phantasmagoric rather than a literal Africa. Certainly, Marlow's vision of Africa, like Conrad's, depended upon European misconceptions of African cultures. (Griffith 24)

Marlow's descriptions of the Congo therefore belong to that tradition of fantastic exoticism; i.e. a fantasy that goes back to the early Victorian colonial romances. Such distortions of reality are rooted in cultural imperialism as in travel literature, ethnographic fiction, and anthropological writing (10).

It is well known that in Conrad's time, the general vocabulary used in talking about colonial fiction came from anthropology and ethnography. Hence, Conrad's colonial texts are replete with the terms of these pseudo-sciences considered hitherto instances of ostensibly objective knowledge about colonial reality. The Western ethnographers and anthropologists in fact extended contact with Africa to prepare the ground for future conquests. They were

engaged in writing scientific and ethnographic texts about native African/Oriental settings. They established the basic characteristics of Africanist /Orientalist tradition. In other words, Africanist/Orientalist anthropology and ethnographic texts paved the way for colonialism. Therefore inventions of Africa became African realities. These inventions are profusely implemented in **Heart of Darkness**. Conrad re-invents a 'hostile' African space to incorporate the Manichaean premises upon which imperialism bases its arguments for conquest. Expressions like the 'Dark Continent' –echoed in **Heart of Darkness**– accord so well with the monolithic discourse of imperialism.

In the same line of misrepresentation and othering of the Eastern landscape, Camus's **L'Etranger** is set in Algiers and its vicinity –within the French polis– and away from the un-tamed barbarity of the hinterland. The space is organized in a significant way. Meursault lives in Belcourt. He moves freely in colonial Algiers; he has free access to many places– cinema, restaurant. But at no time does he venture into 'La'kiba', the native part of Belcourt. Most of the time, he is presented to occupy narrow places –the flat, the office, the jail. This may reflect (on) the general malaise and confinement of the *pieds-noirs* (or rather the *petits-blancs*) community in colonial Algeria. The natural landscape–except for the sea, which is claimed, so to speak, as a Hellenic, therefore congenial, legacy—is described as 'exotic', threatening, and even antagonizing: *"Now in the full glare of the morning sun, with everything shimmering in the heat-haze, there was something inhuman, discouraging, about this landscape"* (24-25). The Algerian sun is 'anthropomorphized' and considered as Meursault's chief enemy especially during the scene that precedes the murder: *"Personally I was quite overcome by the heat"* (103). The sun is the catalyst that increases Meursault's estrangement, alienation even: *"Heat was welling up from the rocks and one could hardly breathe"* (58). Elsewhere he complains: *"The light seemed thudding in my head and I*

couldn't face the effort needed to go [...]. But the heat was so great that it was just as bad

staying where I was, under that flood of blinding light falling from the sky" (62). In such

presentation of the sun as *agent provocateur*, Camus is reminiscent of Guy de Maupassant in

Au Soleil when the latter writes:

> Terre calcinée, chaleur terrible de la tente, montagne entière brûlée, soleil martyrisant des premiers jours d'août dans le désert. Sous nos têtes, au-dessus de cette toile, le soleil tombait en pluie de feu et je sentais sur mes épaules et sur ma nuque cette température d'étuve sèche qui caractérise si fort les midis Sahariens. (Qtd.in Ali Khodja 26).

Camus follows in the footsteps of Maupassant and depicts the sun as a malevolent surge in

front of Meursault who despairingly says*: "[The heat] struck me that all I had to do was to*

turn, walk away, and think no more about it. But the whole beach, pulsing with heat, was

pressing on my back." (91). The unbearable heat of the sun is akin to that created by

Maupassant. Again, Maupassant's description is worthy of quote: *"Toute la contrée est aride*

et désolée. C'est le pays du feu, le royaume brûlé du soleil" (Op.cit., 26). The hostility of the

sun aggravates the feeling of uneasiness, so much so that it nearly and paradoxically

murders Meursault—the murderer. It is as though Meursault's shooting of the 'Arab' was an

act of self-defence against the sun! Likewise, in "*La Femme Adultère*", the landscape of

Southern Algeria is represented as being arid and sterile; i.e. with dry plants growing in a

background of hard stones. This is a stereotypical reinforcement of the indigenous

antagonizing landscape within colonial discourse.

Having brought out some aspects of colonial discourse in both **Heart of Darkness** and

L'Etranger, we hope that we have shown that Conrad and Camus reproduce the same

clichés about the Orientals/Africans and the Orient/Africa. We shall see now other common

points in the content of both works but within the same approach, i.e. that of colonial discourse analysis.

2- A Re-assertion of the Liberal-Humanist Tradition and its Limits

Both Conrad and Camus are regarded as liberal-humanists; that is, writers mostly concerned with the freedom and centrality of mankind. Liberal-humanism *"has to do with democracy, decency, tolerance, rationality, belief in hum an pro gress and a whole-hearted support of the individual against the machinations of 'inhuman' political systems."*(Robbins *et al.* 61). Both writers advocated universal assumptions concerning humanity. Yet their liberal-humanist *professions de foi* are limited as we shall show.

In **Heart of Darkness**, Marlow makes scathing remarks upon the European colonial agents in Africa. What he calls the *"great demoralization of the land"* (26) or "*a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly"* (23) are statements that condemn the colonial practices in Africa. Marlow sees that the resources are mismanaged and that the natives are mercilessly exploited and reduced to forced labour. His impression against this backdrop is that of the inefficiency of the colonial venture. He criticizes the lust of the 'pilgrims' in their accumulation of ivory. This, Marlow finds at odds with the ideal of the *mission civilisatrice* and of the <u>white man's burden</u>: *"They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence"* (10). Marlow openly criticizes 'the scramble for Africa' and the consequences resulting from the 'loss of restraint' in the heart of Africa.

As a matter of interest, Marlow's strictures on the exploitation of the natives and their lands are voiced in the context of the doctrine of liberal-humanism. It is worth recalling again that the term liberalism broadly refers to *"that body of beliefs in which the human*

subject is deemed to be central, and which projects his self-realization, hum anity, and essential equality as absolute goals" (Smith 186). Marlow seems to hold those advanced and humane views in accordance with the English liberal tradition. He is shocked therefore by the atrocities inflicted upon the natives in the Congo:

> They were all dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, and they were nothing earthly now— nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. (24)

Marlow's depiction of the natives thus seems at times unbiased. Out of humanism, he confesses: *"but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar"* (51). Marlow is not entirely free, however, from the colonial mentality that he exposes so well. His sympathy for Africans is limited as Frances B. Singh writes:

> He [Marlow] feels sorry for them [natives] when he sees them dying, but when he sees them healthy, practising their customs, he feels nothing but abhorrence and loathing, like a good colonizer to whom such a feeling offers a perfect rationalization for his policies. (Singh 48)

What is irrevocable for Marlow (as for Conrad) is that the African natives are inferior by nature and should be ruled. Conrad's tone is racist even if it appears sometimes anti-colonialist. Hence, Marlow is emblematic of *"the impotent liberal conscience of imperialism"* (Greaney 67) because he supports the civilizing enterprise in Africa but criticizes only the misbehaviour of its representatives. In other words, it is the badly managed imperialism and not imperialism *per se* that Marlow objects to. Therefore**, Heart of Darkness** contains a willing blindness, an implied acceptance of the imperialist mission despite its critique of colonial rapacity. Put simply, while it opposes the brutalities of Belgian –though unnamed– colonialism, **Heart of Darkness** seems to accept and perhaps even to admire the 'efficient'

British version of it. In the novel, Marlow distinguishes the British from the Romans, describing the Romans in a way that applies to the Belgians:

> What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency. But these chaps [the Romans] were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more [...]. They were conquerors [....]. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence. (10)

What marks the British 'efficiency' as superior to the Roman is the *"idea at the back of it"* (Ibid.). Marlow implies that the idea which is not material, the 'civilizing mission', is what redeems British 'efficiency'. We understand from Marlow's remarks that Conrad's text is an attack on rival imperialisms and a defence of the British variety. Here lies the limitation of Conrad's liberal-humanism. More convincingly, as a critic of Empire who functions from within the dominant culture, Conrad *"finds it nigh impossible to venture beyond the very ideological barriers which he purports to dissolve"* (Shetty 462). In other words, Conrad was writing in English as a new member of the British imperialist 'club' and he employs the language–the *parole* (in Saussurean terminology)—of the dominant culture which he 'gestures' to criticize. But rather than offering an alternative vocabulary for discussing racial and colonial politics, his language inevitably adheres to the rhetoric of political and cultural dominance. Conrad clearly draws on the racist lexicon (the xenophobic ideology) of cultural anthropology as we have stated earlier. His dilemma thus lies in the fact that he is aware that imperialism is essentially the domination and exploitation of other people and territories. Yet, he could not conclude that imperialism must end so that the imperialized world could set itself free. As Edward Said forcefully puts it: *"As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them."* (Said, **Culture and Imperialism** 34). The reason is that Conrad remains an ardent anglophile and thus shows a Eurocentric bias.

Camus for his part is famous for his pronouncements on behalf of justice and equality. Like George Orwell whom Said likens to Camus, such *pied-noir*'s denunciation of *colon* 'justice' is not without its problems. As *"colonisateur de gauche"*, to echo Memmi, Camus is divided because

> [E]tre de gauche, pour lui, ne signifie pas seulement accepter et aider la libération nationale des peuples, mais aussi la démocratie économique et la justice, le refus de la xénophobie raciste et l'universalité, le progrès matériel et spirituel [...]. Si le colonisateur de gauche refuse la colonisation et se refuse comme colonisateur, c'est au nom de cet idéal. (Memmi 57)

Camus is torn between his universalist claims of justice, equality and the 'ghettoes' of colonialism. In other words, Camus as his fellow *pieds-noirs* of *L'Ecole d'Alger* –Emmanuel Roblès, Jean Pélégri, and Jules Roy– stood against the anti-colonialist injustices inflicted upon the indigenous inhabitants of Algeria but his stand is wavering. As a liberal, Camus could not choose in the conflict between the colonialist executioner and the colonized 'victims'. This ambivalence is reflected in *L'Etranger*. Meursault in the novel is the embodiment of the free human agent. From the outset, he is aware of his freedom of action. The absolute freedom he incarnates enables him to reject the consolation of the priest and to state his convictions without fear: death is inevitable and he has chosen it. Even when he kills the Arab, Meursault is aware that the act is gratuitous:

> We could only watch each other, never lowering our eyes; the whole world seemed to have come to a standstill on this little strip of sand between the sunlight and the sea, the twofold silence of the reed and stream. And just then it crossed my mind that one might fire, or not fire. (91)

Even after his condemnation, Meursault, being self-centred (and somehow liberal-humanist, revolts against despair through lucid indifference. Thus he asserts his freedom in his revolt against social conventions (this point will be expounded in the part discussing the absurd dimension of *L'Etranger*).

Yet the freedom that Camus claims in **L'Etranger** does not encompass other human beings coming from the 'periphery'. In other words, the Algerians in the novel are not free agents. The *Mauresque* is persecuted, her brother is murdered, and the majority of other Arabs are in jail. A careful reading shows us that Camus has indeed failed to portray them as free individuals. Furthermore, he avoids depicting the sufferings of the colonized and the permanent malaise of French Algeria. The history of colonial Algeria is thus replaced in **L'Etranger** by a focus on de-historicized universalism. But, consciously or unconsciously, Camus reveals in the text another fact, an acknowledgement of his authorial and historical *persona*'s limitations.

It is true that liberal-humanism lapses quite often into universalism. Yet it does not provide for the oppressed individuals a proper response to totalitarianism. This is exactly what happens with Camus whose liberalism overlooks the true liberation of the colonized. Hence it is accurate to say that Conrad and Camus could not cross the Rubicon to the other bank— to the colonized's perspective. They did not write from the other side of Empire, from the side of those who were crying out "Let my People Go". Conrad and Camus did not write from the perspective of those struggling against the Empire. They both wrote from the centre of the Empire. Ngugi in this regard comments on the ways in which European literature neglects the humanity of the oppressed masses—the colonized people:

> The humanistic side of European literature reflects of course the democratic social struggles of the European peoples. But given the domination of the West over the rest of the world through such repressive historical moments as the slave trade and slavery, colonialism and currently neo-colonialism, this literature tends to opt for silence or ambivalence or downright collaboration. Of course these are writers who show great sensitivity to the social evils perpetrated against other peoples: William Blake, Walt Whitman, Brecht, Sartre for instance. But taken as a whole this literature could not avoid being affected by the Eurocentric basis of its world-view or global vision, and most of it, even when sympathetic, could not altogether escape from the

racism inherent in Western enterprise in the rest of the world.(Ngugi, **Moving the Centre** 14).

Indeed the inveterate, innate Eurocentrism makes Western writers (Conrad and Camus) sustain, whether consciously or unconsciously, Western imperialism. Yet, their ambivalent stances vis-à-vis the humanity of those struggling from outside the borders of the West lead them to an impasse from which they could not find an escape route.

3-(A Dim) Awareness of the Colonial Eurocentric Dead-End

In **Heart of Darkness** Conrad exposes the 'horrors' of imperial material practices. Through Marlow, there is the telling of this fact. Yet, the ambivalence of Marlow (and thus of Conrad) lies in his adoption of an anti-colonialist stance while at the same time not wholly vindicating it. If he indicts colonialism, Conrad may run into problems with his foster motherland –England. He was thus overwhelmed by the pressures of the dominant culture under which he sought shelter. Conrad's reluctance is perhaps *"a symptom of his attempt at a critique within the bounds dictated by the debate current in the late- nineteenth century."* (Burden 29).

It is true that Conrad criticizes imperialism but this is without wholly shaking free from its xenophobic blinkers. **Heart of Darkness** is then informed by a Eurocentric worldview where the African people appear only as voiceless stage 'extras' (*figurants*). Marlow's ultimate lie to the Intended and his reluctance to help the natives in Africa are evidence of his condoning the imperialist project in the last resort.

F.R. Leavis gives Conrad a high seat in The Great Tradition of British literature. Si Abderrahmane Arab qualifies this literary space granted Conrad as *"no mere quirk on the part of a Cambridge don but a licence to brainwash the wayward children of Empire into*

ready acceptance of British hegemony" (Arab 104). Conrad's complicity in the imperial

venture is illustrated by Marlow's ultimate confession: *"I did not betray Kurtz—it was*

ordered I should never betray him—it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my

choice" (92).

Similarly, Camus covers up the political antagonism between the *pied-noir*

community and the indigenous community. In **L'Etranger**, Meursault's last stand is his direct

confrontation with the 'Arab'. This confrontation is the ultimate phase of the history of

colonial encounter founded essentially on violence:

> Dans **L'Etranger**, il n y'a aucun rapport entre les Européens [...] et les Arabes. Entre
> les deux communautés, la violence (les coups et les armes) est le seul 'dialogue'
> possible parce que les institutions coloniales elles-mêmes entérinent et sécrètent des
> rapports de force brutaux. (Ansel-Lambert 84)

Meursault's malaise originates in the existence of the 'Arabs' whom he wants –symbolically,

to annihilate. The murder of the 'Arab' however shows, though in silence, the hidden truth

of Meursault's guilty conscience, i.e. the historical guilt of French Algerians and of Camus

himself: *"Le problème colonial constitue* un point aveugle *dans l'œuvre et la pensée de*

Camus" (Ansel-Lambert 89). Consequently, Camus actually consolidates the imperialist vision

of his predecessors. He reinforces the orthodox perceptions of the colonial encounter.

Edward Said views in **L'Etranger** the inability of the *pied-noir* intellectual to choose between

the two conflicting communities, between the humanist endeavour to do justice and the

refusal to give up the profitable colonial political system. This points to, as Said reads it, the

predicament of the *pied-noir* community whose fate is ambiguous. This predicament is

incarnated in the character of Meursault and his final affirmation:

> I' d been right, I was still right, I was always right, I'd passed my life in a certain way,
> and I might have passed it in a different way, if I'd felt like it. I'd acted thus, and I

hadn't acted otherwise; I hadn't done x, whereas I had done y or z. And what did that mean? (118).

Despite the fact that Camus's text is silent about the issue of colonialism, Edward Said places it primarily within colonial narratives. In **Culture and Imperialism** and in an essay on Camus, "Camus and the French Imperial Experience", Said emphasizes the fact that Camus took it for granted that Algeria was part and parcel of French territory and focused on Camus's *"colonial sensibility"* (Said 213).Furthermore, Said makes assertions about the ways in which Camus's fictions unproblematically serve and reflect colonial interests. He u nderl i nes that *"[Camus's] most famous fiction [**L'Etranger**] incorporates, intransigently recapitulates, and in many ways depends on a massive French discourse on Algeria, one that belongs to the language of French imperial attitudes."* (Ibid., 218). Camus, in the eyes of Said, is a representative figure, not of *"Western consciousness"*, but rather of the *"western dominance"* (Ibid., 209) of the non-European world.

Similarly, Said recognizes that while Conrad is critical of imperialism in **Heart of Darkness**, the latter does not offer any alternative, seeming, as he does, to take the European tutelage of the colonized for granted. Said comments: *"Since Conrad ~~dates~~ imperialism, shows its contingency, records its illusions and tremendous violence and waste [...], he permits his later readers to imagine something other than an Africa carved up into dozens of European colonies"* (Ibid., 28). However, in **Heart of Darkness** Conrad is *"restoring Africa to European hegemony by historicizing and narrating its strangeness. [Thus,] he re-enacts the imperial gesture"* (Ibid., 198-9). Said sees Conrad's story as a historical artifact that tells us an orthodox colonialist discourse. It is a discourse of its times, a discourse replete with prejudice. Yet at times **Heart of Darkness** swims against the current of its own discourse. It reads, that is, 'against the grain'. Indeed Marlow's narrative sometimes disturbs

the conventional association of Europe and Africa with light and darkness as we shall see in the next chapter. This is how Conrad discloses the 'blackness' of Europe's imperial activities in the Congo; nevertheless, he does not or cannot disclaim/disavow the idea of Africa's darkness since he conforms, when everything is said and done, to the Victorian ethos. Thus, in seeking to re-adjust Europe's flattering colonial image of itself in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad fails to provide a corresponding re-adjustment of Europe's distorting image of Africa. The narrative therefore fits in the explicit and implicit imperialist *doxa*.

Conrad's and Camus's texts did in fact follow in the imperial palimpsest. The colonial legacy they both inherited from their predecessors, and from which they willingly or unwillingly could not evade, is laid bare in their texts. In this chapter, we have endeavoured to show that *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* partake of the colonial discourses that valorize the Self over the other. The next chapter will emphasize the contradictions inherent in both novels and account for them. We shall essentially focus on the 'unsaids' of the two texts, 'unsaids' read as history averting strategies on the part of both Conrad and Camus.

Notes

(1)-Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*(1902). London: Penguin Books, 1994. All subsequent page references to the text are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

(2)-Camus, Albert. *The Outsider (1946)*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. London: Penguin Books, 1961. All subsequent further references to this English version will be cited parenthetically. Yet to show the power of the words in specific cases, some citations are from the original French version *L'Etranger*. The translations of the citations will be in the endnotes.

(3)-Camus maintains the colonial mythology that Fanon criticizes so thoroughly in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In his own words, Camus states:

> As far as Algeria is concerned, national independence is a formula driven by nothing other than passion. There has never yet been an Algerian nation. The Jews, Turks, Greeks, Italians, or Berbers would be as entitled to claim the leadership of this potential nation. As things stand, the Arabs alone do not comprise the whole of Algeria. The size and duration of the French settlement, in particular, are enough to create a problem that cannot be compared to anything else in history. The French of Algeria are also natives, in the strong sense of the

word. Moreover, a purely Arab Algeria could not achieve that economic independence without which political independence is nothing but an illusion. However inadequate the French effort has been, it is of such proportions that no other country would today agree to take over the responsibility. (Qtd in. Said 216-17)

(4)-Symptomatic reading is

a strategy through which the historical conditions that determine a particular ideological practice are analysed or brought to bear in such a way that the latter's spontaneous or natural appearance is dispelled. (Qtd in . Burden 61)

(5)-*"blue dungarees"* (60). Camus, Albert. **The Outsider**. Op.cit.

(6)-*"the Arabs vanished; they'd slipped like lizards under cover of the rock."* (62). Ibid.

(7)-The term appears in Edward Said's discussion of Orientalism. Here I am indebted to his discussion of *"Imaginative Geography"* in its Orientalist manifestations. See particularly **Orientalism**, pp.52-53

(8)-In this regard, for example, Achebe writes:

I am talking about a book which parades in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities in the past and continues to do so in many places today. I am talking about a story in which the very humanity of black people is called into question.

Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**", in **Hopes and Impediments Selected Essays**. New York: Anchor Book, 1990.

(9)-As opposed to the Thames River which was sung by such poets as Spenser, Dryden and Wordsworth, Langston Hughes wrote a poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", which celebrated the beauty of African rivers such as the Congo River:

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.   Langston HUGHES, **Weary Blues**

(10)-Edward Said writes in *Orientalism*:

> Orientalists and other specialists about the non-European world—anthropologists, historians, philologists—had that power, and, as I have tried to show elsewhere, it often went hand in glove with a consciously undertaken imperial enterprise. (Said 132)

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CHAPTER THREE

Imperial Duplicity and Political Unconscious in

Heart of Darkness and *L'Etranger*

"In the sky there is no East nor West. We make these distinctions in the mind, then believe them to be true."

The Buddha, *Lankavatara Sutra.*

"The notions of "East" and "West" do not cease to be 'objectively' real even though analysis shows them to be no more than a conventional, that is a 'h istorical-cultu ral', construction."

Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks.*

Orientalism is part of the European identity that defines the 'us' versus 'them'; that is, the West versus the East. The ideological creation of the East as radically different from and inferior to the West –which is constructed as being located at the centre and possessing all valued qualities– is an alibi to justify the Europeans' right to dominance.

Our aim in this chapter is to review/revise the Western creation/construction of colonial/imperial discourse and to pinpoint imbalances and inaccuracies in representing the other as well as in reading history. This means that we shall shift away from the focus on 'images' of the other to the telling of the other. The analysis of the narrative structure in particular will help us bring to light the over-determined and contradictory ideological codes which inform the othering process. Our shift then 'leaps' from the obvious opposition of Self-other to an investigation on the contradictions within the colonial discourse that involves an engagement with 'history' on the one hand and 'narrative form' on the other. Or, put in other terms, because it is from reality that the literary text draws its raw materials, it is inevitably related –as a text–to the historical conditions of its production. Yet, this very text establishes a 'distance' between itself and its raw materials. In other words, the text omits historical realities and transforms them into 'ideologies'; thus creating an ideological discourse. This ideological discourse represses historical truth but this very historical truth can be reached through the gaps, slips and silences which betray the repression. Thus we shall show that there arise textual dissonances/silences, i.e. the 'not-said' in Pierre Macherey's parlance, which constitute a challenge to the hegemonic discourse of the Western Establishment.

We shall unroot some of the complexities of imperial self-representation through a careful examination of Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** and Camus's **L'Etranger**. In other words,

we shall focus on imperial discourse's bad faith (1) as manifested/propounded through ambiguities and contradictions. From this perspective and from our standpoint, the analysis of the two texts is tantamount to a dismantling/deconstructing of some of their salient constituents (language, mode of narration, narrative form, discourse, point of view). Our theoretical base will be Pierre Macherey's *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*. This means that we shall bring to light the hidden historical facts both Conrad and Camus have evaded in a bid to avert their immediate political and historical circumstances. Conrad's and Camus's texts then are read as (political) allegories. We will focus on the absent history in the two literary texts, a history which is inaccessible to us except through the textual form. Furthermore, we shall emphasize the function of ideology in the two texts. The ideological traits in both texts generate, as we shall show, contradictory and clashing discourses within the apparently aesthetically 'unified' whole. To put it simply, the 'unsaid' of the two texts will be analysed/de-coded for new interpretative purposes.

1-Narrative Structure and Discourse: Ambiguities and Contradictions

Heart of Darkness is written in the form of a double narrative. The beginning and the end of the tale are presented by a frame narrator who introduces Marlow's tale and concludes it. Marlow's narrative is enclosed in the first narrator's story, in a *mise en abyme*: it is a device which conveys the process of telling a story within a story. More precisely, it is a double-layered narrative technique in which Marlow, moreover, avoids referring to proper names and places or even precise times (this will be assessed when discussing the allegorical dimension of the text). This technique *per se* gives an equivocal slant to the tale. Besides, it seems that *Heart of Darkness* is made of puzzles that need to be worked out by the reader. The chronology of the story is indirect since Marlow appears to tell his tale chronologically

while in fact he does not. The narrative proceeds not according to the sequence of events but according to the sequence of Marlow's thoughts and recollections. This is because Conrad uses the technique of "delayed decoding" (Watt 177), to use Ian Watt's terms (2). This device generates an overlapping from one event to another and therefore the logical ordering is disturbed as is the case when Marlow 'leaps' suddenly from the description of the helmsman's death to his encounter with Kurtz's Intended. Thus *"by withholding explanations of the events he is describing"* (Prescott 304), Marlow creates confusions for the reader. His telling maybe said to foreshadow Meursault's in *L'Etranger*.

L'Etranger is written in the form of a diary (undated). Meursault is the sole narrator of his own story. His narrative mostly records facts, but gives no meaning. It is then up to the reader to build up a consciousness for Meursault, since he is compelled to bluntly react to the text prior to establishing coherence on the basis of those facts. But the dynamism of the reader is countered by the problems posed by the narrative structure. There is a disruption in the chronology of events of *L'Etranger*. In the first part of the novel, Meursault basically registers facts. The mode of writing appears to be simple and naive. For example, Meursault states:

> I was quite done in. The porter took me to his room and I tidied myself up a bit. He gave me some more white coffee, and it seemed to do me good. When I went out the sun was up and the sky mottled red above the hills between Marengo and the sea. (Camus 22)(3)

In the second part of the novel, Meursault organizes, synthesizes, and makes his sentences more complex. To give but one example, in Meursault's words,

> But now I understood, it was so natural. How had I failed to recognize that nothing was more important than an execution; that, viewed from one angle, it's the only thing that can genuinely interest a man. (170)

Meursault the employee (in the first part) is not Meursault the prisoner (in the second part) in terms of narrative procedure. We may say that in the first part the narration is a journal and that in the second part it is a confession/a philosophical statement of faith (this will be shown later). Yet, there remains an ambiguity in the diary: when was it written? It is true that **L'Etranger**, as we said earlier, conforms, on the surface, to the form of a diary (jotting down, noting the futile and unimportant events). However, the diary is undated and this creates an enigma. If it is written after the verdict, why does Meursault start his diary with the death of his mother since that event does not change anything in his life? If it is written day after day, why does Meursault state after killing the Arab that the four shots were like a knocking at the door of mischance? In fact, the novel is full of such ambiguities in Meursault's narration. The scene of the Arabs' description suggests an ambiguity in the colonial encounter between the *pied-noir* community and the Algerian community. As Meursault puts it, *"I saw some Arabs lounging against the tobacconist's window. They were staring at us silently, in the special way these people have –as if we were blocks of stone or dead trees."* (79). Besides, Meursault's report of events is plotless, i.e. the events are not linked together in terms of cause and effect. By way of example, the narrator writes:

> Raymond seemed pleased and asked if I'd like to come out for a stroll with him. I got up from the bed and started brushing my hair. Then Raymond said that what he really wanted was for me to act as his witness. I told him I had no objection; only I didn't know what he expected me to say. (62)

Yet, without any clear reason, Meursault answers: *"So I agreed to be his witness."* (45). Meursault does not reveal the 'causes' of his words and deeds or even gestures; everything happens haphazardly, by sheer ill-luck. The non-linearity of events is symptomatic of a messy existence. This means that there is fusion between the writer's views about life (the absurd) and the rendition of these views in his work (narrative techniques).

Likewise, Marlow's tale is made ambiguous because he often provides his listeners with facts but without explanation. The narrative deals with actions without obvious rational motivation. Marlow's desire to visit the dark places, the Congo in Africa, is long-standing but is unexplained. His telling of his African journey is just like an observer who relates the events of his adventure. Indeed there are limits to what Marlow can tell us and it is up to the reader to make out 'meaning', if there is any. In the course of the narrative, Marlow moves backwards and forwards in time; thus introducing the past into the present of the narration. The sentences therefore succeed each other without a tight link, albeit always with a signal. There is no causality: it is only a juxtaposition of paragraphs. The result is that the non-linearity of events teases us and increases our anxieties about the overall meaning of the tale (is it a colonial adventure story? Or a modernized quest tale? Or is it a *roman à thèse*? Or a protest novel?). This purposefully contributes to creating equivocation throughout the narrative.

Conrad's mode of writing thus is an enigma to his critics. He uses a language that needs to be deciphered in order to understand the latent meaning of what he says. Edward Said shows this discrepancy between what is written and what is meant:

> [W]hat Conrad discovered was that the chasm between words saying and words meaning was widened not lessened, by a talent for words written. To have chosen to write, then, is to have chosen in a particular way neither to say directly nor to mean exactly in the way he had hoped to say or to mean. (Said 90)

Throughout our reading of the tale we find difficulty in reconciling fact and meaning. This escalates anxieties about a language pregnant with inconsistencies cancelling each other. For example, Marlow declares *"Mr Kurtz was no idol of mine"* (Conrad 84) (4). Yet shortly afterwards Marlow admits that he has to *"invoke him [Kurtz] –himself– his own exalted and incredible degradation."* (95). Another example of the contradictions of words appears when

Marlow says: *"Mr Kurtz has done more harm than good to the Company. [...] Nevertheless I think Mr Kurtz is a remarkable man."* (88-9). Sometimes, we find contradictions within the same sentence as when Marlow describes Kurtz's mistress as *"savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent"* (87). Such contradictory statements create difficulties in making out the meaning of the tale. Moreover, Marlow's self-contradictory statements allude to Conrad's ambivalent and even ambiguous presentation of imperialism. In **Heart of Darkness**, Conrad relates his traumatic experience in the Belgian Congo. The tale explores in fact the writer's reluctance to criticize imperial Britain. Being a foreigner, a Polish *émigré*, Conrad has to disguise that critique via the allegorical mode of writing. But was he free to do so given the overwhelming weight of general ideology?

In **Culture and Imperialism**, Edward Said pinpoints the paradox inherent in Conrad's tale. He criticizes Conrad's complicity with imperialism as he writes:

> Conrad was anti-imperialist and imperialist, progressive when it came to rendering fearlessly and pessimistically the self-confirming, self-deluding corruption of overseas domination, deeply reactionary when it came to conceding that Africa or South America could ever have had an independent history or culture, which the imperialists violently disturbed but by which they were ultimately defeated. (Said xx)

Yet Terry Eagleton has a different view from Edward Said's. In a recent interview with **Alif: A Journal of Comparative Poetics**, Eagleton relates Conrad's form and content to the politics and historical context of late-nineteenth Victorian imperialism. He says:

> Said's dialectical view of Conrad seems to me far superior to those who either praise him as a proto-post-colonial theorist, or dismiss him out of hand as a racist and imperialist. He was indeed in a sense both. **Heart of Darkness** announces: 'Look, Westerners are just as much savage brutes as the Africans'. Is this a pro- or anti-imperialist attitude? E.M.Forster's **A Passage to India** says: 'Look, India is such a vast, impossible sprawling chaos that the West's petty-minded schemes for subduing it are ridiculous.' Is this pro- or anti- imperialist?
>
> The true ambivalences of Conrad, however, seem to me to lie in questions of form rather than abstractable political content. **Heart of Darkness**, for example, is both

surrealist modernist 'textuality' and traditional sea tale. To those who simply extract political attitudes from literary works, I would say: Look for the politics of form. That's where everything happens, not what the author or work 'says'. Don't just stare through the signifier to the signified. Don't talk about sexual or ethnic stereotypes while cavalierly ignoring tone, pitch, pace, texture, syntax, address, rhythm, register, narrative structure. So there you are, you see: I'm just an old-fashioned product of the Cambridge English School. Just as Edward Said was an old-fashioned product of Lionel Trilling's Columbia. But as Trotsky wisely remarked, we Marxists have always lived in tradition. (Eagleton 254)

This paradox of Conrad –his inner contradictions, if you like– lies in the choice of formal ideology (or ideology of form). In other words, ideology –*"which implies as much an active affirmation of misconceptions about the nature of social reality, as a merely passive reproduction of them"* (Smith 184)–functions to efface contradictions, discrepancies and inconsistencies in the text. Yet the traces of the ideological manipulations appear in the form of ambiguities. Our task then is to deconstruct and highlight the ideological factors behind Con rad's use of such form in **Heart of Darkness**. Indeed, it is the ambivalence of form rather than content which is symptomatic of Conrad's ambivalent state of mind. The theoretical basis for our 'symptomatic reading' as we have stated earlier is Pierre Macherey's **Pour une theorie de la production littéraire**. It is a challenging theory akin to deconstruction but the former is related to ideology. This theory insists that the text contains a hidden meaning. The second thing is that the text reflects the reality from which it is derived. The text therefore has relation to reality. History, particularly ideology, leaves traces in the text by what is not said in it. Absences are necessary strategies for making the text coherent. Criticism then reads the 'unsaids' of the text as indices of ideological 'blockages'. Thus we aim to see how the writer, through narrative strategies, transforms the historical details into ideologies. Hence, in **Heart of Darkness** and **L'Etranger**we shall insist on the ways in which the two texts reflect, by not 'saying' it or by 'transforming' it, the ideology of colonialism.

L'Etranger belongs to what Roland Barthes called '*le degré zero de l'écriture*' or 'writing degree Zero'. Roland Barthes explains this mode of writing as follows: *"L'écriture au degré zéro est au fond une écriture indicative, ou si l'on veut amodale; il serait juste de dire que c'est une écriture de journaliste, [...], écriture neutre [...]; c'est plutôt une écriture innocente."* (Barthes 56). According to Barthes, the language of ***L'Etranger*** is an illustration of what he called *l'écriture blanche*, a mode of writing remote from cultural myths and social connotations: *"Cette parole transparente, inaugurée par **L'Etranger** de Camus, accomplit un style de l'absence qui est presque une absence idéale du style"* (Ibid.). Camus's text is written or supposed to be written without literary embellishment, without order or intention as it were. It is a diary and a diary is hardly literary writing. The story is narrated using a simple vocabulary; it is devoid of figurative language and thus breaks with the rituals of *'Belles Lettres'*. However, the apparent simplicity and immediacy of Meursault's language is not innocent from cultural prejudice. As Barthes confirms it, *"Malheureusement rien n'est plus infidèle qu'une écriture blanche."* (Ibid.). A good example of the deceptive innocence of the text is Raymond's complaint about his native mistress:

> 'Three hundred francs for rent, and six hundred for her grub, with a little present thrown in now and then, a pair of stockings or what not. E...] But that wasn't enough for my lady' E...]. He went on to explain that he'd discovered a lottery ticket in her bag, and when he asked where the money'd come from to buy it, she wouldn't tell him. E...] 'So I knew there was dirty work going on'. (37-8)

The simplicity of the style conceals a stereotyped representation of the native woman in colonial literature: the "Moorish" woman is economically dependent, lazy, reluctant to work, a prostitute, and furthermore, an unreliable and treacherous person. The stereotype of the *mauresque* woman as a prostitute in French literature can be traced back to André Gide's ***Les Nourritures Terrestres*** for instance. Meursault's restraint from making any comment, his lending a helping hand in the project of punishing the woman, and later his growing feeling

of fellowship with Raymond, all aggravate the novel's embedded 'natural' colonial prejudice. Thus the language of *L'Etranger* is suggestive/connotative. In this sense, it is like that of *Heart of Darkness*.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad uses a richly suggestive language. When Marlow uses words with a religious connotation such as *"pilgrims"* , *"god"* or *"pray"*, he is strongly ironical and implies that the European agents have deified/'divinised' their commercial interests. An excellent example of Conrad's connotative language is provided by the words Marlow uses in order to describe the company women in Brussels:

> Two women, one fat and the other slim, sat on straw-bottomed chairs, knitting black wool. The slim one got up and walked straight at me –still knitting with downcast eyes– and only just as I began to think of getting out of her way, as you would for a somnambulist, stood still, and looked up. Her dress was as plain as an umbrella-cover, and she turned round [...] and preceded me into a waiting-room. (14)

The critic Ross C. Murfin comments on this symbolic description of the two women knitting black wool as follows:

> [...] his insistence on their knitting serves to link them with the Three fates of Greek and Roman myth, who control human destiny...Furthermore, when Marlow describes two young men being 'piloted over' from civilization into the jungle by the elder knitter, the verb connects her with Charon, the pilot who ferries the dead across, the Styx into Hades. Finally, Marlow's last view of 'these two, guarding the door of Darkness' suggests the dual figure of sin in *Paradise Lost*: half woman and half serpent, she is 'the portress of hell gate'. (Murfin 95)

The symbolist features of Conrad's writing are hallmarks of an allegorical or even parabolical dimension of his text (we shall elaborate on this point in the last part of this chapter). Conrad's strategy behind such mode of writing is to step outside the imperial realities.

Yet ideological traces are felt in Conrad's tale. We may point to the (ideological) reading Marlow provides his audience with. After the description of the "gorgeous" (87) and "superb" (Ibid.) black woman, the narrator comments on her ornaments: "She must have

had the value of several elephant tusks upon her" (Ibid.). Through this remark, Marlow

suggests the native woman's dependence on Kurtz, the ivory trader, and asserts the latter's

domination, both as a man and as a European, over the native/female continent, i.e. Africa.

(Murfin 190). Thus, the words Marlow uses conceal meaning. He creates a smokescreen of

adjectives: words as 'enigmatic', 'exotic', 'inscrutable' and 'unspeakable' suggest a played

out trick upon the reader. According to F. R. Leavis, Conrad's "adjectival insistence" (Leavis

204) –which is one aspect of the deceptive language that Conrad uses– adds to the story's

mysteriousness and ambiguity.

The discourse of **Heart of Darkness** is then an ambivalent discourse. As defined by

Homi Bhabha, the term means

> a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which
> though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as
> such both against the rules and within them. The question of the representation of
> difference is therefore always also a problem of authority. (Bhabha 129).

In other words, Conrad's discourse is a double-voiced discourse; i.e. saying two things at the

same time, affirming and denying, remaining on the surface and simultaneously plunging

into the depths. The immanent contradictions within Conrad's (via Marlow's) tale lie in the

fact that he attempts to censor Europe's compulsion to dominate the world while letting the

British Empire off the hook. This conservative –if not reactionary– attitude reflects his

ideological taint. His criticism of Empire functions from within the Victorian hegemony. But

the ideology of Empire 'transposed' in **Heart of Darkness** contains gaps. These gaps lead to

inconsistencies which are manifested through clashing discourses. One of these discourses is

that of Kurtz whose report to the 'International Society for the Suppression of Savage

Customs' mythifies the African conquest as humanitarian: "*By the simple exercise of our will*

we can exert a power for good practically unbounded." (66). Hence, if the conquest of the

other is presented as *'a power for good'*, then *'the simple exercise of our will'* in the 'Suppression of Savage Customs' is morally legitimated. Yet—because ideology *per se* is not stable, when it is demystified, its contradictions become visible—*"the new gang –the gang of virtue"* (36) splits Kurtz's discourse and a gap appears between his (Kurtz's) advocacy of 'the new gang' and the end of his report *"Exterminate all the brutes!"* (72). This clash of discourses reveals the contradiction between the brutality of conquest and the mystifying 'power for good' of colonialist humanitarianism (or even humanism).

Marlow's response to Kurtz's report reveals incoherence. Marlow allies implicitly with Kurtz's *"unbounded power for eloquence"* (72), but he vacillates about the report's conclusion: on the one hand, it is "terrifying" (Ibid.); on the other hand, Marlow valorizes *"that valuable postscriptum"* (Ibid.). There is irony here. The aim behind this irony is detachment; Marlow wants to be detached from the fraudulent humanist ideology of colonialsim. Thus he feels uncomfortable, for the values he embraces are not the same as those of the colonialist enterprise. Marlow then *"embodies the uneasy position of the intellectual who is unable to support fully or challenge directly the interests of the dominant class".* (Qtd. in Murfin 172). Therefore Marlow resorts to ironic detachment to evade the gap between his seduction by Kurtz's eloquence and his attitude towards the Company's imperialist project. From a Marxist viewpoint, Marlow does not fully grasp the real conditions surrounding him. The text does not reflect reality. Rather we can trace the effects of that reality in what is not reflected, in what the text cannot say. Accordingly, all along the narrative, we perceive contradictions in Marlow's discourse. Ironically, his belief in the 'idea' behind imperialism is a retrospective attempt to mask his complicity with the imperial company. In fact, his statements display the inconsistencies he intends to suppress: between the reality and the idea of conquest, between an 'unselfish belief' and a self-serving

hypocrisy. Marlow attempts to resolve these inconsistencies by consistently constructing the savage sphere of Africa. To keep the coherence of the text, he appears thus as a reactionary rather than a progressive.

Similarly, in *L'Etranger*, Camus with a deft sleight of hand avoids to face lucidly the issue of colonialism. However, the text's political unconscious (5), to use Fredric Jameson's expression –or *"l'inconscient de l'oeuvre"* (Macherey 113) – displays the colonialist bias of the work which is generated from textual silences. The discourse of Camus, to adopt Edward Said's terminology, is a *"discourse of exteriority"* (Qtd. in Dine 92). In other words, Camus uses a discourse of exclusion; exclusion of colonized Algeria and Algerians from his narrative. Adopting strategies of evasion, Camus seems 'to resolve' the problem of the struggle between the colonized and the colonizer. Yet, colonial ideology runs throughout his narrative. Marxists traditionally consider that history is the external context to which the text refers. The French Marxist theorist Pierre Macherey offered an intrinsic approach to the study of history and the function of ideology in literary texts. For Macherey, the 'textual unconscious' means that history appears in a work of literature as an absence that can nevertheless be deciphered through critical analysis. Moreover, Macherey argues that literature works as a form of ideological discourse which represses historical truth but this very ideological discourse can be reached through the silences which betray the repression: *"Dans le tissu de l'oeuvre on rencontre toujours des trous, des contradictions, sans lesquels il n'existerait pas."* (Macherey 121).

Bearing the Machereyan reading in mind, we may venture to say that the murder of the Arab in *L'Etranger* is rooted in the deepening crisis of French Algeria. Camus's choice of an Algerian locale for his narrative that ostentatiously seems to be about universal moral

issues creates a gap in the ideology of his text; i.e. the view of **L'Etranger** as a projection of the 'myth of French Algeria'. In other words, drawing attention to Camus's presentation of the court of justice as being impartial between Algerians and Frenchmen, the writer failed to conceal the historical violence that lies behind the French presence in Algeria. In reality, the story of Meursault's condemnation is incredible because no French court in Algeria would have condemned a European to death for having shot an Arab who threateningly wielded a knife. Furthermore, Meursault's story is very much inside the French Algerian colonial scene. Therefore the ideology of silencing the Algerians and neglecting their realities is projected in the form of inconsistencies in the text. In this regard Edward Said shows that Camus's neglect of the Algerians is a rearguard action: *"Camus's writing is informed by an extraordinarily belated, in some ways incapacitated colonial sensibility, which enacts an imperial gesture within and by means of a form, the realistic novel, well past its greatest achievements in Europe."* (Said 181).

Through strategies of deviation, Camus conceals the colonial context. He finds grist to his mill in the 'climate of the absurd' (this, we shall explain later). The death of the 'Arab' informs the reader, though silently, about the hidden truth of Meursault's crime. This hidden truth is the social antagonism of the colonial relation. When Meursault shoots the 'Arab', he says: *"But I fired four shots more into the inert body, in which they left no visible trace."* (64). Here Meursault's hidden racism and hatred of the other seem to come to the surface. Thus, the deeply torn psyche of Meursault is the outcome of the socio-historical conflict of the *pieds-noirs* with the indigenous inhabitants. This conflict appears, in the text's political unconscious, as the outcome of the claim that the colonial bias of the novel can be detected through silences and slippages. These silences and slippages are evident in the way the text frames the contradictions between Meursault's historical guilt in colonial Algeria and his

existential innocence. This contradiction is another aspect of the deceptive nature of Camus's style. Yet through the manipulation of language, Camus legitimizes Meursault's discourse of the absurd and thus exonerates him from his guilt through de-historicizing the narrative and the protagonist *per se*.

Indeed **L'Etranger** is loaded with an equivocation on the theme of guilt and innocence through the absurdities of the prosecutor's arguments during Meursault's trial. The aim is not only to divert the reader's attention from the narrator's responsibility in the colonial system but also to conceal the ideological discourse contained in the language Meursault uses. Meursault is condemned to death not because he has killed a man but ironically because of his insensitivity towards his mother's death; i.e. for betraying the *colon* society's ethos. In Meursault's words, *"Inquiries had been conducted at Marengo and the police informed that I'd shown 'great callousness' at my mother's funeral."* (68). This strategy on Camus's part operates a displacement in terms of the reader's attention: Meursault's actual murder of a native is relegated to the background and the theme of the individual's place in society becomes the centre of the reader's preoccupations. When Meusault is asked about the motives of his murder he justifies it thus: *"I tried to explain that it was because of the sun, but I spoke too quickly [...] I was only too conscious that it sounded nonsensical, and, in fact, I heard people tittering."* (103). Attributing the guilt of killing the 'Arab' to the sun obviously leads Meursault's judges to regard him as abnormal, as someone who would/could destabilize the existing law and order and who must therefore be eliminated as soon as possible. Camus seems thus to insinuate to his readers that Meursault is a scapegoat who is condemned for the wrong motives. The text therefore operates an inversion and the reader is led to sympathize with the narrator –become the sacrificial lamb, so to speak– whom no other voice in the text is technically able to contradict or to criticize.

2- The Enigmatic Narrator-Hero, Monologism, and Allegory

Both *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* resort to an unusual narrative technique; unreliable narration. Unreliable narration is a strategy resulting in deliberate confusion of reality. It is based on structural ambiguities. Thus we, as readers, are kept in a state of uncertainty because reality is in fact not what it appears to be: *"This is deliberate confusion of the reader about fundamental truths"* (Booth 285). For the purpose of mystification, Conrad and Camus use Marlow and Meursault, as ambiguous heroes or/and anti-heroes, to narrate and mirror and reflect on their own lives. But it must be pointed out that the two writers' efforts to conceal their ideologies, in *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger*, happen through the mediation of spoken words, through orality, through the protocol of hearer and listener. In "Conrad: the Presentation of Narrative", Edward Said insists that Joseph Conrad's narratives *"originate in the hearing and telling presence of people"* (Said, *the World, the Text and the Critic* 95). This discursive strategy explains to some extent the ambivalence of Marlow's narrative and the difficulty of telling his story in *Heart of Darkness*. Therefore, the narrative methods oblige us to re-examine the tale and to take an active part in constructing the text's meanings. Through *"swapped yarns"* (Ibid., 94) Conrad's narrative is transmitted orally. Therefore, it is considered as a tale. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth emphasizes the importance of seeing a narrative as consisting of *"a teller and a tale"* (Booth 45) because the angle of vision from which the narrator tells his tale is that of illusion; an illusion achieved primarily through *"the rhetoric of dissimulation"* (Ibid.).

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad chooses to tell the story indirectly. That is to say, the narrative is told through a first-person narrator, Marlow, whose narrative is in turn relayed by another narrator who presumably has not even been to Africa. Thus the tale does not

pretend to offer the reader a clear, unbiased view of the facts of the journey. The purpose

behind this strategy is that Conrad wants to doubly insulate himself behind two narrators in

order to mislead his –British, probably lower middle-class jingoist– reader about his real

attitude towards European imperialism. Indeed, Conrad refuses to take responsibility in

colonial issues. Therefore, he entrusts the telling to a narrator who is to some degree

unreliable. An unreliable narrator is one who does not speak or act in accordance with the

norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms). He is a narrator who resorts

a great deal to irony because he tends to be deceptive. He is a (mistaken) narrator who

believes to possess qualities which the author denies him (Booth 290). Marlow in **Heart of**

Darkness is an observer and simultaneously a narrator who relays his tale to us primarily as a

mise-en-scène because he allows himself to show, to tell, to comment, and to respond to his

listeners. The ambiguity of the tale lies first of all in the narrator-hero himself: *"Marlow, a*

sea-captain and a man of vast experience of the exotic, is admittedly a persona for Conrad

himself; but there are times, when he is more than a persona; a character in his own right

involved in the action and changed by it." (Allen 305). Marlow is enigmatic. We know little

about his physicality except that *"he had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight*

back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped the palms of hand outwards, resembled

an idol" (06); in other words, he is not so much a person as a figuration. He sits on the deck

motionless, mysterious—*"in the pose of a meditating Buddha"* (111) which increases his

enigmatic stature. This means that all his utterances are subject to many interpretations.

Moreover, Marlow's invisibility incapacitates him from the role of a nonsense explorer as

well as that of moral enlightener. Marlow is a voice rather than a physical entity; when he

speaks *"his voice remains steady as his listeners' sight of him fades"* (Said, **The World** 94).

Conrad frequently refers to that sort of 'fogginess' of characters and narrators to preserve

the silence of the 'impenetrable darkness', the atmosphere of obscurity, of the illusory, shadowy and dark mood which the tale creates.

Marlow's narrative is punctuated by absences and presences. He is a speaker who takes over the narrative with his voice, and his voice overrides the fact that he is absent, unseen, to his listeners as he speaks. Edward Said accounts for this strategy as follows: *"Conrad's goal is to make us see, or otherwise transcend the absence of everything but words, so that we may pass into a realm of vision beyond the words […] It is a world of such uncomplicated coincidence between intention, word, and deed"* (Ibid., 95). The uneasiness inspired by Marlow's narrative creates a sort of *malaise*. Meaning becomes obscure and the difficulty to comprehend the tale irritates the reader. Earlier in the tale, the anonymous narrator who introduces the character of Marlow provides the reader with some advice; a reading strategy for Marlow's tale because it is a complex narrative. He states:

> The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical […], and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by […] spectral illumination of moonshine. (08)

The frame narrator's judgment of Marlow's narrative is an attempt to divert the reader's attention about the true meaning of the story. He seems to say that below the surface we may find the 'truth' contained in the 'kernel' of the tale. It is through the decoded words that the reader is enabled to understand the message of Marlow's utterances. In other words, the reader is inclined to 'decipher', under terms of complexity and obscurity, the latent meanings of passages and the unspoken facts. Hence, behind Marlow's words, there is the presence of unstated significance, of facts that cannot be directly articulated. Because speech is used to conceal as much as to reveal, an awareness of the

doubtfulness/equivocation embedded in the language alerts us to the hidden intentions of Marlow's speeches. Thus the covert significance is buried within Marlow's apparently earnest efforts to arrive at the truth. Marlow's language is not innocent. It is akin to Meursault's deceptive language in *L'Etranger*.

In *L'Etranger* the story is not told from an omniscient narrator's point of view—a god-like mind unattached to the human condition: It is conveyed through someone observing events and commenting on them. Yet Meursault is a fallible narrator because his vision, perception and evaluation of the matters he narrates do not coincide fully with the implicit opinions manifested by the author. In fact, he is an enigmatic narrator-hero. Meursault, the *pied-noir*, is an anti-hero lacking heroic qualities. He is a person who hardly has a name and to whom what happens is unimportant. He seems to be involved in casual and sometimes anonymous happenings. Meursault is no more than a voice because we know nothing about his physicality. Indeed he incarnates an attitude of mind (and thus he is the embodiment of Camus's ideas). There is an ambiguity about Meursault: he is unknown, without history, a solitary figure detached from his life and from others. He is a-historical man, of total neutrality, who refuses to choose, and who wants to remain true to himself. Yet, paradoxically (and this is where his tragedy lies), Meursault is steered by the current of events which lead him to be an active accomplice of Raymond Sintès against the Moorish woman; an affair which ends with Meursault's murder of an Arab, his trial, condemnation, and ultimately death.

What is peculiar about Meursault is that he likes clarity and hates equivocation. Nonetheless, to society he himself appears an equivocal man. As a result, he always feels ill-at-ease and becomes a man who <u>undergoes</u> (a) difficulty in his life. His state of *malaise* leads

him to find refuge in silence. Therefore, he is reticent and passive. In a way, we may think of him as the personification of the writer's inability to openly express himself about the French-colonial problematic. There is a failure of articulation in Meursault's narrative; mutedness forced by ideological 'blockage' because Camus through Meursault eliminates 'unspeakable' truths that cannot be –normally– ousted from the narrative. Rather, they lurk in its inconsistencies and interstices. Camus, out of political avoidance of controversy, underplays racism by making his character's fate have a universal appeal. However, Meursault's predicament is intensified by his racial as well as national origins. His isolation from the Arab-Algerian society cannot only be seen in terms of his failure to abide by societal prescriptions, but also because of the already entrenched prejudices and misconceptions on both sides. Meursault thus incarnates signs of the history which Camus seeks to conceal by dissimulating it to his readers. Yet, *"there has not yet been a single Frenchman indicted before a French court of justice for the murder of an Algerian"* (Fanon 200). This statement comes from the essay "Concerning Violence" in Frantz Fanon's classic work, **The Wretched of the Earth**. Hence, Meursault kills the Algerian man because he is frustrated, alone and afraid. His fear has something to do with his being a *pied-noir* in colonial Algeria (We shall take up this idea later).

Meursault is a narrator and an observer who rarely discusses his written tasks. He seems unaware that he is speaking, thinking or writing a literary work. He is not a self-conscious narrator who is aware of himself as narrator. Indeed, we don't know what the goal of the writer is. This creates a great puzzlement in the reader. We just follow the protagonist; when Meursault stumbles, we stumble with him. In such work, we are somehow unable to discover the writer's intentions. The intellectual point of view of the work is deliberately confusing. We as readers feel embarrassed, confused because the

narrator is himself confused. As a result, we feel that we are in a labyrinth and that we are prevented from a full perception of the narrator-hero. Equivocation stems from the unreliability of the narrator's story; there is no straightforwardness and the meaning tends to escape us. We are guided by what Meursault sees and says without knowing or being aware that we are being 'tricked'. Meursault the narrator is not identified or refuses to be identified; he refuses to respond to and answer the questions of others. There is complicity between Meursault the 'hero' and Meursault the narrator. But he is a powerful narrator because no other voice inside the text is technically able to contradict or criticize him. We are seeing thus everything through Meursaults' eyes and hearing everything through his words. This monologism, as a narrative strategy, forces the reader to accept—willy milly—Camus's world view, that of the absurd (this, is taken up in the last part).

Likewise, Marlow in **Heart of Darkness** is central because his version cannot be contradicted by any other voice, since he 'alone' has gone through the experience. Even the frame-narrator, who not only reports but also responds to Marlow's account of his voyage, at first distrusts and resents Marlow: *"we were fated to hear one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences"* (10); but ultimately he endorses implicitly Marlow's view in seeing the Thames leading *"into the heart of an immense darkness"* (111).This sort of monologue is Conrad's method of an authoritative discourse. Marlow tries all along the tale to impose his own vision on the reader. Yet, his language is dislocated as he oscillates/vacillates between pro- and anti-imperialism. In the tale, Marlow's narrative certainly disturbs the conventional association of Europe and Africa with light and darkness, civilization and savagery, revealing the 'blackness' of Europe's imperial activities. In other words, throughout his narrative, Marlow unsettles the reader's conception of Empire and of *la mission civilisatrice*.

The strictures against colonial cruelty and rapacity appear primarily in the first segment of Marlow's narrative—the part ending with the Eldorado Exploring Expedition's arrival at the central station. Marlow sees that imperialism hides behind the pretence of *"weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways"* (18), as his aunt says. From the outset, he knows that the company he is going to work for is *"run for profit"* (Ibid.). According to Marlow, the Eldorado Exploring Expedition has as a sole purpose *"to tear treasure out of the bowels of the land... with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe"* (44). Therefore, he rejects the role of *"emissary of light"* (18) that is stamped on him by his aunt. Ironically, Marlow calls the European agents in Africa *"faithless"* and *"bewitched"* pilgrims; with long staves in their hands they *"[stroll] aimlessly about in the sunshine"* (33). About ivory, Marlow comments, *"you would think they were praying to it"* (Ibid.). He realizes thus that the ideals of the agents of the Company in Africa are pseudo-ideals or corrupted ideals. In other words, the European "pilgrims" are concerned with the profits of the colonial endeavour—and divorced from any altruistic feeling. Hence, Marlow's assumptions about Western civilization are shaken; as he states:

> The conquest of the Earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. (10)

This seemingly contradictory statement admits the unreliability of Marlow's narration. If 'the conquest of the Earth...is not a pretty thing', then can it really be redeemed? And does Marlow accept colonialism? Or does he reject it? Or does he reject continental colonialism but accept British colonialism because of its "devotion to efficiency" and "unselfish belief in the idea"? The "idea" is the idealistic goal of improving the non-Western world through the dissemination of Western culture, education, and religion. Thus, Marlow's treatment of the

colonial endeavour as he experiences it in Africa leads us to conclude that he is highly critical

of it. Yet, despite Marlow's withering critique of colonialism, it remains unclear whether

colonialism in general is under attack or only continental colonialism particularly Belgian

colonialism. In other words, by insisting that colonialism can be redeemed, Marlow leaves

open the possibility that *"he exempts the British from his unrelenting indictment"* (Peters

56). Therefore, Marlow's discourse shows an apparent incongruity between *"the rhetoric*

and the reality of colonialism" (Smith 187); i.e. the dissonance between truth and falsity. This

is what Edward Said confirms in **Culture and Imperialism**:

> By accentuating the discrepancy between the official 'idea' of empire and the
> remarkably disorienting actuality of Africa, Marlow unsettles the reader's sense not
> only of the very idea of empire, but of something more basic, reality itself. For if
> Conrad can show that all human activity depends on controlling a radically unstable
> reality to which words approximate only by will or convention, the same is true of a
> world being made and unmade more or less all the time. (Said 29)

The discrepancy between the idealism of imperialism and its realities draws the

reader's attention to the clash between how the ideas and values of imperialism are

simultaneously constructed and deconstructed through disruptions and dislocations in the

narrator's language. The most striking example of Marlow's contradictory language lies in his

view of Kurtz. Marlow's attitude towards Kurtz is self-contradictory; he combines admiration

with condemnation. The character of Kurtz is very crucial in the tale because he represents

the ambivalence of imperialism. At first, Kurtz is portrayed as a man on a philanthropic

mission; he is not like the other "pilgrims" that Marlow encounters for he is sent there to

redeem the imperialist motives of the country by civilizing the natives. Kurtz is a Company

man of the new *"gang of virtue"* (36) who comes to Africa, as Marlow says, *"equipped with*

moral ideas of some sort" (44). However, Kurtz is overcome by the land of darkness and

returns to the very savage beginnings that Marlow sees in the natives: *"He [Kurtz] had taken*

a high seat amongst the devils of the land" (73). He becomes worse than the 'pilgrims', not because of his true colonial nature but because his atavistic human savagery is awakened by the core savagery of Africa (this is in line with the sun's responsibility in turning Meursault into a murderer). Ultimately, Marlow calls Kurtz a "hollow man" because the latter has truly fallen from a status of a deity to that of a devil.

> Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. Whether he knew of his deficiency himself I cannot say. I think the knowledge came to him at last—only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out easily, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude—and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed within him because he was hollow to the core. (83)

Yet, Marlow adjusts his dark pessimism and alleviates his previous remarks about Kurtz through new judgments. About Kurtz's final cry *"The horror! The horror!"* (100) he comments:

> *Better his cry—much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond when a long time after I heard once more, not his own voice, but the echo of his magnificent eloquence thrown at me from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of a crystal.*(101-2) (emphasis added)

In fact, this traumatic experience with Kurtz creates a 'blockage' in Marlow: he wants to tell about what he knows and yet this cannot be told. As a result, the narrative 'jams' and so does the meaning. Again, to Kurtz's last words, *"The horror! The horror!",* Marlow gives a mitigated interpretation: *"It seemed to throw a kind of light on everything about me –into my thoughts. It was somber enough, too—and pitiful—not extraordinary in any way—not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light."* (11). Marlow's language thus is replete with cancellations. It is a 'double-language'. The escalating contradictions in the tale are restrained by Marlow from time to time; he knows what to

hold back. These contradictions create an ambiguity in meaning. Marlow's <u>recitations</u> therefore are not straightforward. He describes Kurtz's eloquence as enlightening and simultaneously fraudulent. However, his attitude towards colonialism remains equivocal; he views colonialism as an *"illusion"* (08) but a *"great and saving"* (Ibid.) illusion all the same. This suggests that either Conrad does not intend to 'discrown'/disown the idea of African darkness or that he cannot do so as long as he uses the available terms of reference, i.e. imperial discourse. The explicit criticism of colonial practices in Africa as sordid is relegated to a secondary position and Marlow's narrative gradually abandons the overt anti-colonial rhetoric. Instead, it is captured by the myth of the primordial land, Africa, which is described as tenebrous and as the 'white man's grave'. This becomes the text's primary focus. Therefore, it is Conrad's embroidery on the motif of Africa as a dark and backward abysm that places **Heart of Darkness** within the ideological bounds of Western anthropological discourse despite its forceful opening denunciation of colonial activity. Thus, *"in seeking to readjust Europe's flattering colonial image of itself, Marlow's narrative fails to effect a corresponding readjustment in Europe's distorting image of Africa—the bizarre other against which it self-righteously defined itself."* (Shetty 464).

In fact, the symbolic –and simplistic – connection between Kurtz's dark heart and the heart of a Dark Continent is debatable. In Africa, Kurtz falls prey to his own immoderate lusts and vices as they were inchoate in him even before he went to Africa. However, Conrad attributes Kurtz's degeneracy to the African jungle. The tale is about Africa and its othering. Conrad assumes a cause-to-effect relationship between what Kurtz has become and the savage rites he is supposed to have embraced. Yet, Marlow's narrative strategies emphasize the strangeness of the experiences he is describing and sometimes the difficulty of describing the indescribable. 'Unspeakable', 'inscrutable' are adjectives used by Marlow to

stress the overwhelming task of communicating. Therefore Marlow, as the frame narrator often explains, falls silent. Marlow states:

> It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream—making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that comingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams. (39)

Then he says after being silent for a while: *"No, it is impossible, it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence —that which makes its truth, its meaning—[...] we live as we dream—alone."* (Ibid.). Marlow indeed provides no clue for the reader to make out meaning: *"the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative that seems to shape itself without human lips"* (Ibid.) as the frame narrator says. Marlow's narrative strategy enmeshes the reader in *"many puzzles and enigmas that are woven through the text"* (Prescott 309). That's where Marlow makes a philosophical generalization that supposedly encompasses the whole human race (this is in line with Meursault's generalizations).

Likewise, Camus does not want to disclose the colonial conflict. The conflict between Meursault and the natives makes the novel troubling if not troublesome. Meursault is a stranger to the Algerian territory in the colonial universe. He wants to usurp it. In the novel, there is an implicit struggle for (re)gaining/ (re)conquering territory between the conqueror and the conquered. In the scene before the murder, Meursault seeks to reconquer: *"Je pensais à la source fraîche derrière le rocher. J'avais envie de retrouver le murmure de son eau, envie de fuir le soleil, [...] envie enfin de retrouver l'ombre et son repos."* (Camus, **L'Etranger** 92) (6). Accordingly, we may interpret Meursault's murder of the 'Arab' as an attempt to occupy the territory, to eliminate the other, to clear him from the geographical space. This is what Isabelle Ansel-Lambert emphasizes: *"Meursault a tué l'Arabe parce que*

celui-ci lui avait volé son ombre et son identité." (Ansel-Lambert 103). In colonial literature, the shadow of colonized man 'splits' the presence of the colonizer; his presence distorts the latter's outline. This process is visible in that ominous stare between native and settler which structures their relation. As Fanon writes:

> When their glances meet he [the settler] ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, 'they want to take our place'. It is true for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place. (Fanon 35)

In **L'Etranger**, a mutual watch 'binds' the antagonists. As Meursault says: *"We could only watch each other, never lowering our eyes"* (61). In the colonial encounter, *"le regard hostile, [...] La peur de l'immobilité de l'autre"* (Chaulet-Achour 52) stalks the colonial scene. Consequently, the latent conflict between *pieds-noirs* and Algerians constitute the essential threat for the *pieds-noirs* community. **L'Etranger**'s Meursault belongs to this community. His feelings toward the Algerians oscillate between hatred and fear. Christiane Achour summarizes the fear of Meursault/Camus and the other *conquérants inquiéts* as follows:

> Consciente de sa faiblesse numérique par rapport à la masse des colonisés, mais jalousement attachée à son statut privilégié, la minorité française en Algérie s'est sentie constamment menacée et [...] submergée par le nombre. Elle a vécu l'angoisse de l'assiégé et a cherché son salut dans la défense et le maintien du *status- quo*. (Chaulet-Achour 54)

Yet Camus in **L'Etranger** occults the colonial conflict by ostensibly placing his narrative fiction within the context of an allegory about alienation. This allegory entraps the reader in the indecidability of the writer as ethical posturing. Allegory means *"speaking otherwise"* (Cuddon 20); i.e. it is a symbolic mode in which characters and actions are symbolic of abstract ideas. In this regard, Georg Lukàcs defines allegory as an *"aesthetic genre which lends itself par excellence to a description of man's alienation from objective reality."* (Lukàcs 40). Lukàcs means that allegory is an art intent on expressing *"absolute transcendence"* (Ibid., 42); i.e. a negation of any meaning immanent in the world of man. In

other words, in allegory we replace "the concrete typicality with abstract particularity" (Ibid.). This means that the allegorical dimension deprives the literary text of its historicity. This is exactly what we perceive in both *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger*.

To escape the grip of the colonial encounter, Camus sets his text in a world without moral values. In other words, Camus gives a universal dimension to *L'Etranger* about the human condition. In the novel, Meursault is without personal history, without pre-existent reality beyond his own self. In *Heart of Darkness* Conrad too seemingly focuses on Marlow's alienation and on his universalizing tendencies which lead him to overlook historical determinants. Reality then is for Marlow ostensibly governed by universal, primal forces. In both texts, Meursault and Kurtz are victims (one is a victim of the sun; the other is a victim of the jungle). In Conrad's tale, there is a lack of specificity about the continent and the country which are both unmentioned. Marlow avoids referring to proper names and places or even precise times. The timelessness of the tale entails a de-historicizing gesture. The aim is to de-specify clear historical references. It is this lack of specificity which on one level lends the tale to symbolic or allegorical readings; thus contributing to a flight from the disturbing here-and-now. Thus we shall read, in what follows, both *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etrange*r as allegories of human alienation and of the absurd. It must be pointed out here that our discussion of the absurd is confined to its simple, literary form and to its apparent aspects in both Conrad's and Camus's texts.

Existentialist ideas as well as the idea of the absurd are clearly present in both *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger*. The basic premise forged by Sartre, that existence precedes essence, means that we know first of all that we exist; we do not begin with a notion of what human beings are. The absurd is an extended form of existentialist thought. It arises out of

the fact that human beings are possessed of reason, a sense of justice, and a longing for love and happiness. But the human being faces the bitter reality that the world does not satisfy his yearnings. This lack of consonance between human desire and the indifferent world produces *angst* or anguish. Because of this anguish, the human being isolates himself from his fellows and from the world. This isolation is the outward sign of his alienation (this is applicable to Marlow's case). Furthermore, when the human being realizes that death is inevitable and that his actions are consequently meaningless, he falls prey to the feeling of the absurd (Baker 254). Furthermore, as he tries to resolve these universal contradictions, he is reduced to an essential solitude in an absurd world. But paradoxically, his solitude gives him the freedom to choose his way without any dependency or justification (this is applicable to Meursault's case).

In **Heart of Darkness**, Conrad shows the collapse of the myth of the <u>White Man's Burden,</u> the corruption of an ideal, and the failure of the Empire to sustain its promise. In other words, it is the fallacy of Empire that Conrad seeks to convey through Marlow:

> [I]t occurred to me that my speech or my silence, indeed any action of mine, would be a mere futility. What did it matter who was manager? One gets sometimes such a flash of insight. The essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond my reach, and beyond my power of meddling. (55)

This sense of futility accompanies Marlow in his dream-like experience in his journey into the unknown of Africa. As a result of his experience in the African wilderness, Marlow's confidence in Western civilization and any transcendental truths disappear, so much so that he concludes: *"Droll thing life is –that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The best you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself that comes too late –a crop of unextinguishable regrets."* (99). In Africa Marlow witnesses the degeneration of Western values, and he discovers that nothing lies beneath. He realizes that the truth of

Western civilization hides an empty universe and that human existence has no ultimate meaning. This leads Marlow to attribute inscrutability to the African landscape as well.

Marlow's comment that *"every day the coast looked the same, as though we had not moved"* (19) implies that his perception of things is incongruent with their essence. Thus, the coast represents the "density" of the world which Camus was to describe later as the congenial characteristic of the absurd. The landscape is presented as impenetrable, unfathomable; as Marlow despairingly notes, *"the malign somberness of the coast, seemed to keep me away from the truth of things."* (Ibid.). This results in Marlow's being incapable of separating truth from the dream-like events. He says: *"Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me that I am trying to tell you a dream –making a vain attempt [...] It is impossible. We live, as we dream –alone."* (39). Marlow's failure to communicate is indicative of a state of *malaise* and anxiety. This is the outcome of his existential *angst*. Marlow's crisis lies in his utter incomprehension before the jungle. This state is closely akin to what Camus has elaborated in **The Myth of Sisyphus**. For Camus, *"we live with the gap between what we know and what we imagine that we know so long as the mind keeps silent in the motionless world of its hopes."* (Camus, **The Myth** 24). In other words, the absurd begins at that moment when the rational word attempts to grasp and to contain a world which is suddenly discovered to be but 'a vast irrational' world: *"all true knowledge is impossible. Solely appearances can be enumerated."* (Ibid., 18). According to Camus, the absurd begins when the world is impervious to human understanding. In other words, the world becomes strange and primitive when it escapes the illusory meaning that man strives to give it. This is the intellectual malady called 'the absurd'; i.e. when something infra-human is discovered to lie at the heart of all reality. Accordingly, Marlow's plight is his inability to represent a landscape that defeats all known ways of representation. When

Marlow says: *"The earth seemed unearthly"* (51), the expression alludes to an acute verbal impasse that increases Marlow's anxiety. Marlow discovers the extent to which the world is *"so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness"* (79-80). Here he discovers the absurd because the world has escaped language. The world becomes meaningless because it is impenetrable to human thought. Marlow says: *"You looked on amazed, and begun to suspect yourself of being deaf –then the night came suddenly, and struck you blind as well."* (56). The forest is represented by its attribute –silence: *"the high stillness of primeval forest was before my eyes."* (38). This representation of the landscape as mute is Marlow's recognition of an absurd world and his franctic resistance to such a recognition. The silence of the jungle embodies Marlow's deprivation of meaning and truth. As Camus puts it, *"the absurd is born in this confrontation between the human urge toward unity and reason and the unreasonable silence of the world."* (Camus, **The Myth** 32). In other words, the failure of representation leaves the human mind confronted with an unintelligible universe. Thus Conrad describes the African landscape as mute, refusing to yield its *"unspeakable secrets"* (89). The landscape of the absurd in **Heart of Darkness** is an offshoot of the colonial experience. Or, put in other terms, the implications of the absurd are the result of the projection of the irrational onto Africa and the Africans. This means that there is an 'underground' relation between the colonial encounter and the experience of the absurd. The thoughtless depiction of the Africans in **Heart of Darkness** as primitive, irrational, and exiled from history (European history, that is), points in fact to the idea of the irrationality and the colonial ideology, and by extension, to the irrationality of Western philosophical constructions.

In **L'Etranger**, Camus places his narrative in the framework of an existentialist allegory of alienation, despair and death. **L'Etranger** illustrates Camus's attempt to give an

objective presentation of an ordinary clerk's life with a loss of connection and relationship with others and reality. As Raymond Williams puts it:

> The loss of connection and relationship in Meursault, combined with his intense awareness of himself in all other respects, is a genuinely tragic situation of a new kind. That it leads to murder is convincing. The loss of connection with others, which is also a loss of connection with reality, is in that sense fatal. Meursault kills feeling that he is being attacked, but he has lost connection, at this point, not only with what the other is actually doing, but with what he himself is doing. (Williams 176)

The tragedy is thus rooted in two facets of schizophrenia: the colonial, as we have shown earlier in this chapter; and the existential one. The existential is connected with Meursault's absurd predicament which he experiences as a state of mind (a philosophical view). The absurd, for Meursault, takes away any religious explanation to our world. Once we come to realize that there is no outside rationale for our lives besides the lived one, once we accept that the only end is death and that there is nothing after death, then life becomes totally meaningless. If life is meaningless, there is no reason to make any effort whatsoever to fight or to struggle: everything ends in annihilation. Thus Meursault's life is aimless and unmotivated. As he himself states:

> Je ne voyais pas de raisons pour changer ma vie; En y réfléchissant bien, je n'étais pas malheureux. Quand j'étais étudiant, j'avais beaucoup d'ambitions de ce genre. Mais quand j'ai dû abandonner mes études, j'ai très vite compris que tout cela était sans importance réelle. (Camus, *L'Etranger* 69) (7)

In *L'Etranger* Camus seems to be more concerned, than Conrad is in *Heart of Darkness*, with the moral paradoxes stemming from the sense of existence as absurd and the inevitability of death. Meursault says: *"I was sure of myself, sure about everything, [...] sure of my present life and of the death that was coming [...] Nothing, nothing had the least importance."* (118). Moreover, Meursault appears to embody a death-directed consciousness as he affirms: *"I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe."* (120). Meursault is an outsider, a stranger to ordinary human society because he is almost unnaturally honest with

himself and his feelings, never disguising what he feels or pretending to have emotions he does not have. This blunt honesty makes him sensitive to the physical sensations which he values: swimming, sex, eating. Meursault's honesty enables him at the end to reject the false consolations of the priest, and to state his predicament without fear: death is inevitable and he has chosen it. At the same time, he is aware that death has chosen millions of others like him. Furthermore, Meursault has learnt that he cannot sit back and passively exist; he must give sense to the senseless. And this new departure begins, paradoxically enough with his acknowledgement and acceptance of death. And this recognition 'rationalizes', in retrospect, his illogical and gratuitous actions. It is worth quoting what he says in this regard:

> What difference could they make to the death of others, or a mother's love, or his God; or the way one decides to live, the fate one thinks one chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to 'choose' not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people [...] All alike would be condemned to die one day. (118-9)

For Meursault thus the absurd is essentially the result of his awareness of his own mortality, of what Camus calls, in **The Myth of Sisyphus**, the *"bloodstained mathematics which dominate the human lot."* (Camus, **The Myth** 45). Meursault is Every man who, before his discovery of the absurd, had projects, hopes, ambitions, the belief that he was free to order his life, but who has realized that *"all that is disproved in one breath-taking sweep by the absurdity of a possible death."* (Baker 68).

Ostensibly thus Camus uses the character of Meursault to illustrate a particular philosophy. : *"c'est un roman à thèse"* (Ansel-Lambert 31). This philosophy is the philosophy of the absurd. Meursault is its embodiment. According to François Chavanes, Meursault is not credible as a character:

> Meursault n'est donc pas un personnage réel. Camus l'a créé pour incarner ou symboliser l'homme qui est conscient de l'absurdité de sa vie, tel qu'il est décrit dans **Le Mythe de Sisyphe**. C'est-à-dire un homme qui a lucidement assumé sa destinée

mortelle, et qui juge que rien n'a d'importance et que tout est indifférent. (Chavanes 125).

Thus Meursault lives the absurd as a process that has developed in his being. The absurd for him becomes the concrete attitude towards the universe in which he recognizes that there is no scope for transcendence. Indeed, in a way, this is what links Meursault with Marlow in **Heart of Darkness**. More precisely, the alienating power of the sun becomes an antagonist to Meursault, symbolizing not only discomfort but alienation: *"I could feel my temples swelling under the impact of the light...It struck me that all I had to do was to turn, walk away"* (62-3). In the scene of the murder, Meursault wants to flee from his encounter with the sun because it is alienating, uncomfortable, and blinding. When the 'Arab' pulls out his knife again, the reflection of the sunlight on the knife turns Meursault into a frenzy: *"I was conscious only of the cym bals of the sun clashing on my skull, and, less distinctly, of the keen blade of the light flashing up from the knife, scarring my eyelashes, and gouging into my eyeballs."* (64). Meursault considers the sun the primary cause of the murder –sign of the absurd. Indeed the significance of his flight from the sun (at his mother's funeral, while shooting the 'Arab' on the beach, and during the three days of unbearable heat at his trial) is ultimately related to the absurd predicament that Meursault must dwell in. The sun is simultaneously an *agent provocateur* and a sign of the absurd. As we have stated earlier Meursault's tragedy is a double tragedy; an existential tragedy and a colonial tragedy. Besides representing the universal predicament of a 'universal' human being trapped in an absurd universe, **L'Etranger** is about the impoverished life of a *pied-noir* caught in the colonial *impasse*. This *pied-noir* is cut off from the majority of the Algerian population, regarding it with fear and distrust. More precisely, what we have in **L'Etranger** is not just an absolute existentialist alienation but also a historically-conditioned alienation produced by the colonial encounter.

At the close of this chapter, we realize that what we have in both *Heart ofDarkness* and *L'Etranger* is the 'conversion' of the colonial, fragmentary and isolated experiences of individuals into allegories about the nature of human existence. This impulse to abstract and to universalize is a strategy used by both Conrad and Camus to conceal their personal dilemmas. Yet both *Heart of Darkness* and *L'Etranger* disclose some blind spots/ 'unsaids'. These blind spots/'unsaids' result from the writers' efforts to step outside the circle of the imperialist logos, which means deconstructing and (re-)inventing the metaphysical canon.

Notes

(1)-The term, bad faith, occurs in J. P. Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. For Sartre, bad faith is *"not a condition imposed on consciousness by the world, but a willingness on the part of the individual to accept conditions of existence in the face of what, for Sartre, is clearly faulty or in error."* (Robbins *et al* 15)

 -Robbins Ruth, Wolfreys Julian, Womack Kameth. *Key Concepts in Literary Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.

(2)-Ian Watt used the term 'delayed decoding' in his criticism of Conrad's works. The term is used to describe Conrad's habit of describing events impressionistically before identifying what 'really' happened. See in particular: Watt, Ian. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1979. pp. 169-180

(3)-Camus, Albert. *The Outsider (1946)*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. London: Penguin Books, 1961. All subsequent further references to this English version will be cited parenthetically. Yet to show the power of the words in specific cases, some citations are from the original French version *L'Etranger*. The translations of the citations will be in the endnotes.

(4)-Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* (1902). London: Penguin Books, 1994. All subsequent page references to the text are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

(5)-The political unconscious of literary texts means that the literary text has social, political and historical resonance. What Fredric Jameson labels as 'political unconscious' is the repressed facts that the writer hides. This is what he has aptly stated:

> It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity. (Jameson 04)

 -Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981). London: Routledge, 2002.

(6)-   I was thinking of the cold, clear stream behind it, and longing to hear again the tinkle of running water. Anything to be rid of the glare, the sight of women in tears, the strain and effort –and to retrieve the pool of shadow by the rock and its cool silence! (*The Outsider* 62).

(7)-   I saw no reason for changing my life. By and large, it wasn't an unpleasant one. As a student I'd had plenty of ambition of the kind he meant. But, when I had to drop my studies, I very soon realized all that was pretty futile. (*The Outsider* 47)

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CHAPTER FOUR

Lord Jim and *La Chute*:

Imperial Anguish and Flight into Metaphysics

"Cet espace miroitant est l'espace du non-dit ou de l'impossible à dire, de la disparition,

de la mort immanente…" Robert Conrath, **'La vitre de l'auto-traduction…'**

In this chapter, we shall compare two other novels by Conrad and Camus; namely, *Lord Jim (1900)* and *La Chute (1956)*, *The Fa!!* in the English translation*. Perhaps it is in this part of our study that literary parentage between the two writers is most obvious. Indeed the two novels suggest a kinship of sorts. Through *La Chute*, as we shall show, Camus seems to have followed in the footsteps of Conrad, especially through themes and characterization. The heavy insistence by both authors on the psychopathology of their protagonists is quite striking. Thus it is in this chapter that we shall lay bare the influence that Conrad might have exerted on Camus through highlighting similarities Hence this chapter asserts a general likeness and posits resemblances and mutual relevance qualified however with a certain ambivalence.

Our study focuses here on the content of the two works. In particular, we shall pinpoint the ideological implications they both entail. History, politics, imperialism among others, will be the keywords of our discussion. Such elements will be investigated mainly through characterization, themes, and setting. Because both *Lord Jim* and *La Chute* are allegories, they produce meanings beyond the story that exists on the surface. We shall primarily emphasize the 'un-said' of the texts and read the two novels/tales in the light of postcolonial theory and from a deconstructionist perspective.

Both Conrad and Camus in *Lord Jim* and *La Chute* share peculiar affinities essentially on the themes of existentialism, of which the obsession with treason/betrayal and guilt, and the fascination with torture are the most visible. When reading *Lord Jim* and *La Chute*, we feel that Camus uses Conrad as his touchstone. It all sounds like a tribute from disciple to master. But it should be clear that we are neither confirming any influence of Conrad on Camus, especially in the absence of explicit testimonies (so far as we know, at least), nor— conversely, making a case for Conrad as Camus's precursor in this regard, though the

possibility of influence is not to be dismissed outright. We can argue however that the surface similarity of the two works, inscribed in different times and spaces of the recent European past, ought to draw our attention first to the similarity of the contexts of production of the two novels.

1-*Lord Jim, La Chute*: The Surface Appearance

Lord Jim and *La Chute* are read as allegories with two levels of interpretation: the manifest and the latent. The manifest level of the content of both works lenifies the reader making him believe that the 'subject' of the two texts is (un)heroism, which leads us to interpret the texts in ethical terms. Because *Lord Jim* and *La Chute* raise the issues of bravery, honour and cowardice, they are literally considered as romances –more specifically, degraded romances. But before attempting a more detailed examination of the parallel lines of argument, it would be appropriate to provide short summaries of both *Lord Lim* and *La Chute.*

To start with, *Lord Lim* is the story of a man who, inspired by the popular literature that nourished his boyhood, goes to sea dreaming of becoming a hero. Yet when he is first given a chance to 'shine', all he shows is cowardice when he deserts his ship, the *Patna*, an ancient cargo ship carrying Muslim pilgrims. During the voyage towards Mecca, the ship was faced with an obstruction –a bulkhead that might collide with the *Patna* and destroy it. The captain and crew lower a small lifeboat and jump impulsively with Jim in it. Later they realize that the *Patna* did not sink. The shame of the incident follows Jim for years. Haunted by this memory, Marlow, the narrator and Jim's compassionate fellow sailor, finally gives him a trading position in *Patusan* –a remote island. There, Jim tries to redeem himself ethically, economically, and socially. He protects the local inhabitants against despots. Thus he gains the confidence of Doramin, the local chief of *Patusan*, and becomes a respected figure,

adored as 'Tuan Jim' –Lord Jim. All seems well, but then *Patusan* is invaded by 'Gentleman' Brown –a white desperate and ferocious pirate – and his fellow European adventurers. Jim's dreams of heroism lead to his misjudging of Brown. He promises Doramin that Brown and his men will leave the island without bloodshed. The result is the death of many of the villagers under Jim's care, including Dain Waris, Jim's faithful friend and the son of Doramin who had helped protect Jim when he first came to *Patusan.* Jim is finally forced to face his cowardly past. In expiation, he allows the grieving Doramin to shoot him dead.

La Chute is an intricate novel because it revolves around a complex character who defines himself as 'duplice'. Jean-Baptiste Clamence is a French man living in Amsterdam. Previously, Clamence had a golden youth. He was an eminent Parisian lawyer with a reputation for nobility and humanitarianism gained by eloquent defences of widows, orphans, and poor people. In short, he was a performer of good 'deeds' and a paragon of virtue. Yet Clamence's uprightness collapsed. His uneasiness started on a bridge over the Seine River. There was a drowning girl calling for help but Clamence left her without rescue. He succumbed to his weakness and cowardice. Clamence kept the event as a secret and exiled himself to Amsterdam—a no man's land. But now a mocking laughter coming from nowhere continues to haunt him. Clamence is unable to keep up the image of his goodness and innocence for the repressed memories of his cowardice gnaw persistently at his psyche. As he realizes that he can no longer carry on leading his past prestigious life, he seeks a new meaning for life: he turns to debauchery and love affairs. But the fallen man cannot restore his grace or redeem his misdeed. He assumes the role of a 'judge-penitent' in Amsterdam. Filled with guilt he resorts to a stratagem, spreading a universal sense of guilt. But his fall is inevitable still.

a- Jim/Clamence: The Dandyism of Anti-heroes

The tacit comparison of Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the single protagonist of *La Chute*, with Jim, the central character of *Lord Jim*, suggests a deeper bond between the two works. Jim and Clamence are both portrayed as anti-heroes, i.e. they are just ordinary characters who behave cowardly in extreme situations. As such, they are contrasted with the romantic hero whose qualities include bravery, keen intelligence, fidelity to goodness and a certainty of self-righteousness. For a character to be called a hero, he must put himself at risk for the protection and welfare of others. Heroism, thus, is compounded of courage and self-sacrifice. The absence of either destroys the claim for heroic status.

What Jim and Clamence reveal in their respective communities is cowardice and anti-heroism. The basic literary definition of the anti-hero is *"a non-hero or the anti-thesis of the hero of the old-fashioned kind who was capable of heroic deeds, who was dashing, strong, brave and resourceful"* (Cuddon 42). Unlike the romance hero who *"displays noble qualities and virtuous attributes, [...] [the anti-hero] is incompetent, unlucky, tactless, clumsy, cack-handed, stupid, buffoonish. [He is] the man who is given the vocation of failure"* (Ibid.). Furthermore, the anti-hero usually aspires to be a hero but his personality flaws frustrate him from fulfilling his dream. Being a failed hero, he always feels helpless and is often unable to commit himself to any project.

It follows then that the respective portrayals of Jim and Clamence correspond to the anti-hero prototype. As such, each of them is a sample of the new, modernist, character who is opposed to the great hero of classical literature. That is to say, Jim and Clamence are just ordinary men who depart from the traditional heroes of the romantic period and the chivalric romance of the Middle Ages. In *Lord Jim* and *La Chute*, Jim and Clamence appear at first as neo-romantics who embark on a search for a heroic, exciting, and meaningful life rather than an ordinary one. However, Conrad and Camus deflate these ideals and illusions

by stressing the reality and the complexity of real life. By so doing they shed direct light on the tension between romance and reality as in Cervantes's **Don Quixote de la Mancha (1605)**.

Jim in **Lord Jim** carries in his mind an ideal, childish image of himself as a hero. A daydreamer, he recurrently envisions himself as *"always an example of devotion to duty and as unflinching as a hero in a book"* (Conrad 11) (1). But his heroic dream of *"saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line,"* (Ibid.) does not correspond to what he really represents: one who falls from grace, and whose 'crime' is *" a breach of faith with the community of mankind "* (18). Thus Jim's aspirations and actions underline the disparity between appearance and reality:

> **Lord Jim** is the study of a man whose will is valiant and whose behaviour is craven, who is bravely active in his intentions and disastrously passive in his deeds, whose ideal aspirations are courageous and whose real conduct in a crisis is ignoble. He is a man who pursues a glamorous dream at the same time as he flees from an ugly fact. In him, the best and the basest of human motives are ominously interwoven. In imagination he is a hero: in actuality he is a coward. (Tanner 07)

Jim's story is a degraded tale of romance and adventure. Perhaps it is his confidence in the illusory image of heroism which is the source of his inability to confront the truth about himself and about the universe. His death may be nothing but his last attempt to act according to a fictionalized idea of heroic conduct. He remains a romantic,

> a man of self-conceived romance and misplaced imagination who is performing a failure. Suffering as he does from an excess of imagination [...], he resembles that greatly-admired hero of Conrad, Don Quixote. [...].Jim is clearly in the line of those romantic heroes whose awareness of reality never catches up with the roles they have conceived for themselves. (Karl & Magalaner 56)

To put it simply, **Lord Jim** outwardly represents the clash between an older set of ideals about heroism with a modern sense of troubled personal identity. Jim ought to *"see things exactly as they are"* (34). In this sense, we need to stress that Jim's *bovarysme* (2) – i.e. Jim's

disposition towards escapist day-dreaming in which he imagines himself as a hero of a romance and refuses to acknowledge everyday realities– is a warning on the part of Conrad against the delusive enchantments of the romance tradition.

Likewise, Clamence, full of idealism, thinks of himself as someone exceptional. He is fascinated with heights: *"living aloft is still the only way of being seen and hailed by the largest number."* (Camus 09) (3). Thus his supreme goal is to attain grandeur but especially to be above all: *"In short, I wanted to dominate in all things."* (19). At the outset, Clamence enjoys unashamedly his superiority having reached the zenith of his social status. He succeeds in his professional as well as in his personal life. As a lawyer, he pleads for the cause of the needy: *"Clamence se présente d'abord au lecteur comme l'homme parfait qui réussit dans tous les domaines professionnels, mondain, social et personnel. Rien ne semble manquer à la description de cet homme remarquable "*(Hess 147). Because of his success, Clamence becomes self-centered and vain: *"I looked upon myself as something of a superman"* (10). His ideals/dreams are to reign supreme over society, *"well above the human ants."* (09)*.* He is a Dorian Gray type of hero, or rather anti-hero. Like Dorian Gray in Oscar Wilde's **The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890)**, Clamence retains the appearance of purity and honesty. He seems to be the champion of noble causes, granting himself *"a certificate of virtue"* (07). Yet he loves manipulating people. Later Clamence discovers his shameful cowardice. When he sees the drowning girl crying for help he says: *"I wanted to run and yet didn't stir"* (25). He reveals the same cowardice in the *Carrefour*: *"I was trembling [...] and I felt an irresistible weakness steal over me."* (Ibid.). These two events constitute the turning point in Clamence's life. Clamence discovers his inner self, his hypocrisy, and his selfishness. He realizes his fall in the hell of culpability: *"I felt vulnerable and open to public accusation."* (27).

Just like Jim, Clamence's dilemma lies in the clash between romance and reality, between how things fancily appear to be and how they really are. Clamence's and Jim's dreams of glory are fanciful. Both are romantic egotists who are always trying to impose their dreams upon an unimpressed world. Yet their temporary success is doomed to failure. (They both smack of the –belated and benighted– Byronic hero).

Clamence has a superficial presence in the world; in a universe without meaning. He is a poltroon who details his disintegration with pain and torment. Even though he appears at the outset as a leading figure –the elite, having a certain authority and feeling of superiority over the rest, he soon faces the truth of his delusions: *"I feel delightfully rising [...] I dominate, [...] I have found a height to which I am the only one to climb and from which I can judge everybody [...], yet [...] my solution is not the ideal."* (50-1)

b-Psychopathology and the Human Mind: Jim's and Clamence's Guilt and Self-Betrayal

Analogies between **Lord Jim** and **La Chute** do not stop at the level of anti-heroism. Further similarities are apparent in the fact that Conrad and Camus offer a very full impression of the mental life of their protagonists. Consequently, the reader is allowed to penetrate into the psyche of the two men and understand the complexities of their minds.

The agony of remorse continues to gnaw at Jim's and Clamence's peace of mind. They both experience a gradual psychological deterioration. As Adele King writes:

> **The Fa!!** is a psychological study of an individual who cannot live without clear moral absolutes, whose loss of an easily accepted feeling of innocence makes him turn to a belief in universal guilt. It is, as Camus himself noted, a study of disintegration after a failure of moral courage, which is similar to Conrad's **Lord Jim**. (King 513) (4)

Clamence is haunted by the aching memory of his desertion of the drowning girl. This incident shatters his feelings of power and of completion. Hence the nagging sense that he is not what he has pretended to be culminates, and his 'duplicity' becomes evident to the

Other. As conscience is what we are in the eyes of the others, Clamence's hell is in fact other people. He thus borders on standing above them to avoid their judgment: *"When I was concerned with others, I was so out of pure condescension, in utter freedom."* (17). Jean Paul Sartre's "hell is other people!" (*"l'enfer c'est les autres!"*) reverberates here. In this regard, we shall expound on the theme of the Other (with capital O) –as a Sartrean concept— in *La Chute*. Yet we shall do it parenthetically.

Sartre's philosophical conception of the Other means <u>another consciousness;</u> i.e. *"[t]o exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness, its look and locus."* (Bhabha 117). This means that the human being needs the Other because the former cannot realize himself except in the latter's eyes. This Self-Other relationship is central to Sartre's analysis of the human condition. *"The central feature of that relationship is structured by the gaze that turns the free human being into an objectified thing."* (Macey 2001). In other words, through the Other's gaze, according to Sartre, One is an object in the Other's world as much as the Other is an object to the One. To be looked at is to be annihilated in the gaze of the Other. Furthermore, the freedom of One is limited by the gaze of this Other (Adler 286). Thus *"shame is shame of oneself before the Other; these two structures are inseparable. But at the same time I need the Other in order to realize fully all the structures of my being."* (Qtd in. Amrani 121). In the play *Huis Clos (No Exit) (1944)*, Sartre concludes that "hell is other people!". He thus provides a Self-Other antagonism. This is particularly true of Clamence in *La Chute*.

Clamence finds that his agonies are rooted in the others' observations: *"it was especially with others that I was fed up."* (27). For Clamence, other people are hell because they limit his freedom and compel him to submit to conventional rules. To escape this submission, Clamence resorts to *"the prosecution of others [...] [which] went on constantly in*

[his] heart." (27). After his moral fall, Clamence becomes vulnerable to the critical scrutiny of

others: Thus he realizes that he cannot dominate because he cannot subordinate:

> The circle of which I was the center broke and they lined up in a row as on the judge's bench. In short, the moment I grasped that there was something to judge in me, I realized that there was in them an irresistible vocation for judgment. Yes, they were there as before, but they were laughing. Or rather it seemed to me that everyone I encountered was looking at me with a hidden smile. I even had the impression, at that time, that people were tripping me up E...] I stumbled as I entered public places. Once even, I went sprawling on the floor E...], my distrust remained. (27)

> Clamence's dilemma intensifies as he finds no way out of his guilty conscience, his

egomania, his aloneness:

> But when you don't like your own life, when you know that you must change lives, you don't have any choice, do you? What can one do to become another? Impossible. One would have to cease being anyone, forget oneself for someone else, at least once." (51)

 The haunting mocking symbolic laughter increases his anxiety as it continues to pursue him

and confirm the falsity of his new position of 'Judge-Penitent'. As a result, Clamence finds no

real exit from his guilty conscience especially as he abstains from any real action to atone for

his misdeed. He becomes *"a false prophet crying in the wilderness and refusing to come*

forth" (52). The hell of his ego leads to a dead-end.

Clamence's hallucinations reflect his severance from the world out there. He verges

on schizophrenia. This is clearly manifested in the event of the bolt:

> On the point of going to sleep, I can never remember whether or not I pushed the bolt. And every night I must get up to verify E...] Don't think that this worry about the bolt is the reaction of a frightened possessor E...] Hence I am not worried about my safety, but about myself and my presence of mind. I am eager to block the door of the closed little universe of which I am the king, the pope, and the judge. (45)

Schizophrenia, as a matter of fact, involves a severance from reality and a turning on the self

with an excessive but loosely systematized production of fantasies about one's double image

in the mirror. Clamence says: *"My reflection was smiling in the mirror, but it seemed to me*

that my smile was double." (14). In this respect, J. Owen Miller argued that mirror-stage mis-recognition is symptomatic of a schizophrenic state:

> Si l'observateur ne reconnaît pas l'image qu'il projette ou s'il voit une image double, il est affligé d'une personnalité schizoïde ou schizophrène, c'est-à-dire si désunie que le moi intérieur et le moi projeté se présentent comme des entités indépendantes, étrangères ou qui ne se reconnaissent plus l'une l'autre. (Miller 131)

Clamence's tormented psyche and the delusions of grandeur make of him a megalomaniac:

> On my own admission, I could live happily only on condition that all the individuals on earth, or the greatest possible number, were turned toward me, eternally in suspense, devoid of independent life and ready to answer my call at any moment, doomed in short to sterility until the day I should deign to favour them. In short, for me to live happily it was esential for the creatures I chose not to live at all. They must receive their life, sporadically, only at my bidding. (24)

Similarly, in **Lord Jim**, Jim's inner struggle leads to his suffering from instable mental disorders. Nagged by the memory of his desertion from the 'craved' *Patna*, Jim conceals the inner chaos of his life behind a mask in *Patusan* and finds thus the identity he craved for in the eyes of others. But his suffering from guilt gnaws at him and he is unable to soothe his troubled conscience:

> Still, the idea obtrudes itself that he [Jim] made so much of his disgrace while it is the guilt alone that matters. He was not –if I may say so– clear to me –he was not clear. And there is a suspicion he was not clear to himself either. (300)

Jim wants to escape his agonies of guilt and desertion. He settles in *Patusan* to be a great hero in the eyes of the natives and a sort of a 'saviour'. Yet he fails to reach his goal because the predicament of his desertion remains a living reminder of his failure to live up to the code he had set for himself. His situation is that of a *cul-de-sac* from which there is no escape, no salvation. Indeed both Jim and Clamence have guilty consciences and refrain from action. This similarity between the two protagonists indicates that there is a covert allusion to **Lord Jim** in **La Chute.**

Another striking analogy between *Lord Jim* and *La Chute* is to be found in the settings. In *Lord Jim* Patusan is a 'no man's land', a shelter for derelicts, inhabited by Malays. It is cut off from civilization and is a real wilderness. Likewise, Amsterdam in *La Chute* is a 'never never land' that accepts non-identified persons, tramps, strangers, and sinners. It is a place where travelers can indulge in the comforts of anonymity. Both settings are fit to be playgrounds and graveyards for the two protagonists' delusions and ultimate falls. In fact the evocation of the similarity in the setting here will be of great help to us for it consolidates our suggestion of the kinship that most probably exists between Conrad and Camus.

2-Existential Anguish and Bad Faith: The Deep Structure

We have stated earlier that *Lord Jim* and *la Chute* are to be read as allegories and are thus susceptible/likely to yield deeper meanings on the human condition in an alien universe. This is another analogy bearing on philosophy: the primary predicament of both Jim and Clamence is their existential alienation. This is to suggest that Conrad anticipates on Camus.

Conrad's heroes generally live a life of illusion to confront the essential meaninglessness of their existence. This is exactly what happens with Jim whose *"visions of remote, unattainable truth [are] seen dimly"* (28). After Jim's failure to live up to his ideals on the *Patna*, he ultimately realizes his inevitable mortality in an absurd universe. Jim finds out that the burden of his existence is too heavy to bear. Yet he carries on believing in his ideals. He is akin to Sisyphus, Camus's absurd hero, the figure condemned to push a rock up a steep hill only to have it roll back again and again. *The Myth of Sisyphus* illustrates Camus's idea of the absurdity of existence. It draws on the Greek myth of Sisyphus. According to the myth, the gods have condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly roll a rock up to a mountain top. Every

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time Sisyphus pushes the rock up the slope it rolls back; nevertheless he keeps on pushing it

uphill. In spite of failing to reach his objective, Sisyphus is resolutely committed to keep striving. And yet Camus regards Sisyphus as happy ('*Il fault imaginer Sisyphe heureux*') at the very moment he turns to retrieve the rock once more at the base of the hill. Why happy? Because Sisyphus has risen above his fate, not by dull resignation but by deliberate choice. He thereby shows himself superior to this inanimate rock. But what differentiate Jim from Sisyphus is that the former seems to dream of propelling the rock to the summit but actually does nothing. The action takes place only in Jim's mind. However, this does not eliminate the general similarity between Jim and Sisyphus. In an article entitled "***Lord Jim*** et le Rocher de Sisyphe", Alvin Greenberg demonstrates that the hero of ***Lord Jim*** should be considered as a precursor of Camus's Sisyphus. In quest for his authentic self, Jim confronts *"the whole extent of his wretched condition"* (225); thus, *"il appartiendra à Camus de rehausser le protagoniste de **Lord Jim** au prototype de l'homme moderne dans **Le Mythe de Sisyphe**."* (Greenberg 13).

Lord Jim appears then as a work that raises the issues of existentialism. In the novel, the omnipresent themes of the meaninglessness and absurdity of human existence are foregrounded as worldview (Jameson 209). Indeed, Conrad persistently endeavours to find meaning in his fiction about human suffering and death. His writing consistently seeks to find significance in the futility of existence. This appears in the characters' ceaselessly persisting efforts, like Camus's Sisyphus. Marlow says in ***Lord Jim*** that *"all assertion in this world of doubts is defiance"* (154)*.* Similarly, Camus writes in ***The Myth of Sisyphus*** that *"there is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn"* (Camus 87)*.* Jim is alienated from himself, divided against himself, and estranged from nature and from his fellowmen. He lives in fear, in an indifferent, strange universe. This portrayal of Jim embodies, in Conrad's own words, his sense that (as Jonah Raskin quotes him):

Ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity, and even of reason itself seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. (Qtd.in Raskin 192-3)

As a matter of fact, absurd contradictions in one's existence lead to alienation. Alienation as defined by Raymond Williams is *"a psychological state that comes as a result of the absence of or the failure to find adequate or convincing norms for social relationship and self-fulfillment."* (Williams 36). In *Patusan*, Jim always feels alienated from the villagers because his *"shadowy ideals"* (46) do not conform to the society he lives in. Consequently, he feels lack of guidance for conduct and estrangement from the given norms. It is Conrad's ability to write of Jim's alienation; i.e. of man alone in the universe, that shapes his vision of the world. Conrad sees the universe as a place of darkness which is alien and hostile to man. It seems then that, in Patrick Reilley's terms, *"Conrad is here making the first tentative advances into a territory to be more fully explored by Camus."* (Reilley 63).

In **La Chute**, Camus shifts his attention to universalist concerns and metaphysical preoccupations of man's being in the world. He focuses on the human being who is cast in an alien universe. As Camus himself writes: *"In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile. [...]. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity"* (Camus, **The Myth** 45). Indeed, in **La Chute** he exposes deliberately his theory of the absurd. For Camus it is not the world, neither life, which is absurd. It is the connection which man establishes between nature, society and his environment which is absurd. As Clamence himself asserts: *"no relief; space is colorless, and life dead. Is it not universal obliteration, everlasting nothingness made visible? [...] I alone facing the planet at last deserted."* (25). Furthermore, Clamence's feeling of absurdity increases as he does not believe in a superior

force that governs the world: *"Ah, <u>mon cher,</u> for anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful."* (47). Clamence's sole concern is his own image in the eyes of others. He is a man indifferent to the sufferings of others and whose only anxiety is to satisfy his pulsions.

Yet Jim and Clamence are aware of their guilt and the responsibility resulting from their actions. Therefore, they experience an anguish from which they seek to escape. In Clamence's words, *"the judgment I felt forming in me and around me, […] forced me to seek an escape."* (31). Jim and Clamence find ultimately an outlet in the bad faith of self-deception. This Sartrean concept means, broadly speaking, lying to oneself. Put simply, bad faith is *"a conduct by which a man attempts to flee from anguish in the face ofthe non-being of his freedom."* (Amrani 08). To put it more precisely, freedom is that responsibility that man carries for his choices and his actions. This means that man is free from any determinism. Thus he becomes aware of his freedom and suffers the anguish of realizing the responsibility resulting from his freedom. To escape this feeling of anguish, man finds shelter in bad faith. The essential point to be noted is that the problem of bad faith is a problem of identity. We say that man is in bad faith when he is aware of the truth and attempts to conceal it from himself.

Jim and Clamence live in bad faith because they seek to shelter themselves from the image of cowardice which others label on them. In other words, they find peace of mind in the creation of excuses and the acceptance of the idea of fate. Jim evades moral responsibility by relocating the reasons of his evasion to a set of circumstances one of which is that he ascribes the blame of his desertion to others. He tells Marlow: *"Oh, yes, I know very well—I jumped. I told I jumped; but I tell you....it was their doing as plainly as if they had* reached *up with a boat-hook and pulled over. Can't you see it? You must see it."* (175).

Clamence's anxiety results from his acute consciousness of his freedom: *"freedom is too heavy to bear [...] [It] is very exhausting"* (47). Consequently, he shows that *"he was afraid of freedom."* (48). Clamence'*s* fear of freedom leads him to prefer stasis to the responsibility of becoming a free agent. That is to say, Clamence chooses to live in inauthenticity to evade the anguish of the freedom to act. Indeed Clamence, like Jim, finds comfort in bad faith and seems to wallow in absurdity: *"You'll find me unchanged. And why should I change, since I have found the happiness that suits me?"* (50). He lives in passivity and does not accept change: *"I haven't changed my way of life"* (50). This is better illustrated in Clamence's own words:

> We don't want to improve ourselves or be bettered, for we should first have to be judged in default. We merely wish to be pitied and encouraged in the course we have chosen. In short, we should like, at the same time, to cease being guilty and yet not to make the effort of cleansing ourselves. (29)

Ostensibly what Camus and Conrad insist on in their texts is the desperate situation of modern man, i.e. of the man who feels himself utterly lost, a homeless alien in a hostile and meaningless world where nothing is left for him but his own precarious, finite, mortal and therefore meaningless existence. This is evident in Clamence's declaration: *"I read the melancholy of the common condition and the despair of not being able to escape it."* (50). Ultimately, man finds himself apt to deceive himself, fleeing from the burden of responsibility in a bad faith that presupposes a determinism that relieves him from the agonies of freedom and guilt. This determinism originates from Jim's and Clamence's experience of an anguish which they seek to escape. They experience anguish because they are all-too aware of their freedom to act. Yet they flee from this responsibility by adopting one form of determinism; i.e. bad faith.

3- ‘Un-saids’ and Ideology of Escape: The Reality of *Lord Jim* and *La Chute*

Our next analysis is the core of this chapter. Here we attempt to extract another reading besides those brought out above. On a much deeper level, we read Conrad's *Lord Jim* and Camus's *La Chute* as a pretext for evasion, an escape from the burning issues of the day. It is appropriate therefore to draw attention to the ideological dimension of what the texts do not say. In other words, our task in this part is to argue that the ostensible or manifest theme of the absurd in *Lord Jim* and *La Chute* is the 'cover story', the new strategy deployed by Conrad and Camus to displace unwanted realities about imperialism. This should be validated by a focus on the ideology of the texts, a kind of overlapping of Conrad's and Camus's experiences. In fact the essential ambiguity of *Lord Jim* and *La Chute* is the attempts by Conrad and Camus to make their novels stand beyond history. Our task therefore is to 'estrange', or rather to relegate, this overt theme of the absurd to a background position and to foreground the (absent) history in the texts.

In *Lord Jim*, Conrad pretends to tell us the story of an individual's struggle with his own fear and courage. Yet Conrad knows that the real issues are elsewhere. His narrative tactics and the formal ideology (this will be expounded in the next chapter) make him ignore all the circumstances that surround imperialism. He is aware of this historical reality. But he displaces this reality in his fiction as a means of evasion to convince the reader that the ultimate concern of *Lord Jim* is the human condition and the influence of the social setting on the individual. To put it more forcefully, Conrad –strategically and as a pretext– shifts his concern to existentialism and to the absurdity of human existence (in the face of malevolent nature). This strategy allows Conrad to disclose his narrative in light of the antinomy of good and evil. This is what Fredric Jameson confirms in *The Political Unconscious*:

> So it is no accident that Jim's first experience of the violence of the sea is at once coded for us in existential terms; the sea, the source of this mindless violence, becoming the great adversary of man, in much the same way that Camus' vision of

absurdity rewrites an essentially non-human nature into an anthropomorphic character, a vengeful God. (Jameson 216)

Strategically then, Conrad keeps on telling us that **Lord Jim** is a tale about courage and cowardice, about heroic ethos and the code of honour, about testing oneself in epic –not to say mythic, extreme situations.

Indeed the Western colonial tradition celebrated the yearning for romantic ideals and heroic wanderings in faraway lands. The colonized space thus was perceived as an appropriate *tabula rasa* for the realization of romantic aspirations:

Hero-worship and the excitement of Empire were sustained by the late nineteenth-century proliferation of tales of adventure, both non-fiction and fiction. Adventuring heroes are shown meeting the challenge of unknown and savage places. Their stories testify to the innate greatness of individual character and at the same time embody 'the exaggerated sense of responsibility' that the British felt for foreign peoples, inferiors in need of special protection. (Horsely 22)

This version shows that the colonial adventure was the appropriate ground for 'heroic' achievements (as Kipling's fiction shows). However, in **Lord Jim** the ideological and political dimensions, though kept out of sight, are undeniable as we shall see presently.

In **La Chute**, Camus evades/averts the Algerian issue and takes a direction which he tries later to justify on philosophical grounds. He transcends or rather escapes the spatio-temporal location and the socio-historical realities of his time in a bid to attain the horizon of universality. The story is generally read as an examination/exploration of human nature. In the following pages, I propose to enter the abyss of **La Chute**. My purpose will be to uncover specific clues that would unlock and lay bare the latent meaning. I shall proceed in an indirect manner in order to determine, not what **La Chute** says or declares but what it does not say, taking again Pierre Macherey's theory as a guide.

In **Pour Une Théorie de la Production Littéraire** , Macherey says that we need to both look at the text and beyond it; to look at it in order to see how it attempts to create its

own unity, to establish 'the class of truth' which determines its meaning. We must look beyond the text because it is not an isolated object, but part and product of a combination of socio-historical forces. Considering the latter point, Macherey says that the inevitable incorporation of ideology into a text results in certain textual silences, contradictions and inconsistencies which allow the reader to perceive –however dimly– the workings of that ideology. That which ideology remains silent about is the reality of the historical situation (Macherey 108).

In the light of these explanations we aim to re-read **Lord Jim** and **La Chute** and see how ideology signals the mindsets of both writers. The two texts are read as a form of ideological discourse that represses historical truth. Our concern is to make apparent this repressed historical truth and to reveal the 'othernesses' that the texts conceal. The texts thus become about what they appear not to be about. In other words, the focus is on what the text represses rather than on what it expresses, and this is detected in gaps and absences. These absences are essentially the themes of the text. Macherey writes:

> Ce que dit le livre vient d'un certain silence: son apparition implique la 'présence' d'un non-dit, matière à laquelle il donne forme, ou fond sur lequel il fait figure. Ainsi le livre ne se suffit pas à lui-même; nécessairement l'accompagne une certaine absence, sans laquelle il ne serait pas. Connaître le livre, cela implique qu'il soit tenu compte aussi de cette absence. (Ibid., 105)

Unlike what we have in **Heart of Darkness**, Conrad in **Lord Jim** attempts to circumvent the issue of imperialism. However, there are traces which lurk in the background and demonstrate Conrad's implicit condoning of the imperial machinery, though he unconsciously appears to neglect it. It is true that **Lord Jim** is one of Conrad's novels least involved in the issues surrounding imperialism; nevertheless, it situates itself in the world of the dichotomy of 'them' and 'us'.

Lord Jim is an Orientalist discourse that reproduces the same clichés, the same *langue de bois* about the 'mysterious Orient' as well as the stereotypes about the 'Oriental mind', and the Orient as a place of exoticism. The relationship of 'us' and 'them' is a relationship of domination: 'they' are not like 'us' and for that reason deserve to be ruled. In colonial literature, **Robinson Crusoe** is perhaps the prototypal instance of a colonial novel. It is about a European who creates a small kingdom for himself on a distant, non-European island. In **Lord Jim**, the East Asian colonial setting of *Patusan* is an imperial setting. The discourse remains a prejudiced one given from one polarity, one perspective, the West. Conrad implicitly invokes the historical circumstances of colonialism by situating his hero in a part of the world where nearly every land has been claimed by a European power. This is shown in **Lord Jim** when seeing Jim in the employ of men who *"love…short passages, good – deck chairs, large native crews, and the distinction of being white."* (99). Furthermore, in **Lord Jim**, Conrad accepts the Victorian notion that Oriental peoples lack a 'history'. *Patusan* is a primitive place and its in habitants are portrayed as primitives as well: *"Such beings open up to the Western eye, so often compared with mere surfaces, the hidden possibilities of races and lands over which hangs the mystery of unrecorded ages."* (107). The word 'unrecorded' invokes a *tabula rasa* of sorts.

In **Lord Jim,** the critique of imperialism is indeed less central than it is in **Heart of Darkness**. From a postcolonial perspective, **Lord Jim** reveals the destructiveness and the ultimate futility of the colonialist's imperial dream, the dream of the European romantic imagination. The tale then is an implicit condemnation of the most benign imperialistic ventures because the conquest is carried out in the name of high ideals. As a colonialist administrator, Jim fails to impose his ideals on *Patusan*'s natives. The villagers are convinced that he cannot succeed in fulfilling his ideals. Whether the whites are rulers or lovers, *'they*

always leave us' (76), as Jewel, the native woman, confirms. The result is that the colonizer's ideal can never be achieved, even though it may seem noble (the rule that Jim imposes is thoroughly benevolent because his vision of the ideal world is one of harmony and justice). Yet it must be pointed out that Jim's career in *Patusan* has broad political implications. His temporary success reveals the optimistic side of both individual romantic idealism and cultural romantic imperialism. His failure then marks not only the failure of romantic idealism as an individual venture, but also as a political one. Imperialism in ***Lord Jim*** is the equivalent of romantic idealism.

With these thoughts in mind we may ask the following question: Why do we inscribe ***Lord Jim*** in colonialist fiction? To this loaded question we shall investigate, in what follows, the representation of the other in ***Lord Jim*** (including the natives and the landscape).

In ***Lord Jim***, the non-white people are described negatively. First, on the *Patna,* the narrator describes Jim's captain as a *"dapper little half-caste [with a] thin little black moustache drooping on each side of his thick, dark lips, [and whose] flowing English seemed to be derived from* a *dictionary compiled by a lunatic."* (86) (5). The word 'half-caste' is loaded with racialist innuendoes in colonial parlance: it suggests un-naturalness and incompleteness. Another persistent trope in colonialist literature which is present in ***Lord Jim*** is the portrayal of the Oriental as a cruel and corrupt despot. Literary examples in Conrad's time include those who appear in novels by Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The Oriental despot in ***Lord Jim*** is the Rajah Tanku Allang. Marlow introduces him as

> a dirty little, used-up old man with evil eyes and a weak mouth, who swallowed an opium pill every two hours, and in defiance of common decency wore his hair uncovered and falling in wild stringy locks about his wizened, grimy face. (108)

As an Oriental ruler, the Rajah indulges in every vice, rules incompetently, and imposes taxes on his long-suffering subjects.

Conrad, as a matter of truth, replicates a racial discourse through the replay of stereotypes about the inferior, 'exotic' other. Dain Waris in **Lord Jim** is the ultimate other onto whom racial essentialism is projected. He is a 'noble savage'. He represents the 'faithful' intermediate native (6). The prototype of Dain Waris is Friday in **Robinson Crusoe**. These types of figures are generally superior to their fellow natives and their most characteristic act is to die fighting for their white masters. About Dain Waris Marlow comments: *"his own people said with pride that he knew how to fight like a white man."* (205). Marlow elaborates more on Dain's many 'white' qualities and confirms the natives' judgment by adding, *"This was true."* (Ibid.). As a white man, Jim makes use of the faithful subordinate, Dain Waris, to consolidate his own power. Again this is characteristic of colonial fiction. Jewel is also the type of woman we find in colonial fiction. Beautiful and light-skinned, she is the mistress of Jim –the conquering European protagonist.

The colonial tropes in **Lord Jim** are concentrated in the *Patusan* episode. *Patusan* is a colonial setting. Marlow's vision of *Patusan* is realizd in negatives: it is timeless, motionless, a land without a past. In **Heart of Darkness**, Conrad provides the reader with a sense of going backward in time whereas in his Malay fiction the impression is one of a-temporality. In **Lord Jim**, when Marlow is about to leave Jim and *Patusan* for the last time, he tells us that he is leaving a world that will never change to join a world in motion. Going back to England, he says: *"to the world where events move, men change, light flickers, life flows in a clear stream....But as to what I was leaving behind, I cannot imagine any alteration."* (286). Words like 'static', 'inert', and 'unchanging' nearly always adhere to late-nineteenth century essentialist descriptions of Eastern and African territories. While the West moves forward,

Africa and the East remain excluded from that movement, unable even to look backward. Only permanent contact with the West will enable them to progress socially, economically and spiritually.

Yet Jim's complicity in the imperial venture is an important point for our analysis. Jim seems to be a racist. When he allows the white 'Gentleman' Brown to leave *Patusan*, the situation is racially charged. It shows that Jim fails to identify with people from another race. Moreover, his abandonment of the pilgrims occurs because, for him, he does not view them as authentic kith and kin. Jim is indeed a cultural transgressor but, unlike Kurtz, he does not 'go native' all the way (7). The points we have discussed so far reveal the 'sub-text' that lurks in **Lord Jim** or the 'un-saids' of the text. The 'un-saids' in **La Chute** also reveal a hitherto concealed ideological discourse, as we shall argue presently.

The imprint of Algeria is characteristic of the majority of Camus's literary production. Even its absence –as in the case in **La Chute**– is purposefully used by the author to emphasize the gloomy atmosphere of the Northern climates. The 'un-saids' of the text may take the form of absences that conceal the writer's ideological stance. Thus our aim in the following lines is to bring to the surface these absences in **La Chute**.

A decolonized/postcolonial reading of **La Chute** shows that it is the ideological discourse that ascertains French imperial domination despite the text's silence. Camus's silence in **La Chute** hides psychological conflicts. Moreover, this silence may be regarded as a tactic aiming at avoiding 'collusion' with political or rather colonial 'interventions'. This may appear as 'political passivity'. Yet such silence according to Sartre is an active attitude:

> Ce silence est un moment du langage; se taire ce n'est pas être muet, c'est refuser de parler, donc parler encore. Si donc un écrivain a choisi de se taire sur un aspect quelconque de monde, ou selon une locution qui dit bien ce qu'elle veut dire: de le <u>passer sous silence,</u> on est en droit de lui poser une troisième question : pourquoi as-

tu parlé de ceci plutôt que de cela et- puisque tu parles pour changer—pourquoi veux-tu changer ceci plutôt que cela. (Sartre 35) (Emphasis added)

With a sleight of hand, Camus avoids lucidly the issue of struggling Algeria pretending that *La Chute* is concerned with highly metaphysical issues set in Northern climes. He yet escapes into the universal theory of the absurd. But

[t]he discovery of the absurd […] is a restrictive experience, whose universality exists solely in the minds of those able and willing to participate in the unspoken, but nevertheless screaming by apparent premises of the works. (Horowitz 57)

The 'unspoken' here is the absent history of Algeria. Yet, however 'silent' it may be, the discourse of *La Chute* demonstrates another discourse of repression. This silence on the part of Camus as regards the colonial reality of Algeria reflects his ambivalent attitude regarding colonialism in Algeria. His excluding of Algeria and its inhabitants is not a colonial lapsus. The aim of this exclusion is to create a Eurocentric novel as Camus's readership is European.

Conor Cruise O'Brien gave importance to the vexed question of Camus's relationship with Algeria and the Algerians in general. *La Chute* is written in exile (during Camus's sojourn in Paris) and reflects Camus's tragic forebodings for his native country. Isolation and exile signal Camus's position towards colonial Algeria. It is true that *La Chute* is one of the few fictional works whose setting is not Algeria; however, it is the work where Algeria is bitterly present, if not thoroughly absent. Amsterdam, the anti-Algeria, is a foil for Algiers; it is a place of exile: *"un petit espace [...] cerné par des brumes, des terres froides, et la mer fumante comme une lessive."* (Camus, *La Chute* 1482) (8). Bertrand Louèt thus comments:

Ce n'est pas un hazard non plus si la scène de *La Chute* est celui d'Amsterdam : une sorte d'anti-Alger, donc le lieu sombre, brumeux, avec peu de soleil, beaucoup de brume, beaucoup de tristesse et de mélancolie. (Louèt 2)

Amsterdam is described as a sort of a limbo world: *"Then you know that Dante accepts the idea of neutral an gels in the quarrel between God and Satan. And he puts them in a Limbo, a*

sort of vestibule of his Hell. We are in the vestibule, <u>cher ami</u>" (29). Conor Cruise O'Brien linked the concept of limbo to Camus's position towards the anti-colonialist liberation struggle in his native Algeria : *« Tiraillé entre la justice et sa mère, Camus était entraîné dans une longue hésitation que beaucoup appelèrent neutralité."* (O'Brien 125).

Camus thus seems to expose his guilty conscience in ***La Chute*** and appears to realize his 'fall', a failure to commit himself to justice, a 'fall' from his principles of human equality and liberty. Symbolically, in the novel, the laughter and the call of the girl bear innuendoes to Algeria which Camus turns his back on. Clamence in ***La Chute*** does not answer the call embodied in the *"night voice of Rachel weeping for her children and refusing all comfort"* (39), as Clamence describes it. It is pertinent to recall also Clamence's paralysis on the bridge –*"I stood motionless"* (25) – which can be construed as Camus's position in respect of Algeria:

> La source de ***La Chute*** se trouve dans le problème Algérien en ce sens que la crise de conscience qu'elle met en scène n'est autre que celle vécue par Camus devant le problème algérien : ainsi, par exemple, la paralysie de Clamence sur le pont correspond à celle de son créateur devant l'appel contradictoire de ce qu'il avait considéré comme sa patrie. (Fitch 23)

The laughter that pursues Clamence *"qui remettait les choses en place"* (Camus, ***La Chute*** 1495) (9) may be interpreted as Camus's betrayal of his ideals, of his *" désaccord entre ce qu'il avait dit et la manière dont il s'est conduit"* (O'Brien 126). O'Brien seems to confirm that Camus swerves away from the role of *directeur de conscience* and chooses to neglect/avoid the Algerian problem: *"Lui [Camus] qui a tant parlé de justice doit maintenant abjurer son langage, puisqu'il place quelque chose au-dessus de la justice"* (Ibid.). In other words, as O'Brien wants to confirm, Camus remains essentially a French colonizer and thus *"commence à prendre la parti de sa propre tribu"* (Ibid.).

Indeed Camus is the 'end-product' of French history, French culture, and French education. *"[d]'est un juste sans justice"* (Qtd.in O'Brien 127), as Simone de Beauvoir describes him. Camus's choice to remain silent about Algeria is the result of a torn psyche.

As a conclusion to this chapter, we may safely re-assert that both Conrad and Camus were not blinded to the issue of imperialism. Yet while Conrad showed an explicit concern with it, Camus was rather implicitly involved. Despite this difference, both writers provided modern versions of the imperialist who attempted to reach self-redemption. However the two writers were doomed ironically to feel anguished because what they had tried to exclude from their worlds did reappear. This is portrayed, though implicitly, in Jim and Clamence. Indeed, the imperial issue keeps interpellating both writers' –in spite of their attempts to escape it. In Conrad's overtly colonial settings, the imperial interpellation is explicit and this is seen in **Lord Jim**. For Camus, the imperial actuality cannot be clearly pinpointed especially as he ostensibly drowns it in an ethos of universality and humanism. The existential alienation of Clamence –the narrator-hero in **La Chute**, becomes the core of Camus's concern. This reveals that Camus, *"a very late imperial figure"* (Said 208) strives to reach 'universalist' verdicts to escape the socio-historical realities of his native land –Algeria. Second, by making of Clamence a Sartrean hero –an example of *mauvaise foi,* Camus seems to admit –though very reluctantly– his failure to live up to his own philosophical doctrine. Conrad for his part seems to be less involved –through the convenient mediation of Marlow (this will be discussed in the next chapter) – and remains quite an unrepentant imperialist.

In the next last chapter, we shall attempt to show how Conrad and Camus employ the entire discursive arsenal available to them, by lenifying their readers (if not intoxicating them). In other words, we shall highlight those formal/structural/linguistic features through

which Conrad and Camus 'filter' their narratives to avert the imperial interpellation. Yet they fail in their endeavour –at least in their own minds.

Notes

(1)-Conrad, Joseph. *Lord Jim: A Tale (1900)*. London: Vintage, 1994. All subsequent page references to the text belong to this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

(2)-*Bovarysme* comes from the title character of Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary (1856)*, who enters upon a love affair as a result of reading novels about romantic love: these books, in their charm and excited beauty, seem more real than her too common, dull life. *Bovarysme* is similar to *Quixotism* in that both involve transferring of literary responses and expectations into the arena of actual life. Cervantes' Don Quixote, as a result of reading chivalric romances, becomes a knight but he must ignore important aspects of anti-chivalric reality that surrounds him in order to live out his literary dreams.

(3)-Camus, Albert. *The Fall (1956)*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. All subsequent further references to this English version will be cited parenthetically. Yet to show the power of the words in specific cases, some citations are from the original French version, *La Chute*. The translations of the citations will be in the endnotes.

(4)-For further investigation on Camus's indebtedness to Conrad, see: Dominique Aury, "A Talk with Albert Camus", *New York Times Book Review*, 17 February 1957, p. 33. According to Adele King, the above stated article includes Camus's acknowledgement of his influence by Conrad's writings. It must be pointed out however that we could not obtain the article which is available in the online web-site of the *New York Times*.

(5)-In Edward Said's *Orientalism*: He shows how Westerners have described Oriental languages as being "arrested, totally ossified, and incapable of self-regeneration". (Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. P.145). This is a sign that the people themselves are incapable of developing on their own.

(6)-The 'native' type represented in imperial fiction or the 'Westernized native', see Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", October 58, (Spring, 1984): 126-33. Bhabha calls this colonialist creation 'the mimic man', probably as a reminder of V. S. Naipaul's novel, *The Mimic Men*. He is well represented in Dain Waris in *Lord Jim*.

(7)-'Going native' indicates *"the colonizers' fears of contamination by absorption into native life and customs."* (Ashcroft *et al* 115). Kurtz, in *Heart of Darkness*, embodies the perfect model of the perils of 'going native'. He embodies the vulnerability, primitivism of the process. See: Ashcroft, Bill. Griffiths, Gareth. Tiffin, Helen. *Postcolonial Studies: the Key Concepts*. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000.

(8)- *"a little space [...] hemmed in by fogs, cold lands, and the sea steaming like a wet wash."* (*The Fall* 05)

(9)- *"which re-established the proper proportions."* (Ibid., 14)

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CHAPTER FIVE

Lord Jim and *La Chute*:

Discursive Ploy and Strategies of Insulation

-"There are no words for the sort of things I wanted to say." **–Lord Jim**

-"You don't understand what I mean ? I'll admit my fatigue. I lose the thread of what I am saying. I've lost that lucidity…." **–The Fa!!**

We have stated, in the previous chapter, that in both **Lord Jim** and **La Chute,** Conrad and Camus resorted to an allegorical mode of writing. Their aim is, roughly speaking, to escape history, or more precisely the colonial encounter. The central characters, Jim and Clamence, refuse their historicity and by so doing turn a blind eye on the colonial situation. Thus there are ruptures in the two texts which testify to the two writers' evasive tendencies. Indeed both Conrad and Camus can express themselves only as artists –*cum*– philosophers since they are unwilling to adopt a political stand. Consequently they deploy the entire Western artistic and literary arsenal to lenify/distract the reader.

Therefore, we shall propose in this chapter an assessment of the form of the two novels, focusing mainly on similarities in certain stylistic devices such as the <u>unreliable narrator</u> and <u>broken narrative.</u> This common aspect indicates further that there is, in **La Chute**, a covert allusion to **Lord Jim**. Point of view and handling of language are the pertinent 'tools' Conrad uses in his system of representation. Yet for him as well as for Camus the faithfulness to the language of the Western Establishment becomes his source of anguish. Through discursive ploys, the two writers transpose their anguish to the reader. Thus the form of **Lord Jim** and **La Chute** contributes to distancing the reader from comprehending the 'meaning'. It is as if they wanted to 'annoy' us and/or secretly to get us to share their inner anguish. Conrad and Camus deploy a combination of stylistic devices such as 'oblique narration', and tropes such as irony and allegory which add to the two stories' equivocation, not to say obscurity. In what follows, we shall examine these devices and tropes and attempt to account for them –tracing back Conrad's and Camus's reasons behind using fragmented narratives in particular.

1-Allegorical Dimension and Symbolic Suggestions

Allegory is the common ground on which the two writers' fictions rest. Through it Conrad ensures the symbolic nature of his tale. Allegory is *"a symbolic mode or an extended metaphor"* (Childs&Fowler 04) that achieves timelessness and impersonality. Typically an allegory involves the interaction of multiple symbols which together create a moral or spiritual meaning. In the case of **Lord Jim**, the meaning is more specifically philosophical: Conrad speculates on the human condition. The protagonist, Jim, *"represents the supreme development of philosophical exoticism, which can only be perpetrated and survive through the hero's refusal to take on a visible human form."* (Darras 26). This means that the characters of allegories are embodiments of abstract ideas. This is validated in **Lord Jim** by Marlow's words: *"Jim remains under a cloud"* (311) (1). Elsewhere he states:

> [T]here are days when the reality of [Jim's] existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force; and yet upon my honour there are moments, too, when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth, ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades. (313)

Likewise **La Chute** is written in an allegorical mode. It, too, can be read as a reflection on the human condition. In other words, the narrator-hero serves as a 'spokesman' of the absurdity of human existence in the twentieth century. In Clamence's own words, *"that's really what I am, having taken refuge in a desert of stones, fogs, and stagnant waters –an empty prophet for shabby times."* (Camus 41) (2).

La Chute dramatizes Camus's personal struggle to effect political change in French colonial Algeria. Furthermore, the novel is an innuendo to the writer's isolation and exile from his native land. Like the enmeshed Clamence, Camus was never able to extricate

himself from the Algerian conflict. Thus, symbolically, the ousting of Clamence from the Parisian *Paradise* to the *Inferno* of Amsterdam is an allusion to Camus's exile. Indeed symbolism dominates the narrative of **La Chute**. Through the mesh of words, Clamence is entrapped in a modern *Inferno*. For him, Amsterdam is hell on earth, *"a soggy hell, indeed! Everything horizontal, no relief; space colorless, and life dead. Is it not universal obliteration, everlasting nothingness made visible? No human beings, above all, no human beings!"* (25). Furthermore, Amsterdam is described as a land of nowhere, a 'no-man's land', analogous to Dante's Southern hemisphere. As Clamence puts it: *"Have you noticed that Amsterdam's concentric canals resemble the circles of hell?"* (05). Amsterdam is not a real setting but *"a dream of gold and smoke –smokier by day, more gilded by night."* (Ibid.). It is as if Camus himself were caught in that maze, in the green hell of the canals. Put simply, Amsterdam is a labyrinthine setting: *"We shall never get out of this immense holy-waterfount."* (38) The fogs and concentric circles of the city are obvious Dantesque symbols. In this regard, it is pertinent to say that to understand the novel, it is necessary to be aware of the literary parallels and allusions that Camus refers to in his work. As the formal structure of **La Chute** is parallel to that of Dante's **Inferno**, we must refer back to the latter in order to fully perceive what Camus has to say.

On the surface, **La Chute** is simply a series of conversations divided artificially into sections with each section representing an evening monologue set in a different part of Amsterdam. There are a number of stages which Clamence goes through before he reaches –if he really manages to– his final station. These stages recall those of the **Inferno**. Clamence's fall is a spiritual decline to the basest forms of sin; whereas in the **Inferno**, what we have is a physical descent to the centre of hell. 'Mexico-city bar' is compared to one of

the circles of hell in Dante's *Inferno*; a place where people from all over the world come and go.

The allegorical import and the dantesque allusion clearly show that **La Chute** is *"un roman à thèse."* (Anglard 12). But it is not just that. As a matter of fact, the author's aim is not only to illustrate his absurdist vision of the world; it is also and especially to 'solidify' the contradictions that define the human condition.

Indeed, because of his deployment of myriad symbolic suggestions, Camus's message cannot be understood easily. It is buried beneath Clamence's confusions and negations. We shall therefore attempt to seek the meaning outside the novel; in other works by Camus. Indeed because of its many ambiguities, **La Chute** is considered as Camus's most difficult work. There are constant shifts in perspective and no clearly defined portrayal of Clamence. He says: *"Open the window a little, please, it's frightfully hot. Not too much, for I am cold also."* (48). Clamence is an actor playing different roles: Satan, Christ, etc. His confusion reflects the confused *"ambiguous"* (40) modern world. He says*: "I read the melancholy of the common condition and the despair of not being able to escape it. And as for me, I pity without absolving, I understand without forgiving."* (50). Furthermore, his forename, Jean-Baptiste, and much of the surrounding symbolism allude to Saint-John-the Baptist. Clamence situates himself in the continuity of that saint who announced the arrival of the Saviour and who administrated a new form of baptism (3). In the novel, when Clamence plunges into the river, the scene becomes an emblem/a sign of a sacrificial descent leading, paradoxically, to salvation and rebirth. Clamence calls himself *"false prophet"* (52) living in duplicity: *"I lived my whole life under a double code [...]. Since I was a liar, I would reveal this and hurl my*

duplicity in the face of all those imbeciles, even before they discovered it." (31-2). He is an anonymous voice that claims to expose the *"fundamental duplicity of the human being"* (29). Clamence's paradoxical assertions —*"I am a judge-penitent"* (41)— and the disorientating symbolic suggestions he provides inhibit the reader's comprehension of the story.

From another perspective, Camus's diction in the novel points to a Greco-Christian loyalty. He adopts/borrows a rich diction from Christianity: 'sons of Rachel', 'Baptism', 'confession', 'penitent', 'Christ', etc. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that Camus deploys in *La Chute* most of the entire religious arsenal that Christianity offered him to which he adds Ancient Greek mythology. We should bear in mind, after all, that Camus writes for a Western intelligentsia. Camus's true spiritual motherland was classical Greece. On many occasions he said that he felt: *"closer to the values of the ancient world than [he does] to the Christian ones."* (Qtd. in Peyre 23). Nonetheless *La Chute* shows that Camus seems to have, belatedly, 'converted' to Christianity. It must be pointed out however that Camus's conception of Christianity was rather unorthodox; i.e. he turned his mind in the direction of Christianity but *"he was not in fact a Christian"* (O'Brien, **Writers and Politics** 102). In this regard, we shall briefly discuss this specific turning point in Camus's life with a view to better understanding *La Chute*.

The tone of *La Chute* draws no doubt on Camus's intention to absolve himself of his 'sins'. In Clamence's words, Camus seems to admit: *"Only, the confession of my crimes allows me to begin again lighter in heart and to taste a double enjoyment, first of my nature and secondly of a charming repentance."* (50). But what is interesting to remark here is that Camus's 'conversion' coincided in time with his (failed) attempt to bring 'civil peace' to the

two communities of Algeria. Thus, reviewing **La Chute**, in an article entitled "Monsieur Camus Changes his Climate", Conor Cruise O'Brien notes that:

> M. Camus, standing between two proud and bitter communities, whose pride and bitterness he cannot in either case fully share, turns his mind in the direction of humility and peace and therefore, with the culture which is his, to a certain style of Christian conscience. (O'Brien 102)

O'Brien attributes finally the religious "richness of **La Chute**" to a *"whirl of conflicts"* (Ibid.) within Camus's mind. In other words, O'Brien seems to suggest that **La Chute** is Camus's *chemin de croix*.

In **Lord Jim**, Conrad too complies with the Western literary tradition. Marlow portrays Jim first as some sort of belated-errant-knight: *"I liked his appearance; I knew his appearance; he came from the right place; he was one of us."* (43). More in tune with the times, in his portrayal of Jim, Conrad draws on the myth of the English gentleman and inevitably adheres to the rhetoric of political and cultural dominance. But the Quixotic and imitation-Byronic nature of Jim point towards a quest romance which actually foreshadows an inverted initiation quest. In other words, **Lord Jim** is written in the form of a romance, but a degraded romance, as we shall see presently. Northrop Frye defines romance thus:

> The essential difference between novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to 'create' real people so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in romance that we find [...] [the] romancer deals with individuality, with characters in *vacuo* idealized by revelry. (Frye 304-5)

The romance genre makes of the hero's quest as a journey into the unknown. The Victorian discourse about the Orient tended towards this form of romance. The narrative of **Lord Jim** mimics the imperial quest romance whereby the heroic Western penetration of the untamed Orient is the central theme. Jim, as the white representative of a higher level of

social evolution, penetrates the darkness of *Patusan*. Or, put otherwise Jim is a mythic

English man who journeys to an exotic jungle in quest of personal rehabilitation:

> Comme Kurtz également, Jim cherche refuge dans une communauté éloignée, se met à l'écart de la civilisation pour reconstituer un espace 'utopique' où il exerce le pouvoir et devient une figure héroïque, quasi légendaire. (Manegaldo 76)

In this way, Jim's appearance is fit to make of him a courageous European man:

> He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull. His voice was deep, loud, and his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion which had nothing aggressive in it. It seemed a necessity, and it was directed apparently as much at himself as at anybody else. He was spotlessly neat, appareled in immaculate white from shoes to hat, [...] he was very popular. (09)

Consequently, Marlow describes Jim as a hero —wrestling with dark, evil forces—who

achieves an almost legendary status:

> He was white from head to foot, and remained persistently visible with the stronghold of the night at his back [...] For me that white figure in the stillness of coast and sea seemed to stand at the heart of a vast enigma. The twilight was ebbing fast from the sky above his head, the strip of sand had sunk already under his feet. (253)

Yet, unlike the traditional hero of romance who is rewarded by true knowledge, Jim never

sees the naked face of the veiled *"Eastern bride"* (313). Alone and sombre figure, he remains

blind to the reality until the end:

> He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic. [he] had beheld the face of that opportunity, which like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side. [...] He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct. (313)

Jim's story then is an inverted initiation quest because, unlike Ulysses, he does not become

wise or reaches self-knowledge. The same is true with Clamence in **La Chute** as he affirms: *"I*

haven't changed my way of life." (50). Both narratives can be regarded as degraded quests for self-knowledge.

Indeed Conrad writes **Lord Jim,** predictably, for the 'minds and bosoms' of his Western readers. As an alien, he felt compelled to give evidence of his allegiance to the English Establishment. It must be pointed out here that the scientific institutions and the conservative institutions (as *Blackwood's* Magazine) signal the limitations imposed, albeit implicitly, by the very language and worldview available to Conrad.

Lord Jim comprises a myriad use of metaphors and symbols. This indeed helps to blur the meaning of the story. According to Edward Said, Conrad uses *"retrospective and investigative narrative devices"* (Said 97). As we shall try to show, Marlow's narrative needs decoding. The reader is forced to carry on an activity of decipherment. Marlow's language in **Lord Jim**, as it is in **Heart of Darkness**, is made to be dense with terms like 'inscrutable', 'unspeakable'; that is, words that denote imprecision and non-clarity. These words are tinged also with uncertainty. Therefore, the meaning of Jim's story is not clear. Marlow constantly postpones it and concludes that the meaning of Jim's story is an *"enigma"* (253). He sometimes decides that there is no meaning to be found at all. This uncertainty about language is the key feature of Conrad's style. It carries depths of (seeming) profundity and even meaninglessness. On the other hand, Conrad's diction is also linked with the difficult themes he deals with. This points to the dual relationship between form and content; i.e. the confusion of the narrative form reflects the blurring of ideals.

2-The Confessional Type of Narrative

Both **Lord Jim** and **La Chute** share confessional type of narration, which is a kind of writing that invites the reader's compassion. Confession is a religious practice. In Catholicism, the sinner confesses to a priest aiming at reaching penitence (a sacrament for expiation). A sincere repentance purifies the sinner. Confession leads to God's forgiveness. As a literary device, confession is of a double import: one's confession to God and one's confession to society.

Hence in **La Chute** Camus made a pause for purpose of self-analysis. Indeed we may say that he made his *examen de conscience*. This internal withdrawal is exemplified in **La Chute** which is considered the most existentialist of his literary works. On the surface, it is a simple narrative as Jean-Baptist Clamence recounts the events from the last few years of his life. On a much deeper level, **La Chute** is Camus's written confession. It reveals Camus more than in any previous work. Jean-Baptist Clamence is a character not only representing Camus's *jeu de glace*, but also his guilt and repentance.

Camus stated once *"Je suis excédé [...] de cette réputation d'austérité et de vertu – dont je suis bien indigne– et que l'on m'assène comme le pavé de l'ours"* (Qtd. in Hermet 180). Thus through Clamence's words–*"I had collapsed in public"* (19) – in **La Chute**, Camus appears as the man who *"conscient de ses faiblesses et soucieux de vérité, aurait voulu détruire une réputation de sainteté laïque qu'il estime ne pas mériter"* (Hermet 179). Clamence examines his past life and judges it. To his listener he confesses the whole series of his vices, failures, and limitations: *"Only the confession of my crimes allows me to begin again lighter in heart and to taste a double enjoyment, first of my nature and secondly of a charming repentance"* (50). By this process of self-accusation, he forces others also to

condemn themselves as well. So he becomes their mirror, their conscience. In other words, Clamence—*"in indulging in public confession"* (49)—wants/wishes to unburden his conscience putting forward self-justification and seeking self-condemnation. He will therefore gain the sympathy of the Other: *"We are all guilty"* (41).

Clamence/Camus acknowledges his previous self-deceptions/delusions:

I lived my whole life under a double code, and my most serious acts were often the ones in which I was the least involved. Wasn't that after all the reason that E...] I could not forgive myself, that made me revolt most violently against the *judgment I felt* forming in me and around me, and that forced me to seek an escape? (31).

Indeed there are frequent avowals of weakness. The protagonist makes a lengthy confession about all the women he seduced or harmed, one man he may even have allowed to die. He acknowledges his intellectual impotence and the nature of his egoistic love: *"I lived consequently without any other continuity than that, from day to day, of I-I-I"* (17). But his confession does not change his personality. He remains basically cynical and domineering. This makes us question his sincerity.

Indeed Clamence's confession is, as Anglard writes *"une confession truquée"* (Anglard 10) as it is fraught with gaps and silences. He narrates his stay in Paris but not his entire life story. Clamence refers to what he did, or saw, or felt. It is personal and subjective. He uses tricks to further dominate the conscience of his interlocutor. Confession implies the necessity of telling the truth. Yet Clamence does not tell the truth. He unsurprisingly states:

I have ceased to like anything but confessions and authors of confessions write especially to avoid confessing to tell nothing of what they know. When they claim to get to the painful admissions, you have to watch out. (42)

Camus via Clamence follows in the ritual of those authors of confession but he never reaches the second stage; i.e. he does not ask actually for forgiveness or repentance. As Clamence affirms:

> We don't want to improve ourselves or be bettered, for we should first have to be judged in default. We merely wish to be pitied and encouraged in the course we have chosen. In short, we should like, at the same time, to cease being guilty and yet not to make the effort of cleansing ourselves. (29)

Instead, Clamence seeks to falsify/disguise reality: *"c'est le moment de se méfier, on va maquiller le cadavre"* (Camus, **La Chute** 1538). Moreover, Clamence says: *"J'avançais ainsi dans la surface de la vie, dans les mots en quelque sorte, jamais dans la réalité."* (Ibid., 1501) (4). Thus he provides an elusive reality. In a word, Clamence (Camus) wants 'to have his cake and eat it too'. Hence his strategic duplicity.

Likewise, Jim in **Lord Jim** seeks through confession the compassion of a listener. It is the story of a depressed man who provides an elusive reality; or rather it is the story of a person who went through upheavals in his lifetime and presents as a true story the illusion of reality.

The novel is divided into two parts: the first part deals with Jim's moral failure. The second part deals with his relative success. Each part mirrors the other. Jim becomes a Tuan, a lord. Yet he commits suicide because he discovers that he has fallen short of his own standards. He thus retreats from reality. Because he lacks courage, Jim confesses:

> For the best of us there is a point when you let go everything in an abominable funk. Fear is sure to come. And you have got to live, knowing that you can be broken. Though some do not believe that all are so weak each is afraid of himself. Man is born a coward. It would be too easy otherwise. (76)

Jim feels guilty. He thus relinquishes his grandiose dreams. Marlow is sympathetic towards Jim and advises him: *"make up for it"* (88).

Indeed all the events in the novel hang suspended in the narrator's (timeless) memory until he needs them. This memory and this speculating intelligence belong to Marlow; i.e. he is the dominating voice in the narrative. Most of the whole story in **Lord Jim** is built out of Marlow's telling. The latter can probably be trusted most of the time. But we need to keep on our guard. He is not fully reliable. This is what we shall explore presently.

3-Unreliable Narration and Irony

Conrad and Camus doubly insulate themselves behind their narrators. Unreliable narration is a kind of confession riddled with self-justification. Hence an unreliable narrator is not a trustworthy character. Unlike the Victorian novel that uses a narrator who represents a trustworthy point of view and also a safe vintage point from which to watch the hearts and minds of the characters, Conrad does not employ a 'reliable' narrator.

There is an elaborately woven scheme of narration in **Lord Jim**. The narrative comes to the reader primarily through Marlow. Marlow identifies with Jim's fallibilities. He says: *"I looked at [Jim] with the same sort of feeling I might be fairly conceived to experience."* (99). The narrative is authoritative because Marlow has complete control over the story. In many ways, he exercises his power; yet in complicated ways. He manipulates the flow of the narrative by creating juxtapositions and contrasts that highlight some aspects in the story of Jim. To cite but one example, Marlow says: *"[Jim] has his place neither in the background nor in the fore ground of the story; he is simply seen skulking on its outskirts, enigmatical and unclean, tainting the fragrance of its youth and of its naîveness."* (216). The reader is invited

to get involved through differing degrees of reliability. But Marlow is unfathomable. One of the listeners says: *"you are so subtle, Marlow"* (76). His ambiguity increases when he begins his retelling of what Jim told him by declaring himself an unfit *"receptacle of confession"* (182). Marlow thus seems enigmatic. His function in the book, apart from narrating, is to interpret psychologically and morally Jim's actions. Yet he repeatedly mentions his faulty memory and the words' inevitable incapacity to fully account for Jim's fate. He states: *"My weakness consists in not having a discriminating eye for the incidental –for the externals."* (76). And Jim himself is just as enigmatic.

The novel's structure raises many questions about Marlow's account of Jim's story. The final part for example consists of Marlow's 'reconstruction' of Jim's death and the incidents preceding it, which Marlow gathered from discussions with Gentleman Brown and Jim's former lover. In fact Marlow does not always specify who told him what. Indeed he has not seen the *"unflinching"* (313) expressions of Jim before his death. Yet he takes Jim's words to mean a supposedly brave acceptance of death. The man who receives Marlow's description of Jim's last days remains unsure about Marlow's interpretation. Indeed, all along the story, Marlow as a narrator continues to impose his pretensions. Furthermore, he cannot claim real knowledge of Jim: *"I wanted to know –and to this day I don't know, I can only guess"* (123). Marlow is quite clearly an unreliable narrator. Edward Said, in "Conrad: the Presentation of Narrative", comments on him as *"a narrator preventing the wrong sort of interpretation"* (Said 95). This means that Marlow's interpretations of Jim's experience are not to be completely trusted. When he ultimately states: *"was I so very wrong after all?"* (313)—we as readers doubt about his sincerity. Marlow's utterances are fraught with uncertainty. His narrative proceeds in self-questioning mode:

I don't pretend I understood [Jim]. The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses through the shifting rents in a thick fog –bits of vivid and vanishing detail, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of a country [...], upon the whole he was misleading. (243)

Actually, Jim himself is misleading. Marlow's understanding of him is not clear and his authority on the narrative is a sham. At the same time the narrator's rhetorical interruptions draw his reader's attention to the *"symbolically suggestive language which Marlow articulates to interpret the mystery of Jim's personality."* (Ambrosini 118). Moreover, there is a contradiction at the heart of the whole narrative. This may be due to the conflicting views of the other 'internal' narrators as we shall explain later.

Like **Lord Jim**, **La Chute** rests entirely on the unreliable narration of Jean-Baptiste Clamence. Through his impersonal narration, he deceives the reader because he resorts to *"un discours mystificateur"* (Anglard 13). The reader is asked to decipher and to shift through the flow of complex and obscure words and fill in the unspoken utterances. It is true that we are seeing through the eyes of Clamence, but this does not mean that we accept totally the narrator as a reliable guide. As he himself attests: *"I know what you're thinking, it's very hard to disentangle the true from the false in what I'm saying."* (42). Indeed there are contradictions in his speech as he admits that he fabricates *"a portrait which is the image of all and of no one. A mask"* (49). Clamence's abrupt shifts give an overall impression of contradictions suggesting the insanity of the speaker: *"Promise to tell the truth and then lie as best as you can."* (29). Clamence misleads his listener/reader and therefore we too feel lost, adrift in a Northern haze. All that he says creates a state of confusion. At the end of **La Chute** we uneasily feel that we have been listening to an enigmatic voice and seeing a penitent shadow *"en trompe-l'oeil"* (02).

The unreliable narrator fails to see the connections between events in the story. This device is sometimes used for purposes of irony. As a matter of fact unreliable narration depends on irony. It is a device for excluding as well as for including. The effect of irony is that of detachment. There is an ironic tone in *La Chute*. Irony is Camus's literary strategy to draw the reader to share the self-doubt and cynicism of Clamence and express sympathetic identification with his 'case'. Furthermore, it shows Clamence's true/false sincerity.

It must be pointed out that the discursive technique which Camus employs to convey Clamence's message is very complex. *La Chute* is founded on a *"pseudo-dialogue"* (Anglard 69). As Clamence states: *"Nous avons remplacé le dialogue par le communiqué "*(Camus, *La Chute* 1499) (5). More precisely, the novel is a monologue in the shape of *"dialogue implicite"* (Fitch 25). In other words, it is a false dialogue. The protagonist says: *"Pleased to know you. You are in business, no doubt? In a way? Excellent reply! Judicious too: in all things we are merely 'in a way'."* (03). Here Jean-Baptist Clamence, the narrator and sole speaker of *La Chute*, has one dialogue with a silent partner whose rejoinders are suggested but not heard. His presence is made very real by the skilful monologue of Clamence. Camus accounts for his choice of the technique of implied dialogue as follows:

> L'erreur de l'art modern est presque toujours de faire passer le moyen avant la fin, la forme avant le fond, la technique avant le sujet. Si les techniques d'art me passionnent et si je cherche à les posséder toutes, c'est que je veux pouvoir m'en servir librement, les réduire au rang d'outils. Je ne crois pas en tout cas que *La Chute* puisse rejoindre les recherches dont vous parlez. C'est beaucoup plus simple. J'y ai utilisé une technique de théâtre (le monologue dramatique et le dialogue implicite) pour décrire un comédien tragique. J'ai adapté la forme au sujet, voilà tout. (Qtd. in Anglard 70-71)

Thus, according to Camus, this narrative choice is the appropriate technique, used in *La Chute*, to portray the modern man caught in an ambiguous world without definite moral values and who becomes progressively enslaved by his tormented conscience.

Indeed both Clamence and Marlow are involved in –are the masterminds of– a deliberate mystification. They both lull the reader with a certain metaphysical 'glamour' whereas what they actually do is conceal what they would not like the reader to know. In a way, Marlow contributes to strengthening the Victorian imperialist ideology. Clamence for his part foregrounds his problems of conscience in order to get the reader to ignore the 'presence' of the Algerian war. Both aim at distracting the reader.

4-Broken Narrative, A-chronology, and Inconclusive Tale

Narrative is the text itself, the particular structure, the specific manner in which a story is presented. Conrad's story here is shown as a tale told to an audience of listeners. *Lord Jim* is characterized by a break in the narrative as we move from the story of the *Patna* to a more romantic account of Jim's new career in *Patusan*. The novel in fact bears witness to gaps and discontinuities. Time shifts continually in *Lord Jim*; there is no spatial unity as that provided by the *Nellie* in *Heart of Darkness*:

> In *Heart of Darkness*, the frame narrator's intervention which allows Conrad to define how to read the story immediately follows Marlow's statement that his audience can see the story because they see him, E...]. In *Lord Jim*, which lacks the narrational concern about storytelling that characterizes *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad challenges the mental apathy which limits the reader's response instead of suggesting a particular reading model. (Ambrosini 160)

This means that, because the narrative structure is complicated, the reader is distanced from the events described in *Lord Jim*. The surrounding shell has many layers, i.e. meaning is

found in the interpretation within an interpretation because the narrative structure is complicated.

In fact, in **Lord Jim**, there are several voices counterpointing each other. The complex story of Jim is told by many narrators who help unravel it. Hence Conrad creates a character who seems to be more than he really is. The narrative is divided into sequences. The first three chapters are narrated by the omniscient narrator/novelist, who in chapter four shifts to Jim and shortly introduces Marlow as the one who remembers Jim's story. In chapter five, Marlow takes over the narration from the novelist and continues in direct command through chapter thirty-five. Chapter thirty-six begins a new narrative method, a letter that Marlow sends two years later. The recipient of the letter who is introduced by the omniscient novelist then relates the letter, itself a patchwork of Marlow's observations over a period of time and lacking in real continuity. In chapter thirty-seven, Marlow's letter is presented, and he reveals that the source for his information about Jim comes from someone else, the villain Brown. Marlow's letter ends and his story of what happened begins in chapter thirty-eight. This narrative begins with Marlow's comment that *"it all begins... with the man called Brown"*, continues to the end of the novel with the death of Jim and Stein's waving *"his hand sadly at his butterflies"* (313). These are the divisions of the narrative but still these divisions represent a shift back and forth in time with interventions of Jim's words and comments by Marlow. It seems that Conrad uses a *"textual labyrinth"* (Coroneos 110) to create an ambiguity in the whole tale. The narrative is ambiguous because it is almost entirely transmitted orally. Thus the shape and form of the story are telling and hearing. Jim is heard and spoken about more than he is seen directly in the narrative setting. When he is seen,

Marlow says: *"For me that white figure [...] seemed to stand at the heart of a vast enigma."* (253).

In the novel Conrad puts quotation marks around direct speech to convey the sense of Marlow reporting what was reported to him so much so that when Marlow repeats what Jim said another man said, Conrad requires three sets of quotation marks. There is an overlapping of narrators within narrators. The novel is a *"patchwork of narrative voices"* (Ambrosini 140). This is akin to Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism'. Bakhtin's use of the term 'dialogism' in a very broad sense indicates the polyphonic play of different voices in the literary text, without the assumption of a dominant, monolithic authoritative voice. Yet in **Lord Jim** the multiple points of view are clearly dominated by a single voice –that of Marlow: *"Les témoignages successifs [...] constituent un portrait en forme de puzzle où seule la voix de [Marlow] apparaît dominante, émergeante de la polyphonie discordante des autres voix."* (Manegaldo 73).

The first part of Jim's story is told by an omniscient narrator who opens the narrative and who allows direct access to the hero's mind. Then he 'blocks' that access early in the story. In fact, the bulk of the novel is made up of Marlow's telling of Jim's story to the group of listeners in the darkness. These listeners stand between the reader and Marlow's telling: *"He existed for me"*, says Marlow, *"and after all it is only through me that he exists for you. I've led him out by the hand; I have paraded him before you."* (298). Yet information about Jim's personality comes also from other characters such as Stein, Brown, Jewel, the French Lieutnant, etc. They all tell parts of Jim's story. This means that Marlow does not spin his yarn in a void, but in a highly polemical context, where his interpretation is in conflict not

only with the impersonal/omniscient narrator's presentation of Jim, but also with that of the other 'internal' narrators. Thus Marlow's interpretation of Jim is put into question by the reader because the tale, seemingly spoken in Marlow's voice, is voiced instead by other narrators. The significance of this narratological structure has been debated by many critics.

According to Con Coroneos, it is a narrative device on the part of Conrad that *"creates the illusion of an unmediated relationship between the tale teller and the tale hearer."* (Coroneos 115). For John G. Peters, such a narrative technique represents unreality because *"by employing multiple narrators, Conrad emphasizes the uncertainty of the final aggregate, suggesting that since all information is filtered through a human consciousness, knowledge can never be certain."* (Peters 64). Furthermore the multiple narrative techniques in **Lord Jim** may distance the reader from the true meaning of the tale. As a matter of truth, no point of view is entirely trustworthy because as J. Hillis Miller comments, the novel is *"a complex design of interrelated minds, no one of which can be taken as a secure point of reference from which the others may be judged."* (Miller 106).

The use of multiple narrators has an implicit intent on the part of Conrad. This is in particular what Chinua Achebe confirms in his stricture against Conrad. According to Achebe, Conrad *"appears to go to considerable pains to set up layers of insulation between himself and the moral universe of his story, in order to draw a <u>cordon sanitaire</u> between himself and the moral and psychological malaise of his narrator"* (Achebe 08). The method of a narrator-within-the-narrator allows Conrad to effectively distance himself from the thoughts and actions of Marlow, while at the same time giving leeway to the reader to analyse Marlow's

tale and grasp the underlying 'meaning'. Therefore, most critics defend Conrad by citing the oblique convention of narrative.

Tied to Conrad's use of multiple narrators is his use of a-chronological narration. Conrad's plot is not just an (intricate) causal web. It is a puzzling and arbitrary one. In other words, there is no causal chain, no chronology. Readers find it difficult to follow the sequence of events. The disruption of the chronological time sequence occurs in part because of multiple narrators telling different parts of the story. Conrad's reasons however for employing an a-chronological narrative are another matter. This narrative form represents the issues raised in the novel. In other words, the confusion of the narrative technique creates confusion in the moral issues considered:

> Dans **Lord Jim**, l'invention narrative, la subtilité du jeu sur la temporalité, les stratégies de retardement, la multiplicité des points de vue, sont au service d'une vision du monde problématique qui vise à mettre en évidence l'ambivalence, le caractère énigmatique et fluctuant de la réalité, la relativité des concepts intellectuels et moraux. (Manegaldo 82)

Indeed this narrative methodology emphasizes the subjectivity of knowledge and the impossibility of taking anything for granted. For example, Marlow's concluding words do not signal the possibility of a reading that would come to terms with both the meaning of Jim's life and the meaning of **Lord Jim** as a 'fable'. The end is burdened with a disturbing ambivalence. Marlow's rhetorical question *"was I so very wrong after all?"* (313) shows his inconclusive response to Jim; his own assessment of Jim is put into question. Therefore the ambiguity of the end of **Lord Jim** is so blatant that the reader is compelled to engage in the process of interpreting Jim a-new. While Marlow insists that Jim is *"one of us"*, he emphasizes also Jim's 'inscrutable' nature, his oddity. Marlow's narrative is therefore

inconclusive since he admits that he cannot declare the truth about Jim and that Jim remains in a peculiar way indistinguishable from his compelling but enigmatic power over us. He is very akin to Clamence. The two protagonists are schematas of ambiguous reality.

Both Conrad and Camus have adopted a narrative structure that does not enable the heroes to escape from the circle of their destiny. Jim realizes ultimately that *"there is no escape"* (300). He must flee or die. He finds out that it is impossible to retreat without shame. Likewise, Clamence finds no escape from the 'malconfort' of his existence: *"there is no escape"* (28). The latter's desire to escape through the transformation of his space elsewhere or even nowhere is doomed to fail. He went from 'ici'; that is, the unlivable, in an attempt to create the alternative space an 'ailleurs' which fails him because this other universe has no concrete shape. In this maze, *"[w]hen one comes from the outside, as one gradually goes through those circles, life –and hence its crimes– becomes denser, darker."* (05). **La Chute** inconclusively 'closes' thus: *"It's too late now. It wil always be too late. Fortunately!"* (52). Camus seems to advocate that there is no escape/no redemption from the guilty moral conscience. There is no salvation for man. The only possibility left is man's ability to escape the hell of one's ego. The question of how to ignore one's ego is deliberately unresolved. Clamence thus is the embodiment of every man's impossibility to escape his dilemma. The novel remains a problematic one and the heroes problematic as well. The confusion is never resolved. We as readers are left intentionally baffled about one or more questions raised by the work. The final *"éclaircissement"* (Booth 297) is a vision of total meaninglessness. In this respect, Wayne Booth explains:

> One can theoretically project a novel in which no attempt would be made to give a
> sense of progression toward any conclusion or final illumination. Such a work might

simply convey an all-pervasive sense that no belief is possible, that all is chaos, that nobody sees his way clearly, that we are all engaged in a 'journey to the end of the night'. In a work of this kind, not only would the narrator and reader move together through the unanswered questions as they arise, but presumably the implied author would move with them; no one could be the wiser for having read the book. The author of such a work must leave the action unresolved: any resolution would imply a standard of values in relation to which one situation would be more nearly final than another. Only an unresolved sense of meaningless continuation could do justice to a full nihilism of this kind. (Ibid.)

This meaningless world which both Conrad and Camus create in *Lord Jim* and *La Chute* stems from their inability to grapple with the realities of their respective societies. The absurd is the only suitable 'explanation' left for a character caught in an ethical dead end. And it is by extension Conrad's and Camus's shaky refuge from direct confrontation with the colonial predicament.

Camus's paralysis is evident in *La Chute*. In the novel there exists a series of silences, of failures of articulation that seem at odds with the clarity and honesty of what Camus represents: *"The silence that followed [...] seemed interminable."* (25). Therefore we may say that the novel reflects Camus's attitude toward his native country. The scene of the bridge and the drowning girl become emblematic of the historical situation of Algeria. Clamence says:

On the bridge I passed behind a figure leaning over the railing and seeming to stare at the river. On closer view, I made out a slim young woman dressed in black. The neck of her back, cool and damp between her dark hair and coat collar, stirred me. But I went on after a moment's hesitation. (25)

Elsewhere, Clamence admits: *"I crossed over North Africa [...]. But in Africa the situation was not clear; the opposing parties seemed to be equally right and I stood aloof."* (43). Indeed Camus's ideological 'strife' marks his attitude towards the Algerian issue. He once declared: *"Je n'ai jamais rien écrit qui ne se rattache de près ou de loin à la terre où je suis né; c'est à*

elle et à son malheur que vont toutes mes pensées" (Qtd. in Siblot 179). Yet he was unable to take a firm stand on behalf of the Algerians in their struggle for independence. In other words,

> Contradictions arose from Camus's predicament as a *pied-noir* [who was] consciously frozen in historical immobility and incapable of directly confronting the problem of the European-Arab relation which continued to work in his sub-conscious and surfaced in his fiction as an admission of historical guilt. (Kulkarni 1528)

At the time of writing **La Chute**, Camus went through difficult personal circumstances. He felt morally and intellectually alone. That feeling goes back to the outbreak, in 1954, of the Algerian war for independence. In 1956, Camus failed to impose the idea of a civil truce accepted by all belligerents. In fact he felt that he could not advocate any course of action except one of reconciliation for the 'the two peoples of Algeria' and he would not support any official policy. Desperately, he interpreted the failure of his self-assigned mission by the image of a 'fall'. In one of his statements he declared: *"Si je voyais une action possible, même la plus folle, je la tenterais. Mais nous dévalons vers l'abîme, nous y sommes déjà."* (Qtd. in Lévi-Valensi 29). Consequently, Camus's response to the Algerian issue took the form of silence. His silence was the epitome of an attitude. For his silence was more like a long speech to which no one was listening. In Stockholm in 1957, Camus responded to an Algerian student who rebuked him for his silence:

> I have always denounced terrorism. I must also denounce a terrorism which is exercised blindly, in the streets of Algiers for example, and which one day could strike my mother or my family. I believe in justice, but I shall defend my mother before justice. (Qtd. in Apter 499)

This statement expresses, in a casual way, some of the more complex tensions informing Camus's response to the Algerian liberation war against French colonial rule, a response that has since become the most controversial topic concerning Camus's life and career.

Statements like the one cited above, have led his contemporaries and critics to accuse him of defending the *status quo* in colonial Algeria.

Apart from Edward Said, Conor Cruise O'Brien in particular has indicted Camus for what he saw as his gross mishandling of the racial and colonial issues of Algeria. O'Brien criticized Camus for his fantastical/utopian vision of an Algeria to which he belonged; i.e. an Algeria in which 'all Algerians' shared a common culture (O'Brien, **Albert Camus** 10-11). He reproached Camus with justifying a continued colonial presence and for being unable to imagine an Algeria in which he, and other *pieds-noirs*, did not exist. O'Brien and other critics have suggested that Camus's inability to see the need for Algerian independence was reflected even in his novels and stories, in his frequent portrayal of Arabs who are less than *"stick figures holding up the scenery, or scopic effects, tracking Euro pean inquisitors with malevolent diffidence."* (Apter 503). Tacitly, Camus's philosophy of the absurd implicitly defends a perennial French presence in Algeria. At the same time, it 'turns a blind eye' on the longstanding historical injustice in his native country. Camus's silence, as a *petit blanc*, could be regarded as a token of allegiance to "*La France, mère des armes, des arts et des lettres*" (Cf. Du Bellay, **Les Poètes de la Pléiade**).

Likewise, Conrad in **Lord Jim** attempts to step outside the circle of imperialistic certitudes. In this regard, Ngugi comments:

> On the whole I found Conrad's vision limited. His ambivalence towards imperialism – and it was imperialism that supplied him with the setting and subject matter of his novels– could never let him go beyond the balancing acts of liberal humanism. (Ngugi 76)

The tale's symbolic bias, the narrator's acknowledged doubts, and the ambiguous quality of the tale blur all meaning. Indeed, the tale reflects the author's escapism. Through formal

manipulations, Conrad sets up layers of insulation that hide his ideological contradictions. In *Lord Jim*, the narrative tactics splinter Conrad's critique of imperialism because political issues are at stake. Conrad was very conscious of that. Therefore

> [He] never really stated his attitude to the British Empire and all we know about it must be inferred by contrasting it with his attitude to Belgian imperialism in the Congo or to more 'subtle' forms of imperialism as portrayed in some of the so-called 'political' novels. One may of course maintain that he never dealt with the British Empire in detail, just as with British politics at large, because he was trying to get himself accepted as a citizen and an author by Britain and therefore needed all the benevolence he could summon from his foster country. (Bignami 199)

By resorting to evasive strategies (unreliable narrators, broken narrative, mise en abyme, allegory), Conrad raises a sort of smokescreen about the real problems of British imperialism. Similarly, Camus has followed Conrad in his allegorical maze. The two writers resort to discursive ploys to lenify the reader.

Notes

(1)-Conrad, Joseph. *Lord Jim: A Tale (1990)*. London: Vintage, 1994. All subsequent page references to the text belong to this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

(2) Camus, Albert. *The Fall (1956)*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. All subsequent further references to this English version will be cited parenthetically. Yet to show the power of the words in specific cases, some citations are from the original French version *The Fall*. The translations of the citations will be in the endnotes.

(3) Baptism is the first sacrament; pouring water on the new-born baby, the priest purifies the former from the original sin inherited from Adam.

*(4) " thus I pro gressed on the surface of life, in the realm of words as it were, never in reality." (**The Fall** 18).*

(5) "For the dialogue we have substituted the communiqué." (Ibid., 16).

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CONCLUSION

"Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other to feel the other, to explain the other to myself...At the conclusion of this study, I want the world to recognize, with me, the open door of every consciousness."

Frantz Fanon. ***Black Skin, White Masks***

"If nothing had any meaning, you would be right. But there is something that still has a mea n ing."

Albert Camus. ***Second Letter to a German Friend***

This dissertation, intentionally limited to dealing with Conrad's and Camus's evasive strategies, is a contribution to the demesne of comparative literature. The latter, as a branch of literary study, concerns itself with highlighting the links of analogy, kinship and influence between different literatures. Divergent literatures or literary texts are thus brought together, to highlight common aspects and hence better understand man's creative process (Pichois & Rousseau 174).

At this final stage of our research work, we can safely say that our analysis of Joseph Conrad's and Albert Camus's fictions –undertaken from a comparatist perspective, allows us to draw this one conclusion: there are undeniably many echoes of Conrad in Camus's fiction. Or, put in other terms, Camus writes his works (but not all) on the palimpsest of Conrad's fiction. For in the light of the previous chapters, the analogies between the two writers are too striking to be accidental. Yet in the absence of or rather in our inability to get concrete evidence of Camus's indebtedness to Conrad, we contend that affinities between Conrad and Camus –who have undergone the same experiences and have been under the same pressures– have led them to address similar problems, raise similar questions, and adopt nearly identical ideological stances as well as analogous philosophical outlooks. Therefore our conclusion stands on three major tentative explanations: the first one is to liken Conrad to Camus essentially in terms of philosophical preoccupations. The second is to stress the ambivalent attitudes of both Conrad and Camus towards imperialism. The third and most important explanation is to look briefly at the legacy of both writers in the postcolonial world.

As far as the philosophical outlook is concerned, there is undoubtedly a commonality between Conrad and Camus in this regard. To escape their immediate context and the issue

of colonialism, both authors shift their attention to universalist concerns or to the metaphysical questioning of man's being in the universe. Throughout our analysis, what both writers seem ostensibly to emphasize is the desperate situation of modern man; i.e. of the man who, having reneged God, feels himself utterly lost in a hostile and meaningless world: nothing is left for him but his own precarious, finite, mortal existence. Ostensibly thus Conrad and Camus focus on man's solitude, suffering and mortality while searching for a meaningful relationship with the universe.

Conrad sees the individual as the only significant centre of an indifferent world. He recognizes that every man is subject to the inescapable evils of irrational suffering, conflict, guilt and death. The existential philosopher calls these evils 'the absurd', whereby human purpose is reduced to nothingness. This existentialist view is incarnated by the brooding protagonists of Conrad's works. Faced with the absurd, man must find some kind of leverage, either a transcendental force or an indomitable passion. As such, they have a family resemblance so to speak, with the heroes of our two writers' contemporaries:

> The plight of man on whom life closes down inexorably...is the subject that has become familiar to us in modern literature. Ibsen, Mann, Gide and Kafka have successively employed it. It appears in Joyce, in Hemingway, in Dos Passos, and other novelists of our time. Its latest appearance is among the French existentialists, who have given heroism a new setting in the absurdity of society and the universe...The hero of modern fiction in James, Mann, Joyce, Kafka but no less in Conrad is the man marked by apartness and alienation. (Watts 132)

Conrad's philosophical perception of 'alienation' has similarities with existentialist thinking. His ability to write of human alienation, of man alone in the universe, is part and parcel of his worldview. Thus, in both *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, Conrad seems not to protest against anything, he is only illustrating a perennial aspect of the human condition. All alternatives to what he shows us are in fact worse. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad portrays

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the evils of nineteenth-century colonialism in Africa with extraordinary vividness. The Congo experience shows that idealism ends in corruption, and loneliness can force a man into a horrifying awareness of his identity. In **Lord Jim**, one comes to terms with his moral opposite, 'the secret sharer'. Conrad's fiction is thus a study of loneliness-in the-crowd from which the only escape is self-defeat. He seems to say that solitude is inevitable but destructive, and that society is necessary but corrupting.

By the same token, Camus's drama of existence is based on two truths. The first is man's desire for unity, for clarity and cohesion, a desire that springs from his quest for the absolute. The second is that the world which surrounds the individual who is searching for unity is unreasonable; it is rather chaotic, haphazard, and anarchical. The outcome is the absurd itself, which is essentially a separation between the human need for unity and the silence of a universe which lacks sense. Therefore, what characterizes Camus's attitude are despair and revolt. These are evident in both **L'Etranger** and **La Chute**. Raymond Williams summarizes Camus's views as follows:

> The condition of despair, as Camus describes it, occurs at the point of recognition of what is called 'the absurd'. This 'absurdity', in Camus, is less a doctrine than an experience. It is recognition of incompatibilities, between the intensity of physical life and the certainty of death; between man's insistent reasoning and the non-rational world he inhabits. These permanent contradictions can be intensified by particular circumstances: the decline of spontaneous life into mechanical routines; the awareness of isolation from others and even from ourselves. By whatever channel the recognition may come, the result can be an intense despair: a loss of meaning and value in one's world, one's society, one's own immediate life. (Williams 175)

Indeed this is the intellectual position which, though ambiguously, Camus rests on. In **The Myth of Sisyphus**, Camus shows that despair is fundamentally rooted in the absurdity of existence which signifies that we recognize and accept that there are no metaphysically

guaranteed directions for conduct. Thus Camus presumes the absence of any kind of universal logic or orientation generally associated with the idea of divinity.

Thus, in both of Conrad's and Camus's fictional works, man is thrown into a world of philosophical and metaphysical chaos. There is no harmony with the universe, no heroism, no coming together with French and Arabs, with whites and blacks. The novels of Conrad and Camus are a reflection of the changes murder wars wrought on human beings. Their works are about the alienation of man as well as about the un-reconciled relationship between races and civilizations.

Differing phraseology, but shared ideas, experiences, and feelings, become the focal point of Conrad and Camus taken together. Of central importance to our conclusion is the overlap that exists between Conrad's notion of existentialist thought and Camus's idea of the absurd. The absurd for Conrad is a revelation –not unlike the Joycean epiphany, of certain facets of the human condition as brought forth through the characters, places, events, and situations of his novels. Camus, for his part, erects the absurdity of the human existence as a central principle. Of course Conrad is not an existentialist in the technical-philosophical sense, since this philosophy post-dates his work. And we do not think that Conrad's heroes perceive the world as absurd and their existence as marked by anguish. But in **Heart of Darkness** and in some other works like **Lord Jim**, there is an anticipation, we think, of the notion of existentialist isolation, alienation, and the need to be loyal to a perceived truth, to accept it unflinchingly, to take responsibility for it. Indeed there is a subtle relation between the colonial predicament and the absurd predicament in both Conrad's and Camus's works. The crisis of late-colonial narratives is like the crisis of the

absurd. It is the shared predicament of late-colonial writers and absurdist writers that places Conrad alongside Camus, whom Conrad seems to have anticipated by forty years.

As we have stated earlier, the kinship between Conrad and Camus stems from their shared ideas and themes which, in a sense, are determined by nearly the same backgrounds. The two writers have a common cultural and historical matrix. They are situated at a crossroads from which they can reflect on the traumatic effects of imperialism on both colonizer and colonized.

Indeed the study of the biographical data and the historical background in the first chapter of our dissertation, by means of comparative analysis, has enabled us to establish Conrad's affinity with Camus. Thus we have brought out relations of analogy between the two authors through a pertinent exploration of their socio-historical backgrounds. Consequently we have shown that no matter how hard Conrad and Camus tried to convince their readers that they were opposed to domination, they nevertheless offered hardly any alternative as to whether the British should remain in Africa or the French in Algeria in the first place. It is true, as we have demonstrated, that in Camus's early writings there are condemnations of French colonialism. But Camus condemns colonialism in the same way Conrad condemns colonialism in Africa. Conrad condemns the abuses of the Belgians as well as the excesses and pretensions of the English. But he takes colonialism in his stride. In Conrad's view, it is –unfortunately– the fate of the non-Western world and its inhabitants to be colonized by, we put it crudely, 'their betters', which is exactly the same as Camus's. Thus, despite their reluctance, Conrad and Camus are deeply rooted in the tradition of Eurocentrism. In other words, the two writers cannot free themselves from Eurocentrist

assumptions despite their insistence on their liberal-humanist statement of faith (*profession de foi*).

As an illustration, in the second chapter of our research work, we have argued through the comparative analysis of **Heart of Darkness** and **L'Etranger** that the two texts are colonial discourses both. Furthermore, we have disclosed that the ultimate effect of the two writers' narratives is to reinforce stereotyped notions of the Orient/African, in the sense given by Edward Said himself in his classic **Orientalism**. For Edward Said, the Western representations of the Orient, no matter how well-intentioned, have always been part of the damaging discourse of Orientalism. Wittingly or unwittingly, they have always been complicit with the workings of Western powers. Even those Orientalists who are clearly in sympathy with Oriental peoples –and their cultures cannot overcome their Eurocentric perspective– have unintentionally contributed to Western domination. This is the case of Conrad and Camus. Both are 'Orientalist' writers who show some kind of sympathy towards the natives but cannot cross the Rubicon of their commitment and remain faithful to their Western prejudices. Instead of the objectivity in the service of the higher goal of true knowledge that the West often claims for itself, we find in the works of Conrad and Camus false representations that have condoned military domination, cultural displacement, and economic exploitation. In this regard, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o confirms the Western writers' fidelity to Europe even when they criticize imperialist practices. It is worth quoting in full what he wrote:

> Were we to see the world through the European responses to imperialism of the likes of Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad or Joyce Carry, whose work in terms of themes or location or attitude assumed the reality and experience of imperialism? Of course they responded to imperialism from a variety of ideological assumptions and attitudes. But they could never have shifted the centre of vision because they were themselves bound by the European centre of their upbringing and experience. Even

where they were aware of the devastating effects of imperialism on the subject peoples, as in Conrad's description of the dying victims of colonial adventurism in *Heart of Darkness*, they could not free themselves from the Eurocentric basis of their vision. (Ngugi 04)

This means that Conrad who claims to be a liberal humanist suffers from a liberal dilemma. Conrad in fact mildly questions imperial ideology. His reluctance shows that he oscillates between anti- and pro-imperialism. He 'carnivalizes' the myth of the 'philanthropic' and 'missionary' enterprises. Yet he cannot free himself from the blinkers of his age because he reproduces the same clichés about the other. Despite the fact that he is different from other colonial writers, Conrad presents essentially and primarily an imperialist worldview. In other words, Conrad may sympathize with the plight of blacks, he may be disgusted by the effects of economic colonialism, but because he has no desire to understand or appreciate peoples of any culture other than his own, he is not emancipated from the mentality of a colonizer. Conrad shares the widespread European belief in Africa's darkness, and draws on the same collective myth, the myth of the Dark Continent. He reproduces the same orthodox view of Africa –primitive land, dark, 'exotic', silent, wild and threatening. This situation is particularly evident in *Heart of Darkness* which reinforces the orthodox perceptions of Africa even if it exposes imperialism's avowed intentions in the 'Dark Continent'. *Heart of Darkness*, as we have demonstrated, reproduces the same stereotypes about the supposed ignorance of blacks, their barbarism, and their assumed simple-mindedness.

Likewise, in *L'Etranger*, the relationship Camus establishes between the natives and the French Algerians is a reproduction of the same clichés, the same *mentalité africaine*; it is a relationship based on binary opposition of colonizer-colonized, civilized-barbaric, and Self-other. The absence of Algerians in Camus's work is part and parcel of his colonialist

(blinkered) vision. Indeed Camus has followed in the footsteps of Conrad in his rendering of the Self-other relationship. Conrad uses a stereotyped discourse and so does Camus.

In chapter three, as we have focused on the 'unsaids' of **Heart of Darkness** and **L'Etranger**, we have brought out the ambivalent attitudes of both Conrad and Camus towards the issue of imperialism. More important are the analogous techniques resorted to by both authors such as unreliable narration and the allegorical mode of writing. Conrad's ambivalence is rooted in his identity as the colonized Pole rather than as the British colonialist. Camus, for his part, and as a *pied-noir* of Algeria, has had a wavering attitude:

> He remained profoundly isolated from the world of the native Algerian. It is this intellectual predicament which lies behind the preferred liberal self-image, namely, the torture and tragedy of being caught in the middle between two warring tribes, as 'neither victim or executioner'. (Dine 95)

Camus 'covers' the political conflict between the two opposing societies with a philosophical sleight of hand, thus creating a 'climate of the absurd'. But the hidden truth about his characters confirms the consolidated imperialist vision of Camus: he reinforces the same *idées reçues*, the same prejudices that represent the other as inferior. His fiction remains characterized by racial condescension from 'us' to 'them'.

In chapter four and five, as we have argued, **Lord Jim** and **La Chute** bear the traces of profound ideological dilemmas in Conrad and Camus. They provide a metaphysical dimension to their works and deliberately ignore the harsh realities of imperialism. Yet, and through a Machereyan reading, we have revealed that their evasive strategies, by resorting to allegories of the human condition, betray them. Through transcending the locale into the metaphysical, Conrad and Camus fail to sustain their universalist status. Their liberal-humanist assertions are limited and even paralyzing. To sum up, what we have, in the four

novels studied, is not an existentialist alienation *dans l'absolu*, but a historically-conditioned alienation produced by the colonial situation as expounded by Edward Said.

Indeed the equivocations and the 'in-betweenness' of both Conrad and Camus are what comes out of our study. As intellectuals and artists, they could have adopted a firm stand *vis-à-vis* imperialism. But they did not; so overwhelmed were they by their innate – irrational – sense of loyalty to the metropolis? Camus could accept neither the idea of a free and independent Algerian nation by actively supporting the FLN nor even could he totally turn his back to the strident calls for justice coming from his real motherland. Conrad, for his part, is paradoxically a critic of Empire and complicit in the imperial project. For all his blunt condemnations, he relays the colonial project. In other words, Conrad and Camus carry in themselves a 'collaborationist' inclination with the European colonial enterprise while remaining outside the central stream of consciously collaborationist writers such as Rudyard Kipling and Louis Bertrand. At the same time, they are not committed to the anti-colonial struggle. In other words, unlike the writers of the heyday of colonialism –like Rudyard Kipling or Louis Bertrand– who had no qualms of conscience, Conrad and Camus are late-colonial writers; i.e. they are the 'end-products' (or the 'fog-ends') of British and French imperialism. Indeed the two writers are not blinded to the issue of imperialism; they both provide modern versions of the imperialist who attempt to reach self-redemption. However the imperial issue keeps interpellating both writers –in spite of their attempts to escape it. Thus Conrad and Camus are considered as 'writers of the threshold', to use the useful expression of Si Abdderrahmane Arab. Their liminality positions them on the frontier of Europe yet with a hyphenated status. This is evidenced by the fact that, despite the generous speeches and articles through which Conrad and Camus voice their claim to liberal-humanist concerns,

they use in their fictions such disparaging terms as 'negro' and 'Arab'; which shows that their umbilical cord with Eurocentrism cannot be severed.

Finally, we must bear in mind that Conrad's and Camus's colonial fictions and inherent ideologies do not exist in a vacuum. They must be juxtaposed to Anglophone and Francophone fictions of the Third World; thus establishing a dialogic relation. The Third World literary dialogue with Western culture is marked by two characteristics: its attempt to negate the European negation of colonized cultures and while adopting Western languages in conjunction with indigenous languages and forms. The postcolonial reader feels misrepresented, belittled, and despised through the Western discourse. The inequality of races triggers off postcolonial responses which seek to rehabilitate the false image provided by Western literature. Third World writers have been laboring under the burden of such false images for a long time. They are now struggling to free themselves from the prison of colonial discourse. More significantly, writers such as Joseph Conrad and Albert Camus help us to start a debate about the fate of the oppressed but ultimately they cannot be a substitute for the voices of the oppressed themselves. The discourse of liberation belongs essentially to the oppressed.

The texts of Conrad and Camus, despite all the ambiguities we find in them, are based on the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. This cleavage is better expressed in Tayeb Salih's **Season of Migration to the North**, a novel written during the late sixties at a time of Arab nationalism and a rejection of the West. His narrative deliberately recalls and reverses Conrad's. The novel is a rewriting of **Heart of Darkness**, seen now as the tale of someone who voyages into the 'heart of light', which is modern Europe. Salih, a post-imperial writer of the Third World, bears the scars of humiliating wounds. In Salih's text, the formerly silent

native finds his voice. If **Heart of Darkness** narrates the history of modern imperialism from a position deep within its metropolitan centre, **Season of Migration to the North** presents itself as a counter-narrative of the same bitter history. Just as Conrad's novel is bound up with Britain's imperial project, Tayeb Salih 'writes back' to the colonial power that once ruled the Sudan.

The creative works of Ngugi, Achebe, Salih, Wilson Harris, Salman Rushdie are located within a decolonizing nationalist agenda which seeks to negate the moral and civilizational binarisms and absolutes of Western colonial ideology. It is true that these writers and other Third World writers acknowledge their influence by the artistic creations and innovative techniques of Western writers but they criticize the long-standing tradition of stereotyped non-Western world. Ngugi, as one of the most influential African novelists and critics, indeed admires Conrad's writing:

> "[…] the shifting points of view in time and space; the multiplicity of narrative voices; the narrative-within-a-narration; the delayed information that helps the revision of previous judgment so that only at the end with the full assemblage of evidence, information and points of view, can the reader make full judgment –*these techniques had impressed me*. (Ngugi 76) (Emphasis added)

Ngugi is fascinated by the creative writing of Conrad but he is critical of his vision. Achebe, for his part, admits that Conrad is *"a great stylist of modern fiction."* (Achebe 12). Yet Achebe attacks **Heart of Darkness** which according to him *"eliminates the African as human factor and parades in the worst vulgar fashion, prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies."* (Ibid., 10).

Likewise, Camus has had a wide readership in the post-colonial world and especially in Algeria. His writings have acquired beyond dispute an enhanced position and have succeeded against all odds in maintaining that position to the present day. Many Algerian

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writers have been influenced by Camus. Kateb Yacine, the author of **Nedjma** (1956), acknowledged the debt he owed to Camus. Yet he denounced Camus's continuing neglect of the native Algerians in his narratives:

> Mais l'homme Algérien on ne le voyait pas. Il était pratiquement 'étranger' dans toute cette littérature. Il y avait toute une école qu'on appelait l'Ecole d'Alger, l'école de Camus qui représentait jalousement la littérature algérienne. (Qtd.in Achour 89)

Kateb Yacine and others rebuked Camus for his inability to come true to terms with the aspirations of the Algerians. This is what Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi emphasized when he wrote: *"Camus a été infidèle aux humiliés."* (Qtd.in Chavanes 142). Elsewhere he vehemently declared: *"Le titre de 'Camus l'Algérien' [...] Camus ne l'a pas mérité. Il restera donc pour nous un grand écrivain ou plutôt un grand styliste, mais un étranger."* (Ibid.)

Indeed the trenchant/pungent response from the other indicates an increasing dissatisfaction towards the unequal relationship between the Self and the other. It also indicates the expectation by critics of the role of literary texts to bridge the gap between the two halves of humanity.

In conclusion, one is tempted to ask whether the African or any group of the excluded others have really been able to inscribe their presence in a discourse of their own? Or are they limited to empty parodistic gestures? In other words, have postcolonial writers in Algeria or elsewhere in the formerly colonized world been able to write authentically about their religion, their culture, their landscape, their humanity in ways and accents that outdo and outwit Conrad and Camus?

Needless to say, our conclusion is paradoxically inconclusive. Ours is a simply interpretative reading and does not claim to have the last word. Indeed many other common

aspects in both Conrad's and Camus's works remain unexplored. What we modestly hope is that this conclusion has paved the way for other scholars' undertakings.

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"Some have relied on what
they knew; Others on simply
being true. What worked for
them might work for you."

Robert Frost

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans mon travail de recherche, j'ai choisi de traiter quatre textes de deux auteurs de renommée internationale, à savoir : **Joseph Conrad** et **Albert Camus**. Les deux écrivains sont considérés comme impérialistes et révisionnistes car ils se sont empêtrés dans la contradiction entre la vision orthodoxe et Euro-centrique de l'empire, et leur propre vision – plutôt libérale et humaniste. Leur malaise se situe aussi bien dans leur fâcheuse situation intellectuelle que dans leur instabilité spirituelle qui leurs proviennent de leurs statuts civiques (l'un Britannique choisi et l'autre Français repenti).

J'ai suivi dans cette étude comparative une approche Postcoloniale et Néo-marxiste, deux approches qui ont révélé les positions politiques de Conrad et de Camus.

Mon étude comparative est centrée sur deux oeuvres de fiction de chaque auteur, à savoir : ***Au cœur des Ténèbres*** et ***l'Etranger***, d'une part, et ***Lord Jim*** et ***La Chute*** d'autre part ; dans laquelle j'insiste sur le fait que Conrad et Camus sont tous les deux conscients de l'impact négatif de l'impérialisme. Mais, à cause des conditions historiques et personnelles, ils se sont empêtrés dans des positions ambivalentes. Afin de résoudre ce dilemme, Conrad et Camus ont eu recours à la métaphysique (l'absurde en particulier) pourtant sans trop de conviction. J'ai donc essayé d'éclairer l'ambiguïté essentielle qui 'envahie' (involontairement) leurs discours coloniaux, en soulignant 'le conflit' idéologique dans leurs esprits.

Ma thèse comporte cinq chapitres. Le premier traite du milieu sociopolitique des deux auteurs ; leurs ressemblances et leurs différences en termes de biographie et idéologie. Dans le second chapitre, j'analyse la représentation stéréotypée de l'autre de Conrad et de Camus dans ***Au Cœur des Ténèbres*** et dans ***l'Etranger***, respectivement, tout en discutant le fait que leurs textes comportent énormément de discours coloniaux, des discours chargés de retenue et de condescendance. Dans le troisième chapitre, j'essaye de démontrer que les discours de Conrad et de Camus sont caractéristiquement ambivalents. En outre, ce chapitre explore la complexité tortueuse de leur vision universelle à travers l'analyse de quelques aspects fictionnels et formels. Quant au quatrième chapitre, il traite l'échappement de Conrad et de Camus tel qu'il apparaît dans ***Lord Jim*** et dans ***La Chute***. Ce chapitre traite également le problème idéologique auquel les deux auteurs font face. Le cinquième chapitre quant à lui, souligne les stratégies narratives déployées par Conrad et Camus dans leur tentative de résoudre le dilemme de l'opposition binaire colonisateur –colonisé.

Enfin, dans la conclusion, je discute le fait que la relation entre Conrad et Camus peut être expliquée par les similitudes thématiques qui, dans un sens, sont déterminées par des milieux presque identiques. Plus explicitement, le refus de Conrad et de Camus de reconnaître –contre leur nature intellectuelle– l'autre comme égal, les a mené à adopter des stratégies discursives. En d'autres termes, en échappant à l'histoire, Conrad et Camus posent un oeil aveugle sur la lutte pour l'identification du colonisé en tant que véritable être humain. En conséquence à leur confusion idéologique, Conrad et Camus se rabattent sur l'expressivité artistique –une réserve élégante qui incite leurs lecteurs à passer sur leurs imperfections politiques. C'est précisément leurs accomplissements esthétiques que les critiques et les auteurs postcoloniaux emploient comme un tremplin dans leur réévaluation des oeuvres de Conrad et de Camus.

Mots Clés: Absurde, affinité, ambiguïté, ambivalence, l'Autre, dialogisme, équivocation, idéologie, influence, impérialisme, roman, discours colonial.

ملخص

اخترت في هذه الأطروحة معالجة نصوص لكاتبين عالميين: **جوزيف كونراد** و **ألبرت كامو.** يعتبر الاثنان من الامبرياليين التعديليين لأنهما يتقيدان بالتناقض بين النظرة الأرثدوكسية و الأوروسانترية للإمبراطورية و نظرتهم التحررية الإنسانية. يكمن قلقهما في موقفهما الفكري المستنفر و عدم استقرارهما الروحي الناجمين عن مكانتهما المدنية (أحدهما متبني بريطاني و الآخر فرنسي معاد له الاعتبار).

في هذه الدراسة القائمة على المقارنة، تتبعت نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار و الماركسية الحديثة التي تثير المواقف السياسية لكل من **كونراد** و **كامو.**

تنصب دراستي القائمة على المقارنة بدراسة عملين خياليين: *في قلب الظلام* و *الغريب* من جهة، و *لورد جيم* و *السقوط* من جهة أخرى حيث أركز على كون **كونراد** و **كامو** مدركان للأثر السلبي للامبريالية. فيما بعد و نتيجة للظروف التاريخية و الشخصية تقيدا بمواقف مزدوجة. لإيجاد حل لهذا الإشكال لجأ **كونراد** و **كامو** إلى الميتافيزيقا (فلسفة العبث بالخصوص) دون الكثير من الإقناع. حاولت إذن توضيح الالتباس الأساسي الذي يشمل دون قصد الخطابات الاستعمارية بإظهار "الخلاف" الإيديولوجي في فكرهما.

تتضمن دراستي خمسة فصول. يعالج الأول الخلفية الاجتماعية السياسية للكاتبين، تشابهاتهما و اختلافاتهما في حدود السيرة الذاتية و الإيديولوجية. حللت في الفصل الثاني الصورة النمطية في تمثيل الآخر حسب **كونراد** و **كامو** في كل من *في قلب الظلام* و *الغريب*، مناقشة كون نصوصهما تحمل الكثير من الخطابات الاستعمارية خطابات مليئة بلغة الإقصاء و التعالي. أحاول في الفصل الثالث إظهار أن خطابات **كونراد** و **كامو** تتميز بالازدواجية. إضافة إلى ذلك يتطرق هذا الفصل لتعقيدها المنحرف لنظرتهما العالمية من خلال تحليل بعض المظاهر الخيالية و الشكلية. فيما يخص الفصل الرابع، يتعرض لهروب **كونراد** و **كامو** كما يبدو في *لورد جيم و السقوط*. يعالج هذا الفصل كذلك المشكل الإيديولوجي الذي يتعرض له الاثنان. أما الفصل الخامس، يبين الاستراتيجيات الروائية المعتمدة من طرف **كونراد** و **كامو** في محاولتهم لحل الإشكال المزدوج بين المستعمِر- المستعمَر.

أخيرا و في الخاتمة، أناقش كون القرابة بين **كونراد** و **كامو** قابلة للشرح بالمحاكاة الموضوعية المحددة في خلفيات متطابقة. أكثر ضمنيا، رفض **كونراد** و **كامو** الاعتراف -عكس طبيعتهما الذهنية- بالآخر كمماثل دفعهما إلى تبني مخططات منحرفة. بعبارات أخرى و بانفلاتهم عن التاريخ، نظر **كونراد** و **كامو** بعين لا تبصر إلى النضال من أجل هوية المستعمر ككائن بشري حقيقي. نتيجة لغموضهما الإيديولوجي، لجأ **كونراد** و **كامو** إلى التعبير الفني -تحفظ جميل يحث قراءهم على تجاوز عيوبهم السياسية. تحديدا، اكتمالهم الجمالي هذا هو الذي يستخدمه كتاب مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار كهمزة وصل في إعادة تقييمهم و نقدهم لأعمال **كونراد** و **كامو.**

الكلمات الدالة: العبث, التجاذب, الغموض, التناقض, الأخر, الخطاب الجماعي, الالتباس, الايديولوجية, التأثير, الامبريالية, الرواية, الخطاب الاستعماري