

APOLLONIAN/DIONYSIAN PREDICAMENT IN ALBERT CAMUS' *THE STRANGER*

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FACULTY OF ARTS
SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA,
NSUKKA

SUPERVISOR: REV. FR PROF. A. N. AKWANYA

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TITLE PAGE

Apollonian/Dionysian Predicament
in
Albert Camus' *The Stranger*

APPROVAL PAGE

This project has been approved by the Department of English and Literary Studies of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka for the award of the Degree of Masters of Arts in English and literary studies.

Rev. Fr Prof. A.N. Akwanya
Project Supervisor

Date

Prof. Ikenna Dieke
Head of Department

Date

External Examiner

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, the loveliest being with undying love for (each of) her progeny: there has never been a better place to begin charity. It is also specially dedicated to literary students and critics alike, who recognize the self-reference and self-sufficiency of the literary art, literature as a self-sustained heterocosm that gives rise to new critical discoveries, thus the polysemanticism and inexhaustibility. This cannot end without an honour in memory of Samson Onyemaechi Ugwuoke, a dear colleague I lost when this thesis was well underway. He is sorely missed.

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I have found out that I am sometimes at trouble with this section of the preliminaries: the unpardonable but inevitable sin of omission. To beat the glaringness at least, one must start from somewhere; one need follow an order of some sort. So I begin with Professor Amechi Akwanya. He is a man that has over the years proved to be a first-rate tutor and, more importantly, been fatherly in his supervision. Good teachers open the door but you must walk through it yourself (Chinese saying). To call Prof. Akwanya a good teacher is no belittlement on his person; it is simply a lie, some glib flattery. He is a great tutor who takes project supervision in his stride: he guides the supervisee as he or she walks through past the door, into the nearly abysmal knowledge, until the student keeps a footing and makes a mark. The months under his tutelage were not short of thoroughness and forbearance. Under him my interest in academic research was rekindled; I also felt for the first time a deep sense of fulfilment that makes work of this sort worthwhile. For this and more, I forever remain in his debt.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to my family for their contribution in the course of this project. My parents have provided support in every way: financially, emotionally and otherwise. My siblings have also been wonderful. Vic often proffered incisive arguments that helped shape the main

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ABSTRACT

Character study most frequently comes up in the criticism of narrative, one of the three forms of literature. This is so because a narrative text comprises a unique world of creatures (characters), a language and incidents that prompts thought. The thesis is set out to investigate the peculiarity of a hero's tragic situation. This problem is introduced in chapter one, with the attendant research questions for which the literary investigation intends to find answers, in turn, the relevance of the study comes into view. The task of summarizing the previous studies on Camus's *The Stranger* is taken by the second chapter; this review helps to highlight the gap the research will fill. This close reading adopts a conceptual framework that is built on Nietzsche's philosophy of the underlying will to power: a hero of the high mimetic mode and of the divine form is a victim in Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. This hypothesis is delineated in chapter three. The study analyses Meursault in the high mimetic mode. The tragic hero's situation of constraint is brought about by an unending struggle between the forces of the Apolline and the Dionysiac. The constraint Meursault faces and the stoic indifference (his response) are discussed in chapters four and five respectively. It is his reaction to his predicament that highlights the more-than-man factor working in him. He seems an *Übermensch* (overman) of some sort. Furthermore features of the rough beast are subsumed under the Dionysiac intoxication (*Rausch*), which always confronts the Apolline *Gotterbild* (divine image). The rough beast is an amoral and unmotivated being that is hardly deliberative; acts solely on impulses. Meursault of *The Stranger* is such a figure and by nature a stranger to everyone, including himself. What gives a victim of his calibre unqualified substantiation is *ataraxia*, the stoic indifference to his predicament. Armed with this heuristic tool, the literary investigation hopes to gain a better understanding of the predicament of the stranger: the oddity of Meursault's being.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page- - - - -	i
Approval Page- - - - -	ii
Dedication- - - - -	iii
Acknowledgements- - - - -	iv
Abstract- - - - -	vi
Table of Contents- - - - -	vii
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	
1.1 Background of the Study- - - - -	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem- - - - -	1
1.3 Objectives of the Study- - - - -	2
1.4 Significance of the Study- - - - -	3
1.5 Scope of the Study- - - - -	4
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review	
2.1 Psychobiographical Criticism of <i>The Stranger</i> - - - - -	5
2.2 Sociological Criticism- - - - -	8
2.3 Structuralist Criticism- - - - -	11
2.4 Poststructuralist Criticism - - - - -	13
2.5 Jungian Criticism of <i>The Stranger</i> - - - - -	15
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology and Conceptual Framework	
3.1 Methodology - - - - -	20
3.2 The Apolline, the Dionysiac and the Predicament- - - - -	20
3.3 High Mimeticism, More-than-Manness and the Hero - - - - -	26

CHAPTER FOUR: Meursault in the Predicament

4.1 Constraint- - - - - 29

4.2 Boundary Situation- - - - - 32

4.3 The Innocent, the Condemned- - - - - 39

CHAPTER FIVE: Stoic Indifference

5.1 *Übermensch* and the Rough Beast- - - - - 42

5.2 *Un Étranger*- - - - - 46

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion- - - - - 55

Works Cited- - - - - 59

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Each new narrative work arrives not unannounced, but comes laden with echoes from the literary tradition. For already occupying deserved spaces in the estate of world literature are narrative texts which, in broad terms, are either tragic or comic. Although fictional, the novel—a subtype of narrative—comprises a real world with its nexus of relationships: a language, characters and incidents. Not only does this interconnectivity lay bare the organic structure of the work (its textuality and originality), it prompts thought. To study a novel means to dissect, or rather, in Derridean terms, deconstruct the concatenation of incidents found within the narrative text, all in an effort to grasp the movement of thought. This is so because literature, as a symbolic form, to borrow Paul Ricoeur's expression, "gives rise to thought" (*Conflict of Interpretations* 299). Hence a close reading results in what Martin Heidegger has called "unconcealment." The Heideggerian word is his translation of the Greek *aletheia* (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 36). The disclosure of beings, one in particular, constitutes the concern of this research. The being in question is that of a hero, Meursault, the tragic hero of Camus's *magnum opus*. There exist, as always, questions concerning the identity of a tragic hero, inquiry into his being and individuality as he suffers constraint. The peculiarity of a tragic hero's predicament gives rise to this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literature is "an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries" (Northrop Frye 17). As a kind of art, it never comes into being *ex nihilo*. Many a thing goes into it, namely human experiences, historical accounts, myths, bits from the literary tradition and so forth. Nonetheless, the closing reading of an individual work of art is not to be done in relation to any of the above, save for the

world of literature. Furthermore the literary tradition echoes mythology unceasingly, and vice versa. Two Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysus, constitute the guiding principles of Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the underlying will to power. The latter is considered the first tragic hero. Achilles of *The Iliad*, for instance, is a Dionysiac mask; in fact "all the famous figures of the Greek stage, Prometheus, Oedipus, etc are merely masks of that original hero, Dionysos" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 51). This deity embodies the "erring, striving, suffering individual" (Nietzsche 52). Thus an understanding of this Dionysiac condition provides new insights into the being, or nature, of the tragic hero of *The Stranger*. The abovementioned condition is made manifest "or possible even" by an opposing force: the Apolline.

The struggle between the external elements of the Apolline and the Dionysiac stirrings bring about the tragic hero's predicament. Not only does the tragic hero, Meursault, fall under the high mimetic mode, he is of the divine form. Nothing has been done concerning the probability of the "more-than-man" factor working in Meursault. In consequence, this research takes up the task in order to gain an understanding of the tragic hero, a character regarded as *fremd* (strange).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this research is to examine the hero of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*. The following questions serve as a guide in the achievement of the objectives of this research:

1. What informs Meursault's actions and consciousness?
2. Is he really very different from other characters; if so, why?
3. Why does he seem indifferent to his predicament?
4. Is he an innocent or guilty victim of his predicament, or both?

To provide substantial answers for these research questions, the study shows how the combined forces of the Dionysiac and the Apolline constitute the constraint that informs the tragic hero's

actions and inaction. It brings to the fore the consciousness and struggle of Meursault, that is, his whole being as it experiences the tragic situation: Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. The onus is on this literary investigation to study accordingly the being of the tragic hero in relation to those of other characters, which Amechi Akwanya calls "people of the book" (*Verbal Structures* 136). The tragic hero is "the subject of a chain of actions, making a series, in its turn a constituent within the structure" (Akwanya 144).

1.4 Significance of the Study

This close reading sheds new insights into the being of a tragic hero, the predicament inherent in his situation: its peculiarity. The gap this research hopes to fill is the "more-than-manness" of Meursault, the tragic hero of Camus' *The Stranger*. Put differently, my study aims to look into the "more than man" factor that is working in this tragic hero. Nothing has been done in that regard. The literary investigation hopes to gain an understanding of this character, grasp his being and individuality; in turn, this will lead to further unveiling of the text itself, this phenomenological process Heidegger has called "unconcealment." There is always the disclosure of the being of a literary work at every close reading. This is so because literature is surrounded with ambiguity.

This study promises new insights into Albert Camus' text and will therefore be of great aid to literary students and critics alike in further readings. Main characters in tragic works tend to be besieged by constraint and thus engulfed in suffering. For tragedy *per se* "constitutes the expression of an enquiry into suffering" (Edith Hall 20). The main thrust of this literary inquiry is to argue that constraint is the permanent and essential condition of tragedy. In regard to *The Stranger*, constraint here comprises Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. This study argues that a

tragic hero is more than man and, as a consequence, always confronts that which is more than man. Constraint informs the hero's consciousness and power of action, not necessarily his morality. An effort made to gain an understanding of the being of a character is an attempt to grasp the heterocosm of the literary work itself.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Albert Camus's narrative work *The Stranger* is the primary text for this study and thereby its focus of analysis. Reference is made in the course of analysis to other texts as the need arises. This is so because a work of art shares qualities and patterns with others in the literary tradition. As Pierre Macherey observes, a literary work 'never arrives unaccompanied'; it is always determined by the existence of other works (100) and '[poems] can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels' (Frye 97). Thus the close reading is archaeological in Michel Foucault's sense because I also intend to dig into the literary tradition for reference to validate the title of this research.

The heuristic tool for this literary investigation is Nietzsche's philosophy of the underlying will, with respect to the hero's fate. Armed with this framework, the study explores the Apollonian/Dionysian predicament of Meursault, the tragic hero of Camus's *The Stranger*, as regards not the hero's morality, but his supposed 'power of action' (Frye 33).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Previous studies have been done on Albert Camus's *The Stranger*. Literary studies as a discipline is more closely related to some fields of study than it is to others. These include history, philosophy, sociology/anthropology and psychology. Much of the writing on *The Stranger* is done through the lenses of the aforesaid academic disciplines. For clarification I have grouped this review into five approaches namely, archetypal criticism, poststructuralism, structuralism, sociologism and psychobiography.

2.1 Psychobiographical Criticism of *The Stranger*

In the psychobiographical criticism of *The Stranger* the writers are of the view that Camus has masked his life using Meursault, the main character in the novel. With one accord psychobiographical critics lead us to think of the author and his thoughts as inseparable, hence his works are one of his ways of "confiding in us" (Roland Barthes 143). Jean-Paul Sartre in his "An Explication of *The Stranger*" takes the view that a literary work mirrors its author:

The Stranger is a leaf from his life. And since the most absurd life is that which is most sterile, his novel aims at being magnificently sterile. Art is an act of unnecessary generosity. We need not be over-disturbed by this; I find, hidden beneath Camus's paradoxes, some of Kant's wise observations on the "endless" of the beautiful. Such, in any case, is *The Stranger*, a work detached from a life, unjustified and unjustifiable, sterile, momentary, already forsaken by its author, abandoned for other present things. And that is how we must accept it, as

a brief communion between two men, the author and the reader, beyond reason, in the realm of the absurd (7).

Psychobiographical critics such as Sartre are of the view that Camus has used this novel to discuss his lifelong philosophy and experiences. For them, this narrative work is about the concept of the absurd and nothing else.

Absurdism is the view that there exists no meaning in the world; that human beings only try to seek meanings in or make sense of what they do. This criticism of Camus such as Sartre's emphasizes the point that the absurd, like tragedy, is immanent in the human condition; insofar as if such is found in the lives of human characters should no doubt be a reflection of the author's lives. The view of absurdism is shared by Christopher Panza and Gregory Gale. They emphasize, as it seems, the Camusean philosophy:

As Camus puts the matter, absurdity means more than just irrationality or craziness. It isn't a statement about the world by itself. Absurdity really comes from a combination of two things: an irrational world and a person who's looking out at it and trying to make it rational. You've probably had that feeling - you know the one; you're sitting at your desk and looking at the circus around you, thinking, "I'm the only sane one here." For the existentialists, this is how human beings as a group look out onto the world. But humans don't just think that they're the sane ones; they also try to impose that sanity and order on the circus around them. The world laughs at them when they do this - and this is absurdity (74).

Likewise, Harold Bloom treads the beaten path. He argues that "Camus was not a writer invested in happy endings" (15). That is, Camus more or less assumes an absurdist viewpoint at all times. As Bloom notes:

In *The Stranger*, the world of the protagonist expresses Camus's view of the absurd. The protagonist, Meursault, continually states that things do not matter, not only to him personally but in the world at large. In short, while people around him feel the world has some innate logic guiding it, Meursault does not see it that way. This perspective is what leads him to say, for example, that working in Paris or getting married really has no significance (14).

Writers of this sort claim that the author uses his human characters as a way of living in, if not escaping, this world plagued by the hydra, absurdity.

David Simpson, on the other hand, employs a more direct approach: he draws a comparison. He writes that:

[Camus's] father was recalled to military service and, on October 11, 1914, died of shrapnel wounds suffered at the first battle of the Marne. As a child, about the only thing Camus ever learned about his father was that he had once become violently ill after witnessing a public execution. This anecdote, which surfaces in fictional form in the author's novel *The Stranger* and is also recounted in his philosophical essay "Reflections on the Guillotine," strongly affected Camus and influenced his lifelong opposition to the death penalty (n.pag.).

Simpson here draws attention to what he reads as the impact of a father's experience on his toddler. The excerpt above draws an analogy between the writer's life and his work *The*

Stranger. Meursault's experience which bears a seeming likeness of Camus's is taken as no coincidence by the likes of Simpson:

I remembered a story Mother used to tell me about my father. I never set eyes on him. Perhaps the only things I really knew about him were what Mother had told me. One of these was that he'd gone to see a murderer executed. The mere thought of it turned his stomach. But he'd seen it through and, on coming home, was violently sick. At the time, I found my father's conduct rather disgusting. But now I understood; it was so natural (*The Stranger* 69).

From the foregoing, it follows that Meursault is not only a human character but in fact a lifelike form of Camus: humanists hardly give up the criterion of lifelikeness (Frye 134). Literature may be interested in the things that pertain to many fields, or other disciplines. Nevertheless, universality and probability comprise a must for it. Aristotle is in the right to have observed that "poetry is a more philosophical and higher thing than history" (ch. 9). So literature is "more worthy of serious attention than actual events" (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 14). Psychobiographical criticism is said to derive from psychoanalytic theory, which is used as a way to understand an author.

2.2 Sociological Criticism

This part of the review is concerned with the relation between an author's work and his society. That is, it contains how the author influences his society through his work and even conversely. It more or less takes off from where psychobiography stops, so to speak, an extension of some sort. Wouter de Nooy has remarked that:

One common element in sociology and literary studies is the study of structures: social structures and text structures respectively. Of course, the social and cultural sides of life are in many ways related. Influenced by cultural anthropology, sociologists have incorporated culture into their theories. Students of literature have paid attention to social reality in authors' biographies. The sociology of literature in particular has focused on the relation between society and literature, usually employing the metaphor that literature mirrors society (359).

A sociological approach to criticism is meant to focus on the significance of a literary work to society. Sociological critics of *The Stranger* argue that Camus only wants to give a message to society, that is, his intention is to teach his society and the world, as many authors would.

In John Fletcher's criticism of Camus's narrative, we read that the author is out to manipulate the reader, using his hero:

In any case, what could be more characteristic of the *nouveau roman* than Camus's handling of Meursault's rhetoric in *L'Étranger*? The cunning with which Meursault manipulates the reader and alienates his/her sympathies away from the murdered Arab is the invention of a writer who was fully aware that reality is created by language—a premise of the *nouveau roman*—rather than being straightforwardly conveyed by it.... A close reading of *L'Étranger* shows how Meursault, by a cunning use of tenses and of other rhetorical devices, *creates* the version of events which virtually every reader accepts and retains: that the Arab's death was at worst a regrettable incidence of manslaughter and at best a legitimate action, on Meursault's part, in self-defence, rather than, as the prosecution allege at Meursault's trial, murder in the first degree (qtd in Bloom, 66-67).

A sociological approach to criticism attempts to explain the appeal of the work to those who read it. Sociological critics of literature claim that the author should be a writer intent upon messages; in turn, the individual work of art is to be written with both social and psychological ends in view, final truths in sight. Two writers, Dick Schram and Gerard Steen, express the view that literary texts as products of creation (writing) and stimuli for creation (reading)...is another issue in the empirical study of literature that has remained underexposed (8). To put the matter in another way, readers are involved in the construction of meaning, whereas authors are behind the creation of meaning (Schram and Steen 8).

Many echo the view that Camus published his premier novel shortly before the end of World War II, According to Walter Kaufmann, Camus:

received the Nobel Prize in part because existentialism seemed to deserve recognition; and Sartre's politics had made him persona non grata, while Camus' profound humanity and sensitive conscience had made him one of the most attractive figures of modern literature. [Camus] attempted great things and was motivated by a sense of obligation to humanity. His inspiration was moral, not the wish to entertain or to achieve fame. Camus' *The Plague* [as well as *The Stranger*] is the posthumous child of *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch*. The theme is the same: the confrontation with death. Camus, like Tolstoy, attempts a parable about the human condition, an attack on the unthinking inauthenticity of most men's lives, and an appeal to conscience (39-40).

Kaufmann (and the like) argues that the aftermath of war provoked Camus's spirit of writing in a bid to contribute meaningfully to a meaningless world (Nietzsche qtd in Panza and Gale 270). Kaufmann is of the view that Camus advocates one major theme: the confrontation with death.

Sartre once remarked that "People told each other that it was the best book since the end of the war" (3). Sociological criticism presupposes that society is fraught with questions.

Camus's novel, for such critics, has helped people cope with the inevitabilities and tragedies of life. Heiner Wittmann, yet another sociological writer, sums up the matter:

With his entire oeuvre and above all in his theoretical and narrative works, Camus sought to find an answer to life's absurdity. In doing so he did not embrace any kind of fatalism or pessimism. The result is rather an insight into the unavoidable necessity of accepting this life as it is and of renouncing all ideology. For Camus, it is first and foremost artists— meaning all those involved in creating art, including writers— who are given the role of being a guiding intellectual force (96).

Works of art, for Wittmann and others, are the tools of the author's trade and thus a medium for teaching. Literature then becomes a contrivance of some sort, so to speak, a manipulative tool. Nothing could be further from the truth.

2.3 Structuralist Criticism

"One of the ideas of structuralism," as Colin Martindale notes, "is to chop a narrative into segments and see how the segments relate to one another (402). This means that a structuralist analysis is hinged on the formal structures of the text as emphasis is laid on the importance of the underlying structures, interrelationships and patterns of organization. And structural analysis itself is the result of a work of reading (Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III* 165). Jack Murray has adopted a structuralist approach on the narrative work, *The Stranger*, using the terms "closure" and "anticlosure."

Murray argues that "At first sight, the work [*The Stranger*] appears totally coherent and harmonious and recalls the compact economy of a Gidean *récit* [time]" (70). Thus it attains closure. The sense of stable conclusiveness, finality, or "élinchø which a reader experiences at the point of gratification from a confirmation of expectations already established by the structure of the sequence is what is referred to here as closure (Barbara Smith 2).

Murray further remarks that closure:

is not simply a formal matter, but because of the necessary logical connectedness that it imposes on all the narrative content of any particular work, it becomes an ideological matter as well. Its principal danger is that it may impose a monological construal or reading of the events recounted, whereas a move away from closure would advance into chaos where no coherent reading would be possible at all. Few works in the modern period illustrate both the formal and ideological dimensions of the problem at issue here better than Albert Camus's *L'étranger*. While firmly installed within both the realist and classical traditions, the novel nonetheless enacts an extensive debate between two contending sides over closure, underscoring the contention by an elaborate displacement process that must be designated as allegory. Because the crucial matter of the murder dictates that the dialectic set up between either side inevitably becomes trapped in its own illogic, the reader who endeavors to interpret the text finds himself in the position of the author's Sisyphus: just at the point when he feels that he is approaching some final construal, he must begin the whole interpretive task over again (qtd in Bloom, 69-70).

When the Sisyphean trouble begins to manifest, as Murray claims, the reader can be said to be nearing the obverse of closure, anticlosure.

Otherwise known as openness, anticlosure, according to Murray, is brought to the fore by Meursault's understanding of the murder case. Meursault's position is an anticlosure one, whereas the prosecutor claims that his is of a structured order, thus one of closure. The prosecutor's stance, as Murray remarks, imposes a radical narrative closure on the elements over against Meursault's (71). Anticlosure is firmly established by the protagonist's insistence that the events and his murder case are unrelated, adventitious, and inconsequential—a position, in short, that leans toward narrative anarchy (71).

Following Michel Foucault, the goal of structuralism is to define recurrent elements, with their forms of opposition, and their criteria of individuation [which] . . . make it possible to lay down laws of construction, equivalences, and rules of transformation (qtd in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow 54). Murray is emphatic about the forms of opposition between these two terms in the text of Camus. Structuralism is a theory of language (linguistics), not literature. It however can be and has been applied to literature. The structuralist approach to criticism, like formalism, acknowledges the self-sufficiency of a literary work.

2.4 Poststructuralist Criticism

Born out of structuralism, poststructuralism is a movement that advocates the plurivocity of meaning in an individual text. A literary text, according to Ricoeur, has a surplus of meaning, thus polysemanticism (*Time and Narrative III* 169). A poststructuralist study has been done on *The Stranger*. Amechi Akwanya critiques Camus's narrative work in accordance with language, that is, with regard to the language of the text.

He echoes the view first observed by Aristotle that literature, as a kind of art, is dependent on language alone (*monon logois*) as its medium of representation. In this regard, Akwanya remarks that:

The Stranger gives off nothing in the manner of a meaning that might be followed, as a major preoccupation is the meditating upon the language it engenders. Here the inaugural claim is that this is a diary—this is implicit in the opening, “Mother died today” (1). The diary form means minimally that the story is unstructured, that there is no story. This opening remark is a complete and fully delineated sentence. It does not necessarily begin anything. It is not a cardinal function, nothing need develop or continue as a result of what is posited there so that a conclusion of some sort may result. The diary is open, but it does not promise a sequence. This diary form also signifies that there is nothing at issue, only record-keeping and since this subject is the one writing, we do not have a novel in the standard form: there is no third person of the novel. The space the novel maintains at its heart to mark the absence of the third person is filled in this work by the writing subject, who equally *does* and *suffers*. This idea of record keeping is therefore the source of movement, what drives the narration and what accounts for the form of its language, for example, of the present tense strangely unfolding a narrative (*Verbal Structures* 135).

Owing to the diary form of *The Stranger*, Meursault the subject “writes himself into the book, and in reverse process becomes a creature of the book, instead of the book being his product and his creation” (136).

The thrust of Akwanya's argument is that language in literature is not the garment, but the body of thought itself (*Verbal Structures* 135). Language is literary in so far as it constitutes its own reality, that is, in so far as the product in question is literature. This is equally to say that in literature the content is entirely in its language: [the literary work]...is entirely that language (Akwanya 19). To study literature, therefore, is to study the structure of words, that body of thought, that content: the language. Language as the order of words in literature constitutes its own reality, which is peculiar to the individual work of art. So Akwanya is of the view that the language of *The Stranger* is that of discordance.

2.5 Jungian Criticism of *The Stranger*

Narrative is studied by the archetypal critic, argues Frye, as ritual or imitation of human action as a whole, and not simply as a *mimesis praxeos* or imitation of an action (105). An approach of this sort is called archetypal or Jungian criticism. Kendall Stephenson is such critic. She adopts the archetypal approach not only on the literary work of Albert Camus but also those of Rainer Maria Rilke, W. B. Yeats, T.S. Elliot, Virginia Woolf and Hermann Hesse: these constitute her primary texts of analysis.

According to Stephenson, her aim is:

to show how the primordial, divergent elements of the Apollonian and Dionysian reveal themselves across the field of modernist literature and synthesize to create moments of truth, mental equilibrium, and life-affirmation amongst its characters. .discuss the tribulations characters face if they fail to embrace a balance of Apollo and Dionysus. Through faith in the Greek dichotomy: the individual, Apollonian-self in conjunction with the Dionysian community, and by

accepting their single, earth-bound existence, modernist characters affirm life—whether blissful or bitter (iv).

Stephenson argues that her work is an “attempt to overturn the view of modernist pessimism and meaninglessness by showing that self-realization and life-affirmation can be recognized in canonical modernist literature” (1). She is of the view that literary characters by virtue of the fact that they experience suffering as human beings do stand the chance to “balance their Apollonian and Dionysian instincts themselves, creating moments of personal and positive meaning” (Stephenson 2). In fact she writes that these tragic characters can find balance, “mental equilibrium” as she calls it.

Furthermore Stephenson calls Meursault the Apollonian man:

On the other end of the spectrum, there is a Meursault who comes to recognize his want and value of life, especially without a god. Before readers can see the Meursault who recognizes his self and life as significant, they must encounter the imbalanced Meursault: the Apollonian man. The Apollonian traits which infuse Meursault can be divided into three categories: physical sensations, order and truth. These characteristics, sometimes alone and sometimes in unison imbue the text of *The Stranger* (22-23).

She argues that whereas some characters of modernist literature are principally driven by the Apolline force, the others are under the sway of the Dionysiac element.

Archetypally, Stephenson views not only the “collective unconscious” but also the “individual unconscious” as both shared by all tragic heroes of modernist literature and individuals of all modernist cultures. This point is evident in her analysis, whereby she combines both Jungian criticism and Freudianism (the *id* and the *ego* in particular). Stephenson is of the

view that both the personal unconscious and the impersonal unconscious are unifiable and inseparable even, if not interchangeable:

I point out similarities between the *ego* and the *id* and Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus to further support my assertion that the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy plays a positive and significant role in modernist literature. Essentially, in Freud's theory, the ego represents consciousness and the id the unconscious, and a balanced (sane/satisfied) mind holds the two in proportion – it is logical to interpret the ego as Apollonian, and the id as Dionysian. Rereading each of the texts I have discussed through a psychoanalytic lens further supports my contentions that the Apollonian and Dionysian must achieve balance to promote affirmation (63-64).

To highlight this point Carl Jung's distinction between the Freudian "individual unconscious" and his "collective unconscious" may be of help here:

the collective unconscious stands for the objective psyche, the personal unconscious for the subjective psyche...the former is detached from anything personal and is common to all men, since its contents can be found everywhere, which is naturally not the case with the personal contents (qtd in Jeffery Miller 63).

From the foregoing, Stephenson argues that modernist literature, in its social or archetypal aspect, therefore, not only tries to illustrate the fulfilment of desire, but to define the obstacles to it (Frye 106).

It is noteworthy at this point to state the significance of my work; to highlight the gap I intend to fill with this research. This study is an attempt to look into the "more than man" factor

that is working in Meursault, the tragic hero of Camus's *The Stranger*. Nothing has been done in this regard. My literary investigation, which is a phenomenological process Heidegger calls "unconcealment," hopes to gain an understanding of this character, grasp his being and individuality as the literary text permits it. In consequence, this will lead to further unveiling of the text itself. Stephenson, for nearly the entirety of her work, is emphatic about the need for a balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysiac drives by or on behalf of the heroes of modernist literature. Such a need, she argues, is the same one sought after by human beings. This research, by contrast, brings to light the impossibility of equilibrium for literary characters. My critical study of *The Stranger* is new and completely different from Stephenson's despite of the fact that I am to collect data from the same source—the texts of Nietzsche and Camus—as she already has.

My reading is not an attempt "to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (Barthes 147). It rather discusses the being as it unravels itself. Thus this close reading concerns itself with no such approach. It also intends not to focus amateurishly on the adjective that precedes the word "criticism." The study takes heed of Lowry Peirce's censure which states that the criticism of literature has wrongly become:

an amateur way of engaging another discipline: psychology, theology, political theory, philosophy, linguistics... [in fact it is] not difficult to extend the list. We have Marxist criticism, Freudian criticism, structuralist criticism—once upon a time there were historical criticism and biographical criticism—more schools than I need name exist and are coming into being; but in each case the adjective that precedes "criticism" is more important than any text. Marxist or Freudian or anthropological or feminist or Christian thought, the critic takes for granted, is

more important than the single work of art. But I want to ask. What happens if we try to focus on literature itself (qtd in Akwanya, *Verbal Structures 2*)?

It follows that this research is not built on structuralism, nor does it adopt archetypal criticism or a sociological approach even, much less psychobiography. Each of these is content to take things from the text, but does not take the text as a whole (Akwanya, *Verbal Structures 134*). The close reading of the literary text is unending, for therein lies the attendant plurivocity of meaning. Therefore this critical work no doubt promises to be literary, for if a work is literary and properly before the literary critic, it is so on the same ground as literary works anywhere else (Akwanya, "Aristotle's Double Bequest" 36).

My literary investigation is also archaeological in the Foucauldian sense because it intends to dig into the literary tradition for reference (bits and echoes) to validate the title of this research. This literary criticism takes on Albert Camus's *The Stranger* a self-sustained heterocosm with a view to making manifest the attributes that are present in the predicament and being of the tragic hero, Meursault.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Methodology

The methodology is qualitative in that Kendall Stephenson has already used the same data but differently. She has used Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, a text on which the framework of this work is built. Whereas Stephenson is of the view that Meursault seeks balance, this study proposes that the tragic hero cannot find such a thing because his fate is already sealed; he is besieged by constraint and is to be engulfed in suffering; he cannot get out, no matter what. There is nothing anyone can do about it, not the critic, nor the author even. The hero's textual being has been configured by the literary work, thus refiguration in that regard is impossible. The argument of this research is that a critic only attempts to understand the beings of the characters as the literary text unfolds them. The conceptual framework is constructed out of Nietzsche's philosophy of the underlying will to power.

3.2 The Apolline, the Dionysiac and the Predicament

The two oldest modes of symbolic expression, according to Susanne Langer, seem to be myth and language (xi). However there is a third that helps to form a triad: art. All three—art, myth, language—are what Ernst Cassirer rightly calls "special symbolic forms" (8). These symbols, or symbolic forms, are born of human conception and accordingly culminate in symbolic expressions. Moreover, the "special symbolic forms are not imitations, but organs of reality, since it is solely by their agency that anything real becomes an object for intellectual apprehension, and as such is made visible to us" (Cassirer 18). These organs may supplement one another, as is usually the case, but they are as a matter of fact independent of one another.

That is, they appear as symbols in the sense of forces each of which produces and posits a world of its own (Cassirer 8). My work here requires that I bring to the fore the relationship that exists especially between art and myth.

Art as an activity is as 'primordial and autonomous' (Eugen Fink) as such other activities as social organization and religion, and does not derive from any of these or from anything else (Akwanya, *Àchebe and the Writing Tradition* 98). That is, a work of art, as Fink echoes in agreement, is a basic phenomenon that is not bound to any phenomenon in a common ultimate purpose (qtd in Sebastian Möring 113). Literature therefore signals many things, for in each literary production everything enters into, transpires in the book (Jacques Derrida 92). They include experiences, recorded history, echoes from the world of literature, etc. Doubtless myth is not excluded. For art, like language, is originally bound up entirely with myth (Cassirer, *Language* 98), hence a reading may seem archaeological. In this regard, Akwanya writes that an archaeological method in Michel Foucault's sense pertains to literary texts qua *mythopoiesis* where the bits and echoes from myth and other works are usually much more important than they may appear at first (*ÀSuperman as Master Narrative* 8-9).

In such an archaeological sense, Nietzsche instances Dionysus as an echo from classical mythology and the literary canon. This Greek god, Nietzsche claims, is the first tragic hero. However the Dionysiac condition an erring, striving, suffering nature comes to be and is made manifest by another Greek deity, an opposing force named Apollo. This opponent, in Nietzsche's view, stands for fantasy (dream/image), calmness, individuation, measure, (external) immovable order. These attributes make up the Apolline elements. In comparison the rival, the Dionysiac, embodies intoxication (*Rausch*); transgression of boundaries; unity (a sense of oneness with nature); kinetic stirrings; ecstatic and depressive states (alternating at times, most of

the time simultaneous). As they struggle to keep each other in check, both forces of the Apolline and the Dionysiac make great demands on the tragic hero. The hero is driven into a situation of constraint as a consequence of the above strife. This circumstance amounts to what I call the Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. The hero becomes tangled in this peculiar predicament, for he is always already suffering (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 291); he has never stopped being a victim by vocation (Sartre, *No Exit* 24). In due course, I will revert to this tragic situation of the hero, which results from divine rivalry. Fundamentally there is a need to delineate the two contending forces: the Dionysiac and the Apolline.

On the one hand the Apolline, an ideal form of the Greek god Apollo, represents order which is external as it is fixed. Nietzsche writes that:

we encounter Apollo as the deification of the *principium individuationis* in which alone the eternally attained goal of the primordial unity, its release and redemption through semblance, comes about; with sublime gestures he shows us that the whole world of agony is needed in order to compel the individual to generate the releasing and redemptive vision and then, lost in contemplation of that vision, to sit calmly in his rocking boat in the midst of the sea. If one thinks of it as in any sense imperative and prescriptive, this deification of individuation knows just one law: the individual, which is to say, respect for the limits of the individual, measure in the Hellenic sense. As an ethical divinity Apollo demands measure from all who belong to him and, so that they may respect that measure, knowledge of themselves. Thus the aesthetic necessity of beauty is accompanied by the demands: 'Know thyself' and 'Not too much!', whereas getting above

oneself and excess were regarded as the true hostile demons of the non-Apolline sphere (*The Birth of Tragedy* 27).

The Apolline forces drive the hero towards freedom so long as it is not beyond but under the law of his society and a submission to rule and concept (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 540).

Time and space of the universe which, for Arthur Schopenhauer, belongs to the principle of sufficient reason and consequently plurality is correspondingly termed *principium individuationis* (112). In his translation notes, Ronald Speirs underlines the Schopenhauerean principle of individuation (*principium individuationis*):

Schopenhauer thought that our everyday experience of the world was of separate, distinct empirical objects (i.e. things subject to the 'principle of individuation') and that their distinctness was inherently connected with the applicability of the 'principle of sufficient reason'. Roughly speaking, two things are distinct (individuated) only if we have grounds (sufficient reason) to distinguish them and if we have such grounds they are distinct. However, Schopenhauer also believed that all use of the principle of sufficient reason (and thus all individuation) was a result of the operation of the mind (17).

Furthermore Nietzsche expresses the view that one might even describe Apollo as the magnificent divine image (*Gotterbild*) of the *principium individuationis* (*The Birth of Tragedy* 17). Seeming unambiguousness, typicality and the like comprise the Apolline elements. In other words they ultimately impose restriction on the tragic hero.

The Dionysiac stirrings, on the other hand, stand for the temporary identification with the principle of life, including the voluptuousness of the martyr (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 224). As he further writes elsewhere:

The individual, with all his limits and measure, became submerged here in the self-oblivion of the Dionysiac condition and forgot the statutes of Apollo. Excess revealed itself as the truth; contradiction, bliss born of pain, spoke of itself from out of the heart of nature. Thus, wherever the Dionysiac broke through, the Apolline was suspended and annulled (*The Birth of Tragedy* 27).

A good analogy for the Dionysiac condition is *Rausch*, so to speak, a divine intoxication. Nietzsche is of the view that the Dionysiac stirrings, [the intoxication]... as they grow in intensity, cause subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting (*The Birth of Tragedy* 17). The Dionysiac force promises an urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality, the everyday, society, reality, across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate-painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more floating states (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 539).

Raymond Geuss in the prefatory note of *Birth of Tragedy* remarks that the Dionysiac experience is distorted and corrupted by the *principium individuationis* of Apollo, for the pleasure and pain are represented as distributed to different individuals at different times (xx-xxi). Prior to the distortion, pain and pleasure of almost the same intensity in the same individual (the hero) comprises the Dionysiac experience. In retaliation the Dionysiac *Rausch* challenges the cause of alteration, any threat of limitation: the Apolline *Gotterbild*. Wole Soyinka echoes the view that Tragic fate is the repetitive cycle of the taboo in nature, the karmic act of hubris witting or unwitting, into which the demonic will within man constantly compels him [to rebel] (qtd in Neil Rhodes 240). The *Rausch* an effusive, heightened sense of being gives the hero a feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 539). The genuine aboriginal Dionysiac experience would be most intense pleasure and most intense pain at the same time and in the same person (Geuss xxi). The sensation is almost always

transitory. Transitoriness nonetheless, in the Nietzschean sense, could be interpreted as enjoyment of productive and destructive force, as *continual creation* (*The Will to Power* 539).

What is more, the god Dionysus symbolizes sensuality and cruelty (Nietzsche 539).

The strife between the opposing forces becomes ineluctably an onerous task for the hero in that it affects all aspects of his life: physical, emotional, intellectual, legal and so forth. Meursault of *The Stranger* must bear this burden, and therein lies his predicament. Moreover tragedy, as A.C. Hamilton remarks, "reveals the essential human condition: life as it is and must be, which is inescapable except through death [or great suffering]" (xii). Tragedy:

uncovers the conflicting demands and inner tensions of the system within which the character has to act.... Tragedy presupposes that any system at all, whether sanctioned by the gods or by men, generates these conflicting demands; and the condition of existence for the individual is that one is caught up in these tensions" (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 134).

Apollonian/Dionysiac predicament undoubtedly speaks the same language. The Apolline and Dionysiac forces are brought to bear on the hero's "condition of existence." Tension mounts as a consequence of heavy and conflicting demands, thereby putting the hero in a situation of constraint" Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. The hero "cannot get out of this situation, no matter what" (Akwanya 45).

There also seems, for Frye, to be forms or images of *sparagmos* "tearing to pieces" in tragedy. According to him, the images such as mutilation and torture (222) are, so to speak, a mimesis of sacrifice:

Tragedy is a paradoxical combination of a fearful sense of rightness (the hero must fall) and pitying sense of wrongness (it is too bad that he falls). There is a

similar paradox in the two elements of sacrifice. One of these is communion, the dividing of a heroic or divine body among a group which brings them into unity with, and as, that body. The other is propitiation, the sense that in spite of the communion the body really belongs to another, a greater, and a potentially wrathful power. The ritual analogies to tragedy are more obvious than the psychological ones, for it is irony, not tragedy, that represents the nightmare or anxiety-dream. But, just as the literary critic finds Freud most suggestive for the theory of comedy, and Jung for the theory of romance, so for the theory of tragedy one naturally looks to the psychology of the will to power, as expounded in Adler and Nietzsche. Here one finds a "Dionysiac" aggressive will, intoxicated by dreams of its own omnipotence, impinging upon an "Apollonian" sense of external and immovable order (214-15).

This study naturally looks to the psychology of the will to power as posited by Nietzsche. Heuristically, the work brings into sharp focus the necessary impingement of the *inneres* (inmost) Dionysiac aggressive will on the Apolline *Bild* (image), that sense of external and immovable order. This proves that tragedy, as Akwanya remarks, sees the world in terms of the limitations inherent in its constitution, and notices the individual who, divided between acquiescence and struggle, takes his chance with the latter, even though it entails great suffering and perhaps death (*Discourse Analysis* 48).

3.3 High Mimeticism, More-than-Manness and the Hero

Frye's typology of the hero, to which I now turn, is of some import in this framework. Fictions are, in broad terms, classified as either tragic or comic. In the one the hero is alienated from his

society; in the other he is incorporated into it (Frye 35). According to Frye, both comedies and tragedies are further subdivided into two principal modes viz the low mimetic and the high mimetic. High mimetic tragedy is ðbalanced midway between godlike heroism and all-too-human ironyö (Frye 37). It usually involves a hero that is deemed to be an *Übermensch* (overman), one who ðhas authority, passions... [that are] far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of natureö (33-34). Thus such a heroic figure is ðsuperior in degree to other men but not to his natural environmentö (33). A low mimetic hero, by contrast, is what Arthur Miller calls the common man (1). He is ðsuperior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experienceö (Frye 34).

High mimetic tragedy in contradistinction to low mimeticism corresponds to, not necessarily the Aristotelian sense of better and worse characters, but the contrast between ðcharacters that are on a higher planeø and ðthose on the same levelø (as the rest of us). This study employs high mimeticism not on the grounds of preference but on account of sheer appositeness. For the divine form ð demigod or godô is found in the high mimetic mode. And the ðmore-than-manø factor is the main thrust of Nietzsche's philosophy, which this study adopts. His concepts presuppose divinity in humanity, the synthesis of Apollo and Dionysus.

The gist of Nietzsche's argument is that Apollo and Dionysus are two different pure divine forms who appear as opposing forces that come into play in an individual's life. Mine is that this interplay of the Apolline and the Dionysiac makes the hero to be regarded as something of an enigma, something of a divine form. This will justify the strangeness in the things Meursault does and the stoic indifference to his suffering. Of great importance to this research is the fact

that this tragic situation, which has been called "Apollonian/Dionysian predicament," does not befall every tragic hero, as opposed to the argument of Stephenson which states that all modernist tragic heroes suffer the same predicament. This work proposes that such fate becomes the lot of only one kind of tragic hero: the literary character will be of the high mimetic mode and have the divine form functioning in him. To put the matter another way, such a hero must be superior to both man and man's environment. I argue that only this kind of literary character, so to speak, qualifies as a victim. Only a tragic hero like Meursault can be in Apollonian/Dionysian predicament.

The framework identifies the hero as a high mimetic character and primarily a "tragic victim," he is besieged by constraint (environmental factors). This tragic hero is already in Apollonian/Dionysian predicament, for he always has. Meursault is of the divine form; he possesses more-than-manness; where the Apolline and the Dionysiac can function. Other characters, therefore, cannot reach or make him out, for he is beyond them.

This research, in the chapters that follow, explores Camus's *The Stranger*, employing the above framework: Nietzschean principles of the hero's will to power (based on power of action). The conceptual framework helps portray the existence and being of the main character, Meursault. In the textual analysis, the framework justifies the tragic hero's high mimetic attributes, as well as his *fremd* indifference in every sense of the word: the "German term has a range of meanings, extending from "strange" through "foreign" to "alien" (Speirs 6). Monsieur Meursault of *The Stranger* is a kind of *Übermensch*, a character that has the more-than-man factor working in him; he plies a different plane, indeed a higher one. The following chapters therefore validate from the narrative work of Camus and make necessary reference to the literary tradition.

CHAPTER FOUR

Meursault in the Predicament**4.1 Constraint**

The argument of the study is to bring to the fore the nature of the tragic hero's situation of constraint. It is "because of the sun" (64), he blurts out. This is an effort by the accused to explain his motive. Monsieur Meursault thinks both the effects of that star—its heat and light—have driven him into shooting the Arab five times, "one at first, and the other four after a short interval" (43). This view has been variously echoed. However one deserving mention is Kendall Stephenson she holds not the dog but its owner responsible for the assailing of a victim: Apollo is said to be the sun god, hence culpable. She leads us to think Meursault as "a being whose instincts are out of balance because the Apollonian within him emphatically outweighs the Dionysian" (21). The result is that the stranger becomes "the imbalanced Meursault: the Apollonian man" (Stephenson 22). This however is contrary to Nietzsche's concepts. Apollo is, in the philosopher's words, "the luminous one through and through; at his deepest root he is a god of the sun and light who reveals himself in brilliance" (*The Birth of Tragedy* 120). Unlike the Apolline *Gotterbild*, *Rausch* is the Dionysiac intoxication "which is rather like dreaming and at the same time being aware that the dream is a dream" (Nietzsche 121).

To hold the divine image (*Gotterbild*) of Apollo solely responsible for Meursault's crime and thus his suffering means to misconstrue the god's nature. For as long as a god's name is understood, and taken in its original sense, the limits of its meaning are the limits of the god's power (Cassirer 20). The Apolline *Gotterbild* "must not overstep if its effect is not to become pathological" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 120). Meursault's acknowledgement of this is

seen minutes before the crime, "It struck me that all I had to do was to turn, walk away, and think no more about it" (38). This proves that:

it is the will of Apollo to bring rest and calm to individual beings precisely by drawing boundaries between them, and by reminding them constantly, with his demands for self-knowledge and measure, that these are the most sacred laws in the world (50-51).

Moreover a god is invested with a special name, which is derived from the particular activity that has given rise to the deity (Cassirer 20). Mythologically, the god Apollo may be conflated with *Hēlios*, the Greek word for "sun," in that the latter is also regarded as the sun god; likewise *Selene* and *Eos*, who are not only the Greek words for "moon" and "dawn" respectively, but also correspondingly represent the two phenomena as goddesses. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* resonates with the literary canon—Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, etc. He recounts classical mythology in conformity with the literary tradition. My work here follows in a like fashion. In other words:

Apollo represents "the light," both literal (the sun) and metaphorical, as in the light of reason and the intellect. Apollo's popularity clearly shows how important learning and the intellect were to the Greeks. They valued their soldiers, to be sure, but they also valued their thinkers. Philosophers, inventors, scientists, and artists all occupied places of honor in Greek society (Rebecca Parks, et al., 92).

In Greek mythology Apollo therefore becomes the personification of the activity (luminosity) of that star, as well as "the god of individuation and of the boundaries of justice" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 51).

The luminous *Bild* (image) of Apollo, as Nietzsche puts it, "must include measured limitation, that freedom from wilder impulses" (*The Birth of Tragedy* 120). Our tragic hero takes little heed of "that wise calm of the image-making god" (Nietzsche 120). As he admits, "I knew it was a fool thing to do; I wouldn't get out of the sun by moving on a yard or so. But I took that step, just one step, forward" (38). A concept such as Nietzsche's "presupposes definite properties" (Cassirer 24). These properties, as I have argued in the preceding chapter, may move suspicion away from the Apolline elements, for the moment though. Now it seems that the culpability will have to be shifted onto the Dionysiac stirrings, which are characteristic of hotheadedness.

To transgress is a true Dionysiac attribute; it "must overstep" boundaries of any kind, however risible. Implicit in the stranger's statement is this unreason: "To stay, or to make a move" it came to much the same. After a moment I returned to the beach, and started walking" (37). As the tragic hero, Meursault is unmoved by danger but moved by the Dionysiac forces. In fact "wherever the Dionysiac broke through, the Apolline was suspended and annulled" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 27). The Dionysiac impetuosity is preponderant in Meursault, for it brings the "naive, natural man to the self-oblivion of intense intoxication" (Nietzsche 120), a state of ecstasy. Nonetheless "the game of Dionysus" (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 255) is not solely responsible for the hero's plight. The contest between the two opposing forces of the Apolline (levelheadedness) and the Dionysiac (impulsiveness) is; both constitute the constraint.

Why does he return to the beach, alone? That is the question. One reasonable answer can help with that inquiry: Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. The hero becomes the proverbial grass that bears the brunt of an unending elephantine fight. "To stay or to make a move" is hardly an option for the man in whom the divine form is functioning. Meursault is in a predicament as is

expected of a tragic hero; the fundamental position of tragedy is that the situation of man is imposed by forces or laws which are beyond his power to influence; and his tragedy is that he cannot get out of this situation, no matter what (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 45).

4.2 Boundary Situation

Meursault's apparent openness, or honesty is what Nietzsche calls a *qualitas occulta*, which means hidden property (*The Birth of Tragedy* 145). His being is completely veiled to him until during his trial. As the Apolline forces come into play during his incarceration, he finds himself in the boundary situation, where one is confronted by the deepest questions of existence (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 26). *Anagnorisis* (discovery) may result from the boundary situation; discovery seems a central theme in tragedy (Akwanya 26). Meursault begins to take note of his inveterate disposition towards caprice: the awareness is typically an Apolline attribute, the whim Dionysiac. He, a chain-smoker, pays the least attention to this chronic habit until when he is held in confinement. In the Dionysiac convulsion (Nietzsche 98), Meursault suffers really badly during the first few days when he is deprived of his cigarettes that he even has to tear off splinters from his plank bed and suck them (49). The hero laments this deprivation of prison life: it passed my understanding why I shouldn't be allowed even to smoke; it could have done no one any harm (49).

Furthermore *pathos*, or suffering, runs its course in tragedy. There is, as always, a paradise lost (Frye 210). In M. Meursault's case the paradise constitutes his freedom to the simple pleasures of life, his right to intercourse and the like. He relives his experiences in order to make up for the loss:

Those first months were trying, of course; but the very effort I had to make helped me through them. For instance, I was plagued by the desire for a woman which

was natural enough, considering my age. I never thought of Marie especially. I was obsessed by thoughts of this woman or that, of all the ones I had, all the circumstances under which I had loved them (49).

In the face of his boundary situation, in the midst of the proscriptions, the vision of hope seems to flicker for Meursault. Owing to the Apolline forces of measure and limitation, he begins to grapple with the fact that such privations are part of his punishment; they are trials to which he must also submit himself. As the tragic hero, Meursault undergoes his own *agon*, struggling to accept and embrace the sufferings that lie ahead (Alison Hennegan 221). This becomes manifest when he is offered a cigarette by an officer, which he declines (52). He is however a different tragic hero; deliberation is not his thing.

Meursault's later sublimation and self-restraint signals the presence of the Apolline, whereas his hitherto sensual feelings of rashness are a good indication of the Dionysiac drive. The one, according to Nietzsche, is deceptive as it promises moderation in all things: certainly an unattainable goal. The other does not necessarily shun straightforwardness but certainly embraces unpredictability. The Apolline forces advocate the impossible balance by the warnings: *gnothic seauton; meden agan*, that is, 'know thyself; but not too much' (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 128). By contrast, the Dionysiac drives are indicative of either excess, as is usually the case, or defect – in short, they altogether promise imbalance.

In addition, the Dionysiac urges the individual to – like Oedipus – damn the consequences and plunge into knowing, into doing; by all means he should keep moving. He should be the least worried with such things as the admonitions of the Apolline and live out his life with each passing day, whenever he feels up to it. The Dionysiac man, Meursault, goes about his quotidian life with little or no consequential decision, or activity. Five days are for work; he goes for

recreational activities such as swimming on Saturdays. Sundays put him off: *ØI*øve never cared for Sundays (15). The Arab dies by his hand on such a day. Before incarceration he, for want of anything better, simply gets a panoramically streetward view from his balcony on Sundays. After a few months in prison, thereby having *Øprisoner*ø thoughts (48), he however becomes keen on such days off: he would want *Øto* wait patiently till Sunday for a spell of love-making with Marie (48).

In the boundary situation, Meursault notices that tragedy *Øisn't* only in what they [tragic characters] have experienced and apparently survived; for them existence itself is tragic (Akwanya, *ØA View of Tragedy* 102). The tragic hero senses that, like Dionysus who was dismembered on an annual basis, he is forever stuck in a predicament. Nonetheless Meursault is the least perturbed as he finds solace in the *Øcommon* knowledge that life is not worth living, anyhow (70-71). He tries to familiarize himself with the idea that, somehow, he has always been the *Øerring*, striving, suffering individual (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 52).

In the Apolline trance this Dionysiac man is desperate for assurances, as he declares:

Actually, I was sure of myself, sure about everything, far surer than he [the chaplain]; sure of my present life and of the death that was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into *Ø* just as it had got its teeth into me (74).

Apparently this is an effort to weaken the cleric's stance. Meursault tells the priest that the latter is living like a corpse and, as a consequence, none of his convictions is *Øworth* a strand of a woman hair (74). The tragic hero claims that he, the man awaiting the guillotine, cannot be surer of his life, for he has always been in the right: *ØI*ød been right, I was still right, I was always right (74). How true is this?

Meursault is no surer than the Arab he shoots to death. Only Apollonian/Dionysian predicament proves the rightness, sureness even, of his cause. Many things he does are, of necessity, wrong and constitute a threat to (his) society. Furthermore there lies a chink in his armour: 'I had passed my life in a certain way, and I might have passed it in a different way, if I had felt like it. I had acted thus, and I hadn't acted otherwise; I hadn't done x, whereas I had done y or z' (74-75). This betrays the Dionysiac presence in a seeming Apolline brilliance. Following Nietzsche, a man of reason – the Apolline man – rarely does things at random: x for z, or conversely. The Apolline luminescence holds typicality (custom), law and order in high regard, although it advocates the principle of individuation. For the Apolline brilliance measure, which embodies 'the boundaries of justice' (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 51), is as important as individuation. It says, 'be different but *meden agan*, not too much.' Meursault's trouble from the outset is that he is very different: a stranger. He continues to act despite warning hints to the contrary: 'then I wanted a cigarette. But I wasn't sure if I should smoke, under the circumstances' – in Mother's presence. I thought it over; really, it didn't seem to matter, so I offered the keeper a cigarette, and we both smoked' (7). This act (of utter indifference) is not Apolline, nor is it Dionysiac.

That the Dionysiac forces drive the possessed to transgression and excess is one matter. What also counts is the idea that it essentially stirs up (a sense of) oneness. 'Nature expresses itself with its highest energy in Dionysiac intoxication' (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 121). One beholds primitiveness and reconciliation all at their base nature and best forms respectively: 'do not be surprised if tigers and panthers lie down, purring and curling round your legs' (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 98). Meursault is lacking in the Dionysiac feeling of unity. He is more often not found completely disoriented. It matters least what occasion it may be for

absentmindedness seems to take a heavy toll on him. For instance, during the trial, we see him admit, "I was barely conscious of where or who I was until I heard the warden of the Home called to the witness box" (55). I shall return to the question of forgetfulness further in chapter five.

Perhaps Meursault is just the right stranger; a *fremd* being that should not be blameworthy as he is in a predicament. He is different (an Apolline quality) but inordinately different: excess is of the Dionysiac. I have thus far called him the "Dionysiac man" precisely because of the excessiveness that seems to surround his being, for example, his matter-of-factness and heightened sensuality; more so, these are used against him during the trial. This is not to say that he is wanting of Apolline qualities. One that becomes manifest is the idea, as pointed out by the prosecution, that Meursault "is intelligent and knows the value of words" (63). Another is, as discussed above, his acclimatization to prison life. Meursault suffers the dominance of the Dionysiac *Rausch* over the Apolline *Gottesbild*. Without knowing, he oversteps in his practice of the Apolline principle of individuation and becomes a "queer fellow" (29). He cannot stay on course in that the Dionysiac forces time and again break down the *principium individuationis*, thereby causing the possessed to apply "the principle of sufficient reason wrongly" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 146). He would have not been in the beach, much less killed, had he stayed on course. He cannot because necessity must run its course.

Furthermore in the Apolline elements lie the code of ethics and optimism (Nietzsche *The Birth of Tragedy* 130), whereas the Dionysiac stirrings infuse the hero with "a pessimism, 'beyond good and evil'" (Nietzsche 8). Meursault, as shown in his cell, embraces the latter: the "pessimism of strength" (Nietzsche 1). He knows that if he "died now or forty years hence, this business of dying had to be got through, inevitably" (71). As the Dionysiac hero "a man of

pessimism. Meursault is never contrite. The Dionysiac state is the quintessence of the cruelty of nature (Nietzsche 40). It is a brew of cruelty and sensuality, that phenomenon whereby pain awakens pleasure while rejoicing wrings cries of agony from the breast (Nietzsche 21). This lack of compunction is brought to the fore by the prosecutor's question: has the accused uttered a word of regret for his most odious crime (63)? Meursault reacts to this of course, albeit in thoughts: "I had to own that he was right; I didn't feel much regret for what I'd done. I have never been able really to regret anything in all my life" (63).

As a condemned man, the tragic hero begins to grasp the dark wind blowing from his future (75). This tragic fate he demonstrates to the chaplain:

nothing had the least importance and I knew quite well why....From the dark horizon of my future a sort of slow, persistent breeze had been blowing toward me, all my life long, from the years that were to come. And on its way that breeze had levelled out all the ideas that people tried to foist on me in the equally unreal years I then was living through. What difference could they make to me, the deaths of others, or a mother's love, or his God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he thinks he chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to choose not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people who, like him, called themselves my brothers. Surely, surely he must see that? Every man alive was privileged; there was only one class of men, the privileged class. All alike would be condemned to die one day; his turn, too, would come like the others. And what difference could it make if, after being charged with murder, he were executed because he didn't weep at his mother's funeral, since it all came to the same thing in the end? The same thing for Salamano's wife and for Salamano's dog. That

little robot woman was as guilty as the girl from Paris who had married Masson, or as Marie, who wanted me to marry her. What did it matter if Raymond was as much my pal as Céleste, who was a far worthier man? What did it matter if at this very moment Marie was kissing a new boy friend (75)?

Towards the end, the tragic hero evinces a tacit acknowledgement of the Dionysiac enigma and unpredictability while in an Apolline trance, whereby he recognizes the clear-cut Apolline restraints of life: actions have consequences, fate is bound to choose him and all alike are condemned to die one day.

Meursault is to realize for the first time that his lack of concern is not of his doing. An individual in a predicament such as his is to be the least worried about some things that seem to matter to others: I rather lost the habit of noting my feelings, and hardly knew what to answer (41). The predicament leads the tragic hero to his arrival at the feeling of truth (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 146). He sees himself for what he thinks he really is. Meursault is the Dionysiac hero, a being without his volition: with only velleity, if anything. If wishes were ever granted, such as the hereafter which the priest believes in, the hero would only want a life in which he could remember his life on earth; that was all he wanted (74). The dark, persistent breeze of fate has ensured the levelling out of all the ideas that people have tried to foist on him in the *equally unreal years* he has been living through (75; italics mine). The tragic hero, in the course of time, seems to long for a place of freedom and ease, where one can be unselfconsciously oneself (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 302). Such a hero can get this but that will be both fleeting and his undoing.

Struggle, *pathos* and an attempt at discovery the boundary situation all culminate in the recognition of Meursault as the hero in a situation of constraint. He cannot understand himself

nonetheless. His being is fated to be in shreds due to the combined forces of the Apolline and the Dionysiac; each raging and dividing, struggling for space. Meursault's *sparagmos* (tearing to pieces) is further symbolized by the privations of prison life and, ultimately, the guillotine.

Resignation becomes a great consolation, the common knowledge that life is not worth living, anyhow. The result is that he has to embrace the Promethean declaration:

So must I bear, as lightly as I can,
the destiny that fate has given me,
for I know well against necessity,
against its strength, no one can fight and win (*Prometheus Bound* lines 103-06).

Meursault has proved himself to be a tragic hero even if he does not survive the predicament (Frye 187). The tragic hero will end up the captive of the movement of necessity, but he will also be seen to have struggled against it with every means he commands (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 68). The tragic hero's life, in Nietzsche's sense, is defined through misery and suffering; wrongdoing is of necessity imposed on the titanically striving individual (*The Birth of Tragedy* 50).

4.2 The Innocent, the Condemned

Io of *Prometheus Bound* is a victim of strife between two deities, Zeus and his sister-wife, Hera: the latter's rage over the former's love for the mortal. Meursault suffers a similar fate; he is the fighting ground for an elephantine fight, a divine rivalry. How is it any fault of Io's that she is made an enchantress? Or the wrong in remaining a maiden still, she who might/make marriage with the greatest? (*Prometheus Bound* lines 648-49)? Before long the divine usurper becomes keen on Io; a fire to try the bed of love with her (*Prometheus Bound* lines 649-51). Zeus's furtive aim as he turns the maiden into a heifer is of little avail. The gadfly and the dead herdsman

Argos that hound Io are a good indication of Hera's knowledge. The jealous goddess's wrath and the supreme god's lust are visited on Io as neither, especially the latter, does the mortal little good.

The maiden is in a situation where she is neither guiltless nor guilty (Frye 41). Perhaps Io is innocent in the sense that she is endowed with mesmerizing looks; whereas she is culpable by virtue of her existence, for [by] living in a world where...injustices are inescapable part of existence (Frye 41). Is Meursault 'poetically innocent' (Frye 211), like Io or Maurya of John Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, or the Mother in *Blood Wedding*?

To tackle this means to embrace, as Akwanya remarks, 'the notion that tragedy is set off, not by what one has done, but by who one is' (*Discourse Analysis* 120). Who then is Meursault? He is a tragic hero: an innocent sufferer who pays dearly for his fated wrongdoing. Be it a divine foreknower or a mere mortal whose intelligence is comparable with a god's, the tragic victim is always trapped by the 'sombre sway of *moira*' (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 125). Fate, or *moira*, blocks all the possible escape routes in each predicament, whether or not the individual confronts his 'boundary situation.' Prometheus and Oedipus (the Sphinx riddle solver) alike cannot escape their fates in spite of their respective prowess and acumen.

The tragic hero, according to Ricoeur, 'is subject to a fatal destiny' [whereby] man falls into fault as he falls into existence (*Conflict of Interpretations* 294). As Akwanya further notes elsewhere:

[The] tragic hero...is rarely an innocent victim or purely a villain and a corrupting influence. He is usually a good person (Aristotle), having human strengths as well as weaknesses. Accordingly, his textual career reveals a man both 'innocent and guilty' ('The Self in the Mirror' 48).

Meursault fits the description. If Ió is a wronged victim of fate then, *a fortiori*, so is Meursault. According to Nietzsche, the "double essence of Aeschylus' Prometheus, his simultaneously Apolline and Dionysiac nature" (*The Birth of Tragedy* 51) is that which volunteers a being such as Meursault for his wrongdoing.

He seems an unwilling helper. For instance, when Marie in earnest brings up the issue of union, he readily obliges: "I didn't mind; if she was keen on it, we'd get married" (28). Prior to this, Meursault has granted Raymond Sintes two requests. But he is not agreeable to his employer maybe because the latter is not insistent at the time. On the other hand Raymond presses Meursault. His first entreaty comes in the form of an invite. Meursault grants the request precisely because he seizes a chance: "It struck me that this would save my having to cook my dinner, so I said, 'Thanks very much'" (20). Both men, in the beginning, actually use each other to good advantage, although it seems Meursault is the one exploited in the end. Perhaps it is so due to his lack of deliberation, however little. The stranger's undoing seems to result from his complaisance, which commences with and ends in his writing the set-up letter and him holding the tool for the crime (Sintes's revolver) respectively.

"Fundamental in the tragic attitude, therefore, is the notion of the absurdity of life" not that ... [characters] thwart the order of the world, and render it absurd, but rather...that life is cruel in a blind and casual way" (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 216). As if aware of the attitude the stranger lays his already indifferent "heart open to the benign indifference of the universe" (76). His execution holds the promise of a happy decapitation; a view where he desires to be greeted with "howls of execration" (76). Meursault is long sunk in the abyss of *ataraxia*: a strangely special state of equanimity. The ataraxic state inherent in his Apollonian/Dionysian predicament constitutes the thrust of the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Stoic Indifference

In Apollonian/Dionysian predicament the victim lives in the fantasy world of Apollo—god of *Bild* and dream—but the latter almost immediately leaves the former in the lurch (of limitation), while the Dionysiac stirrings, by contrast, promise boundlessness and attempt to free the tragic character from the thralldom of dreaminess. Whenever the Dionysiac intoxication breaks through, the Apolline image is suspended and annulled, for as it grows in intensity *Rausch*—in a bid to wrestle with the *Gotterbild* of Apollo—plunges the victim into oblivion of some sort.

Contrary to Arthur Miller's view, here the tragic hero, perhaps not of his own accord, is to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status (1). The hero finds himself in a special state of stoic indifference, otherwise known as *ataraxia*. In this chapter, the hero's taciturnity and equanimity will come into sharp focus: the response to the predicament. This reaction is a consequence of a limitation-cum-transgression state, so to speak, a "divine stupor."

5.1 *Übermensch* and the Rough Beast

Like the tragic hero of *Things Fall Apart*, Meursault senses voices asking why he has done the wrongdoing (*Things Fall Apart* 145). Both heroes are a kind of what Nietzsche calls *Übermensch*, which is now rendered as "overman" in lieu of "superman." Akwanya notes that the "overman is not subject to pressure, as he stands head and shoulders above the average man" ("The Superman as Narrative" 2). Okonkwo is "superior in degree to other men" (Frye 33) in Umuofia:

He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like a possessed one (Achebe 13).

In comparison Meursault, as an *Übermensch*, is 'really a different type of human' (Akwanya, 'The Superman as Narrative' 2). He is beyond the other characters, who are on the same level with man. They cannot reach him because of the divine form: his world comprises the place where the Apolline and the Dionysiac can function. This tragic hero is a man 'devoid of the least spark of human feeling.'

The similarity notwithstanding, Meursault and Okonkwo do not have much in common. The one is the rough beast, the other the red dragon. A distinction has been drawn between the terms:

the red dragon, which is in fact related to the rough beast, but differing in having a self-defined and self-centred goal and malignancy, whereas the rough beast is unmotivated and amoral. These patterns may be encountered in folktales as well as in 'highbrow' literature (Akwanya, 'Poetry's Two Estates' 37).

Both destroy life but only the red dragon desires it. Meursault lacks the skill of deliberation, in turn, he doubtless matches the description of the rough beast figure that 'recognizes no external constraint of any kind' (Akwanya 40) and seeks out the fulfilment of his unbridled passion. The rough beast figure lives on impulses; his living is a reaction: he is acted upon. The impulsive Meursault endangers lives in the process - the battering of the Moor - and leaves ruins in his tracks: the butchering of the girl's brother. Okonkwo, on the other hand, is the red dragon that is driven by 'a great passion' to be one of the lords of the clan' (*Things Fall Apart* 92). This ambitionist knows 'how to kill a man's spirit' (*Things Fall Apart* 19). In addition to his wilful

damage, Okonkwo is instrumental in the slaying of some characters such as some unnamed five men in battle (Things Fall Apart 45), Ikemefuna and the head messenger.

Owing to Apollonian/Dionysian predicament, Meursault, by contrast, is ambitionlessness personified. This is portrayed when he turns down the offer of transfer to Paris. His employer evinces his disappointment that Meursault lacked ambition a grave defect when one was in business (28). Meursault's preoccupation appears to be physical sensations. He emphasizes the effects of natural phenomenon (the sun, water and air), showing the pleasing warmth he derives from them. Furthermore as a sensualist, Meursault harps on about Marie's bosoms: their firmness and curve. Every moment with her is held dear, I felt her legs twining round mine, and my senses tingled (34). Never has there been a more delightful moment for this Dionysiac man than the combined warmth of their bodies his and Marie's and the sun (34). Many acts of his, the crime especially, spring from sheer wantonness. Meursault knows not what he does as it is predestined to be the ruin of him. He does not understand his stoic indifference either.

The Dionysiac *Rausch* is embodied in every rough beast, and this has a profound effect on Meursault. He causes harm unwittingly, without motivation or thought, like a possessed one. The rough beast, as described in W.B. Yeats's "The Second Coming," has a shape with a lion's body and the head of a man (line 14). The beast in Yeats's work echoes another in Homer's, the Chimaera. The image comes to view in *Iliad*:

...the Chimaera

[a] grim monster sprung of the gods. nothing human,

all lion in front, all snake behind. all goat between,

terrible, blasting lethal fire at every breath (6. 212-15)!

The chimaera, for the ancient Greeks, was a creature which evoked both repulsion and awe. Its form was symbolic of its nature: a monstrous unnatural body signified a monstrous unnatural disposition (Arthur Saniotis 47). Meursault, in the prosecutor's description, is "an inhuman monster" (60) and, as a consequence of this "monstrous unnatural disposition," has "no place in a community whose basic principles he flouts without compunction" (64). The rough beast character is found in Federico Lorca's *Blood Wedding*. Leonardo is pressurized into arranged marriage: a fleeting ordeal for the rough beast. Subsequently he runs amok and away with the Bride. The Bridegroom and Leonardo slay each other in the ensuing fighting. The latter unintentionally adds insult to injury for the Mother of the former whose family his, the Felixes, have already brought enormous grief. The Bride and Leonardo all along "tried to deceive themselves, but in the end blood proved stronger" (*Blood Wedding* 3.1). The red fluid here epitomizes wantonness. This is symbolized as *Rausch* in Meursault's case. His is "a narcotic which both intoxicates and *befogs* the mind" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 10). The chimaeral rough beast is a despicable "monster that sent many men to death" (*Iliad* 16.288). Leonardo, like Meursault, is indifferent to both the harm he causes and the one his brings upon himself. But Meursault is markedly different; he is disoriented right from the very beginning. His stoic indifference is hinted at the very first line of the novel: "Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure" (4).

In contrast the red dragon figure, Okonkwo, is not only deliberative but also unwilling to admit of any compromise. This rather seems overambitious, unthinking, or egoistic even, to his fellow characters. He strikes in spite of the "utter silence" (*Things Fall Apart* 144) from the Umuofia men, who are known for their gallantry. Only then does he clearly see the signs that Umuofia would not want to go to war with the hegemony (*Things Fall Apart* 144). Okonkwo

realizes that the failure to back him up in the killing of the court messenger had turned what was to have been an act of war into murder (Akwanya, *Function and Deliberative Action* 101). He too cannot escape the tragic fate, which is the repetitive cycle of the taboo in nature, the karmic act of hubris witting or unwitting, into which the demonic will within man constantly compels him. Meursault's stoic indifference seems to overshadow whatever karmic act that awaits him.

5.2 *Un Étranger*

Translations of the French word *étranger* are given as 'stranger', 'foreigner' or 'outsider'. A stranger or *un étranger* can mean an 'alienated outsider' or 'an unfamiliar traveller' in either language. Similarly in German, the term *fremd* is rendered into English as 'foreign', 'strange' or 'alien'. The hero, Meursault, is not wanting in any of the attributes above, regardless of language. Thus his problem arises not necessarily because he is an outsider or foreigner but owing to the strangeness in his alienation. He is regarded as what one may call a *fremd étranger*, or strange outsider. The aberration of his alienation comprises his aloofness, that is, stoic indifference. The prosecutor describes him as a man 'devoid of the least spark of human feeling' (64). This seeming devoidness is to plague him throughout the narrative. Apollonian/Dionysian predicament is, without question, at play.

David Spintzen correctly asks a significant question: 'Why must society' in the persons of the magistrate, defence attorney, and prosecutor' refuse in principle to see him as he is' (116)? The answer to Spintzen's question may not be hard to come up with, still less far-fetched. Unreasoning fear, and hate, of Meursault pervades his society as a consequence of his 'unnatural disposition'. Beings seem to hate what they cannot conquer because it is already in their nature

to fear that which they find unfathomable, as a saying goes. Meursault is a creature that evokes awe as well as repulsion.

To describe his enigmatic being, members of his society lay claim to differing views; even so, do come to common consent eventually. The prosecutor, for instance, sees *no soul* (63), whereas his colleague, the defence lawyer, claims to *have found something there* (65). However, the counsel betrays a consensual undertone as he, in the cell, asks the defendant if he *felt grief on that sad occasion* (41) and goes ahead to omit *the sad occasion* which is material to the case in his summation. The prosecutor, in comparison, points out that *Not once in the course of these proceedings did... [the accused] show the least contrition* (64), albeit his admission that society *cannot blame a man for lacking what it was never in his power to acquire* (63). On the other hand Meursault:

really couldn't understand why he [the prosecutor] harped on this point so much... to my mind, he overdid it, and I'd have liked to have a chance of explaining to him, in a quite friendly, almost affectionate way, that I have never been able really to regret anything in all my life (63).

Both seeming subjects the legal practitioners are no more mystified than the supposed object (the criminal) they claim to have studied closely.

Moreover Meursault finds it strange that he should be labelled as *criminal* *Somehow it was an idea to which I never could get reconciled* (44). The answer to Spintzen's question cannot be made any plainer. None of the characters can fathom the strangeness in Meursault's person, his stoic indifference. Neither does the tragic hero himself notwithstanding his claim of the inability to show compunction. None of them knows that *Craft is far weaker than/*

necessity (Prometheus Bound lines 513-14). Meursault's indifference is born of not cunning but simply necessity.

He is in the self-oblivion of the Dionysiac states whereby the individual with all his limits and measures (of the Apolline) sinks out of sight (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 129). No matter how significant the event, like during his mother's funeral or the trial, marginal consciousness seems to take a hold on him. He has what David Cook calls "vegetable consciousness," it is alive; has very great seasonal value; is readily consumed; but in some sense has no lasting value (Cook 68). There is yet another instance:

Only one incident stands out; toward the end, while my counsel rambled on, I heard the tin trumpet of an ice-cream vendor in the street, a small, shrill sound cutting across the flow of words. And then a rush of memories went through my mind— memories of a life which was mine no longer and had once provided me with the surest, humblest pleasures: warm smells of summer, my favorite streets, the sky at evening, Marie's dresses and her laugh. The futility of what was happening here seemed to take me by the throat, I felt like vomiting, and I had only one idea: to get it over, to go back to my cell, and sleep ... and sleep (65).

All this man wants to do is sleep, a man who is on the verge of being condemned to death, as is eventually the case.

Well, the judicial arm of Meursault's society has, in befuddled accord, clung to (and stressed) his behaviour during his mother's funeral, the heartlessness and inability to state his mother's age; and the "liaison" (a day) after, his visit to the swimming pool where he meets Marie, their matinee at the pictures where a Fernandel film was showing, and finally his return

with Marie to his rooms (62). This is an effort by the prosecutor to portray "the dark workings of a criminal mentality" (62), what he goes on to call the "night side of the case" (62).

Meursault's society is about normality, so members of it ask a lot of Meursault, who is anything but normal: a stranger. He is not concordant with the members of his society. Becoming what they want means altering his being; this cannot happen because the make-up of his being will not allow him, as he is at the behest of the interplay of the Apolline and the Dionysiac elements. His behaviour is merely a reaction put up by either of forces; he always remains aloof. The feeling of detachment is glimpsed early on in the opening paragraph, "Mother died today, or maybe yesterday; I can't be sure." Meursault's reaction to the news of his deceased mother is that of uncertainty, if not disinterest. His utter indifference is made manifest when he is in attendance at the funeral. His fellow creatures of the book would be mournful during the funeral rites, as humans would were they in his shoes. They therefore expect Monsieur Meursault to be inconsolable, if anything. The warden, for example, does not wipe off a single bead of perspiration. Furthermore, what can be more dramatic than "Perez's fainting fit" he crumpled up like a rag doll (12)? These characters, including the caretaker, stand as principal witness against the accused during the trial. The director or warden claims to be particularly amazed by M. Meursault's "calmness" (56). According to him, the defendant on the fateful day never wants to see his mother's body, nor sheds a single tear, or lingers at the grave even (56). He, like the others, finds this alarming. In fact everybody but Meursault regards it as strange.

This tragic hero however thinks he is not different but normal "like everyone else" (42) in that heterocosm, as is explicit in his statement: "All normal people had more or less desired the death of those they loved, sometime or another" (41). The defence lawyer is shocked by this honest opinion. The subsequent admonition signals the notion that the tragic hero is not like

everyone else. Meursault is, in Aristotle's phrase, "consistently inconsistent" (ch 15). His insistent claim on normality portrays how he is up to his neck in *ataraxia*, in Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. Little does Meursault know that he is abnormal and beyond other characters. Meursault is, of necessity, burdened with a "higher *mechane* [means] of existence" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 129).

This tragic hero seems to be in harmony with a character in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* over the same ground (of indifference). Ralph Touchett is, as T. B. Wucher remarks, guilty of "mere spectatorship at the game of life" (22). Happenings around Ralph are of little or no interest to him. Like Meursault, he may not be sure about what interests him but he is absolutely certain of that which does not interest him (72). Ralph "carried his hands in his pockets, and there was something in the way he did it that showed the habit was inveterate. His gait had a shambling, wandering quality" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 35). He is not uninterested in pouches or openings of clothing, be it a jacket or pair of trousers "his hands [always] found their way into his pocket" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 464). Meursault is regarded as sober perhaps owing to a "wandering quality." He more or less speaks only when he deems it significant: "he isn't one to waste his breath, like a lot of folks" (57). Although he is not, in Celeste's opinion, "a secretive sort of man" (57), he is an enigma of some sort. Ralph, by comparison, is sombre, he "looked clever and ill" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 35), whereas Meursault in spite of his brilliance is "unfit to be part of his community" (64). Ralph "had caught a violent cold, which had fixed itself on his lungs and threw them into dire confusion" (*The Portrait of a Lady* 75). While his state is a consequence of pulmonary disease, Meursault's is a shuttle between the self-oblivion of the Dionysiac condition and the self-awareness statutes of Apollo (Geuss 27). The latter's stupefaction signals the insupportableness of Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. He is

swallowed up in ambiguity; he is a stranger. As Akwanya points out in "The Self in the Mirror," "Strangeness and difficulty are connected with the being of literature" (51), not least this tragic hero's being.

Meursault and Ralph are detached observers who engage in "mere spectatorship" in their respective worlds. Meursault's *ataraxic* world, a special equanimity-cum-taciturnity state, is intrinsically part of his tragic situation: Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. His claim to have laid his "heart open to the benign indifference of the universe" (76) is no more than solace: it is an authentication of tragic necessity. He thinks he is no more impassive than the heterocosm of which he will sooner cease to be a denizen. Meursault can no more explain the steps that have led to the perception of indifference than he can describe the perception itself. His stoic indifference is preordained. It signals both fate and evil (his isolation and *pathos*).

One essential condition for tragedy is suffering or pathos. Another is alienation. The tragic hero of *The Stranger* in his Apollonian/Dionysian predicament is further estranged from his society. His "self has been put out of play" (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 255), not as a result of accident but due to the fated effects from a divine struggle. Meursault nonetheless is in an amazing way indifferent to his lot. According to Sprintzen, there exist "the complete unassuming naturalness of his actions and observations, on the one hand, and his insensitivity to normal feelings and expectations, on the other" (108). So the Dionysiac game always brings the "naive, natural man to the self-oblivion of intense intoxication." This signals an underlying gulf, so to speak, a distance. There seems a distance; he neither wants to scandalize, nor offend nor be hated even: far from it (Sprintzen 107). Meursault exudes an air of naïveté and, sometimes, uneasiness as to what is expected of him. On three occasions, in the event of his mother's death, he feels he owes persons apologies: his boss, the director and his lover. When he senses a

reprimand from the superintendent of the Marengo home, he begins to explain himself. However, on the next day at the beach with Marie, Meursault manages to stifle the urge:

I was just going to explain to her that it wasn't my fault, but I checked myself, as I remembered having said the same thing to my employer, and realizing then it sounded rather foolish. Still, foolish or not, somehow one can't help feeling a bit guilty, I suppose (14).

Meursault is made a rare breed by his predicament. His paramour, Mademoiselle Cardona, calls him "a queer fellow," that that is probably why she loves him; she nonetheless adds that she may turn around and loathe him for the same reason (29). In Alain Robbe-Grillet we read that:

the tragic sense of life never seeks to suppress the distances: it multiplies them, on the contrary, at will. Distance between man and other men, distance between man and himself, between man and the world— nothing remains intact: everything is lacerated, fissured, divided, displaced (28).

Nearly all the characters regard Meursault as something of an enigma.

Another instance is the examining magistrate who in a fit of frustration, if not perplexity, soulfully declares that never in his experience has he seen a more case-hardened soul (44). The prosecutor also makes claim in that regard, declaring that he has studied Meursault's "soul" closely:

and had found a blank, "literally nothing, gentlemen of the jury." Really, he said, I had no soul, there was nothing human about me, not one of those moral qualities which normal men possess had any place in my mentality. "No doubt," he added, "we should not reproach him with this..." (63).

Nonetheless the prosecution with the connivance of the judicial body turns a blind eye to a cogent point raised by the counsel:

“I am astounded, gentlemen,” he added, “by the attitude taken up by my learned friend in referring to this Home. Surely if proof be needed of the excellence of such institutions, we need only remember that they are promoted and financed by a government department” (65).

Meursault is under sentence of death in spite of the fact that his crime may have been unpremeditated. Killing is called a crime especially when it is intentional. The court deliberates on the slaying as it tries in vain to search out the motives that explain his actions: its ruling however amounts to murder in lieu of manslaughter. If one is to look at Meursault, one cannot but hold him in awe and think him as a daemon (half-god); what Hans Jauss would call admiring identification: “the distancing act in which consciousness measures itself against the object of its astonishment that makes admiration an aesthetic affect” (168). Members of his society cannot notice this, nor can he. They wonder about the structure of this man’s mind. Whereas they care to find out, the latter is not keen on the matter. Try as they may, they cannot work him out at all.

Moreover crime involves responsibility. This means that the individual who is said to have committed a crime must be competent. Meursault’s crime if so called is unimputable. The obtrusive illogicality proves his indifference. Rarely does he make plans like human beings. This hero hardly deliberates on his actions because he lacks skills of that sort; contemporaneous with this want is another, namely, that of compunction. Society blames a man for lacking what it is never in his power to acquire (63). The other characters cannot reach him because the divine form is absent in them. Meursault is at the level of *ataraxia* where the Apolline and the Dionysiac can only function. The tragic hero is to be “executed [principally] because he didn’t

weep at his mother's funeral" (75). "And what difference could it make" (75)? Asks Meursault. Does it all come to the same thing in the end as Meursault claims? Perhaps it will owing to Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. Meursault stands "no chance at all, absolutely none" (69), "precisely because of this [intermittent but persistent] forgetting" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 146).

Pessimism of tragedy seems the "justification of the evil in human life, both in the sense of human guilt and in the sense of the suffering brought about by it" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 50). Tragedy is, as Richard Sewall remarks, "the sense of ancient evil, of 'the blight man was born for,' of the permanence of the mystery of human suffering, that is basic to the tragic sense of life" (qtd in Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 25). Meursault becomes a victim in his own consciousness. His (marginal) consciousness which seems schizoid is in fact transcendent. The result is that he becomes stoically indifferent. *Ataraxia* helps to draw him further away from King Lear's question: "Who is it that can tell me who I am" (*King Lear* 1.4)? Meursault seems a chimaeral monster that "springs of" a divine struggle. He becomes a tragic victim, who cannot change his *pathos* (as evil) or escape his fate. He is not on the same level with man; he is on a higher plane. No one, as Meursault claims, has the right to expect anything more of him (73), for "in the long run one gets used to anything" (49), including stoic indifference to suffering.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Friedrich Nietzsche's poetics on tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy* provides insight into character study. It takes up in a different light an age-old theme in literary studies and criticism: struggle. Nietzsche's argument is that the tragic hero is, of necessity, in Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. This study has adopted this concept but not completely: not all tragic heroes are in Apollonian/Dionysian predicament, although all face constraint of some sort. This research has taken the view that only a hero of the high mimetic mode and of the divine form is a qualified victim, worthy of the said predicament. An effort to grasp the predicament of Meursault in Camus's *The Stranger* signals an attempt to understand the hero's inscrutable being; more so, the heterocosm of a literary text gives rise to thought (Ricoeur) anytime in that literature is surrounded with ambiguity. Art, a basic phenomenon or activity, is always a confrontation with Being (Fink qtd in Möring 133); the being of the literary art is again and again connected with strangeness and difficulty (Akwanya, "The Self" 51). This explains why literature is "an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries" (Frye 17). The result is that literary criticism becomes what Frye calls a systematic study, so to speak, a science (17). Any evidence should be ascertainable solely within the individual text and partly in the literary tradition, the critic in the investigation employs some sort of supportive tool, say, a hypothesis, to safeguard and equally validate his or her position, in an effort to preserve the individual work of art. "To the createdness of the work the preservers belong just as essentially as the creators. But it is the work which makes the creators possible in their essence and which, in virtue of its essence, needs the preservers" (Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track* 44). Each close reading of a novel therefore yields

up unyielding realities: the beings in and the being of the literary work. The heterocosm of the latter provides a passageway to the different worlds of the former.

An inquiry into one of such beings—the creatures of the book—has given rise to the characterization in this research. For character study does not end where the authors stop, it continues with the literary critics. Characterization, as Achebe puts it, “comprises listening to the character himself, observing him, and trying to understand him” (qtd in Akwanya, “Achebe and the Writing Tradition” 99). My close reading is phenomenological as it is archaeological. That is, this literary investigation has presented the being of Meursault as the narrative work unconceals it at the time—the unconcealment of beings is not a state that is merely present but rather a happening (Heidegger 30-31)—and done some diggings into the literary tradition as well.

This research, using Nietzsche’s philosophy of the underlying will to power, has argued that the interplay of the Apolline and the Dionysiac constitutes Apollonian/Dionysian predicament. This sort of constraint is peculiar to only heroes such as Meursault. Literary characters, like him, must be of the high mimetic mode and of the divine form. Otherwise little or no sense will be made of his tragic situation. If he is taken as the same with every tragic hero of modernist literature in particular, as Stephenson argues, the stoic indifference with which he is surrounded will make no more sense than Hamlet’s pretext of pining—or that of Ralph Touchett even of *The Portrait of a Lady*, who seems to choose when not to be indifferent. The Shakespearean character and that of Henry James are of the renaissance and modernist literature respectively. Ralph and Hamlet both have ambitions; they correspondingly feign disinterest and insanity. By contrast Meursault is ambitionless. His attitude of indifference is markedly different; it is not of his making or a case of cunning. His stoic attitude is as a result of his strange predicament; the Dionysiac stirrings cause subjectivity in Meursault to vanish to the point of complete self-

forgetting.ø These promptingsô *Rausch*ô which contend with the logicalness of ðthe external and immovable orderø(the Apolline *Gotterbild*) signal that ðcraft is far weaker than necessity.ø

Meursault's tragic situation is remarkable indeed. He is already alienated in the novel from start to finish, proving Frye's argument that there exists the "curious blend of the inevitable and the incongruous which is peculiar to tragedy" (38). Meursault is out of synch with his community; his behaviour is incongruous as it is unmotivated. The research has set out to tackle this problem: the peculiarity of the hero's predicament. It has done something substantial and sufficient but cannot be the final answer to the questions concerning this hero's being and identity. Moreover, the most interesting aspect of the field of literary studies is that literary criticism most times "raises more objections than it answers" (Frye 41).

This close reading nonetheless has attempted at finding answers for the research questions that have been raised in chapter one; under "objectives of the study.ø Armed with a framework based on the Nietzschean philosophy, my literary investigation has confronted that which has not been said about Camus's *The Stranger* (his more-than-manness); more so, that which has not been said happen to be of a greater degree than that which has been said. This is proof of the inexhaustibility of the literary art: literature remains enigmatic. There is always room for many close readings in that "the writing of the text anticipates readings to come" (Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III* 166)

Whereas the fourth chapter contains how the constraint comes upon the hero, his reaction to the predicament has been discussed in the penultimate chapter. Put differently, chapter five has portrayed "from the inside to the outside,ø while the chapter before it has taken the converse view: "the outside on the inside,ø a portrayal of the exterior so to speak. By virtue of stoic indifference, Meursault is equal to Apollonian/Dionysian predicament: a result of the interplay.

The one cannot be without the other, that is, the tragic situation can only be significant if there is a certain level of aloofness (a great sense of detachment), and vice versa. The study has portrayed tragicness and especially more-than-manness—a quality hitherto undisclosed in this novel—thereby highlighting peculiarity as well as identicalness in tragic situations. Meursault is entangled in a strange tragedy. Part of his suffering is that he is indifferent to pathos. The narrowness of his cell and the stoic indifference portray the unavoidable misery of life. The suffering of Meursault, like Oedipus or Prometheus even, constitutes a meditation on the primary symbol of fate, of evil (Akwanya, *Discourse Analysis* 101). The inevitability of peculiarity with respect to the hero's predicament, as argued by this research, will be of immense help to literary critics and students alike in further readings. Meursault has something in common with Ralph of *The Portrait of a Lady*, Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*, Leonardo of *Blood Wedding* and Io of *Prometheus Bound*; these shared qualities highlight his stoic indifference, more-than-manness, impulsiveness and innocence/culpability respectively. His lot can be summarized thus: "All that exists is just and unjust and is equally justified in both respects" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 51).

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