MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE
IN THE WORKS OF ALBERT CAMUS

by

MARGARET JEAN BUTTON
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Department of Romance Studies

The University of British Columbia, Vancouver 8, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to trace the age-old theme of man's relationship with the physical universe in the works of one writer: Albert Camus.

In his early works, Camus was preoccupied with this theme. From 1941 on, however, he increasingly neglected it in favour of social, political and philosophical topics. Perhaps, this is why any criticism of his works tends to centre on the man-nature theme in his writings before 1941, and then to completely drop this subject and dwell on the social, political and philosophical aspects of his later works. The man-nature theme, however, is present throughout Camus' works; in only a few is it neglected completely.

Moreover, it was found that Camus' treatment of the theme formed a pattern of four chronological periods. During the first years of his literary career until 1941, Camus dwells on man's deep sensitivity to nature and the sense of "oneness" he feels with the physical universe. *L'Envers et l'endroit* and *Noces* were Camus' first youthful and ingenuous efforts to express his sense of communion with nature and the beliefs he finds as a result of this communion. In *L'Etranger*, Camus' first published work of fiction, man is no longer free in his association with nature, but controlled by it. "Le Minotaure", a description of Oran and its inhabitants, suggests that man has a choice of life close to nature and happiness or a life away from nature which brings sterility and boredom.

In 1941 comes a distinct and decisive change in Camus' attitude to the man-nature theme. The essay "Les Amandiers" announces
this change; in it, nature is reduced to a mere symbol of "the good"; in man is no longer portrayed enjoying the beauties of nature. Indeed, the works of this second period — the longest and richest in literary output — depict man in exile from the nature he adores; exiled because of the "absurd" as in Caligula; because of circumstances of birth and lack of money as in Le Malentendu and because of plague (or war) as in La Peste. Yet, in all these works, nature is present as a memory or a desire. "L'Exil d'Hélène" closes this period with a bitter criticism by the author of a world that has forsaken nature and its joys.

For a brief interval in 1952-1953, Camus' writings reflect a deep desire to recapture his youthful experience of nature in Algeria and Italy. During this period, he describes his renewed relationship with nature in the essays: "Retour à Tipasa" and "La Mer au plus près". Neither essay, however, contains the freshness and enthusiasm of the first period.

After 1953, Camus' characters lose themselves once again in a world that is out of touch with nature. La Chute describes the exile of all men and La Femme adultère, the communion of man with nature, but with a nature that is sterile and death-like.
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INTRODUCTION

Man's relationship with nature as reflected in French literature varies greatly with the century. During the Middle Ages, the courtly writers described nature as they saw it in their gardens or orchards. In its "natural" state, however, nature was something to be feared. Dark foreboding forces — mythical beasts and giants — prowl through the forests of Chrétien de Troyes, for example. In the Sixteenth Century, the Pléiade depicted nature quite differently. In their works, it was a bright, pleasant, sensual world in which nymphs and satyrs, poets and their lady-loves frolicked. In the following century, nature almost disappeared from the French literary scene. Instead of man and nature, man himself — his psychology and manners — preoccupied Racine and Molière. With Rousseau, the theme of man's relationship with nature once more became popular. For him, nature was the "good" as opposed to the corrupt civilized world. From Rousseau's writings in particular was born the Romantic Movement of the Nineteenth Century, in which man's relationship with nature was the central theme. Nature then became an expression of man's emotions, and his refuge from civilization. Unlike the Romantics, the Realists regarded nature from an intellectual standpoint. In their works, nature lost all power of its own and became instead a carefully observed, objectively-described backdrop for man's actions.

In the present century, man's relationship with nature is still a popular theme with many writers: Ramuz, Giono, Bosco, Colette, and perhaps the most outstanding of all: Albert Camus.
The term "nature" has several possible connotations. There is the nature of a human being, for example, which is his native or inherent character. There is also the term "nature" which refers to the universe and its phenomena. Thus, there is a field of knowledge called natural science. In this thesis, however, the term "nature" will be taken to mean the elements, the "flora" and the "fauna" of the physical universe as seen on earth: the sea, sun, sky, the earth, its seasons, vegetation, and animal creatures; in short, what is authentic and independent of man, as opposed to the materialistic, civilized world which is man's creation. Usually, in Camus' works nature is found in a setting unspoiled by civilization, somewhere in a southern climate: Algeria, Italy, Spain, or Greece. Only rarely is it described in an urban setting and then only to illustrate how civilization distorts or destroys nature and man's experience of it.

Camus' literary career spans roughly a twenty-year period, from 1936, when he completed L'Envers et l'endroit, until 1958, when Actuelles III was published. During this time, one can observe a marked development in the relationship between man and nature in Camus' works. There are four periods in particular in this development: firstly, a Mediterranean period in which man is in harmony with nature; secondly, a long period of exile in which man is isolated from the joys of nature; thirdly, a brief period of search; and, fourthly, a final period of sterility.

This development is generally chronological. Moreover, it corresponds, at least partially, to certain events and influences in Camus' life.
In the early years of his career, from 1935 to 1940, Camus depicts man in close harmony with his natural surroundings. During this period, man experiences nature on two planes: first, in terms of his senses: sight, sound, and smell in particular. Then, nature may arouse in him certain philosophical musings or teach him valuable truths about life and death. Man's close communion with nature can be seen clearly in *L'Envers et l'endroit* (1935-1936)\(^1\), *Noces* (1936-1937), *L'Etranger* (1940), and "Le Minotaure" (1939)\(^2\).

This early period corresponds roughly to Camus' youth in Algeria. He was born there at Mondovi in 1913 of humble parents, his father, an agricultural worker and his mother, a charwoman. Camus was very poor and often unhappy as a child — his domineering grandmother ruled the family with an iron hand. By contrast to his unpleasant home-life, the luxurious nature of Algeria afforded the young Camus great happiness. Each day he spent sunning on the glistening beaches and swimming in the sea. In those days, only one thing really mattered to Camus: the union between himself and nature. Thus he wrote in these early days:

> Mer, campagne, silence, parfums de cette terre, je m'emplissais d'une vie odorante et je mordais dans le fruit déjà doré du monde, bouleversé de sentir son jus sucré et fort.... Non, ce n'était moi qui comptais, ni le monde, mais seulement l'accord et le silence qui de lui à moi faisait naître l'amour.\(^3\)

\(^1\)The dates referring to Camus' works in this thesis indicate the year in which the work was written.

\(^2\)Various essays in *L'Eté*, written from 1939 to 1953, show the development of Camus' attitude towards man and nature in the first three periods of his work.

During the second period, from 1940 to 1952, the predominant attitude in Camus' œuvre is that of man in exile from nature. In *Caligula*, the hero is preoccupied with the absurd. In *Le Malentendu* (1942-1943), the heroine is exiled from nature simply by circumstances of birth and poverty. In *La Peste* (1947), the city of Oran is isolated because of a plague. At least two essays in *L'Été* depict man's exile: "Les Amandiers" (1940) and "L'Exil d'Hélène" (1948). In the former, nature is reduced to a mere symbol of vitality and virtue, both of which modern man has lost. In 1948, with "L'Exil d'Hélène", man is in complete exile from the beauties of nature as represented by Greek civilization.

Two events in particular seem to have destroyed the peaceful interlude of Camus' early life: World War II and illness. Soon after the war began, Camus realized that he must somehow take part in it. Until then, he had been firmly opposed to violence of any kind; but now he saw that, in certain cases, it was justified. Far worse were the institutions of violence operated by the Nazi dictatorship and the mass murder they perpetrated in the concentration camps. To suppress these butchers use of force was necessary and excusable. About this time, he noted the end of his early innocent life close to nature and his inevitable involvement in war:

> Il avait fallu se mettre en règle avec la nuit, la beauté du jour n'était qu'un souvenir.... D'abord innocents sans le savoir, nous étions maintenant coupables sans le vouloir....  

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Not only the war but illness was responsible for a change in Camus' attitude towards nature. Already in 1930, he had been stricken by tuberculosis. In 1942, he was stricken again by it and forced to convalesce. At this point in his life, death must have seemed close by to Camus. His illness probably led him to re-assess the meaning and purpose of his life. In any case, it destroyed his youthful exuberance temporarily: "...une grave maladie m'ôta provisoirement la force de vie qui, en moi, transfigurait tout...."\(^5\) and filled him with "la peur et le découragement".\(^5\)

Unable to join the army for medical reasons, Camus became instead a member of the Resistance Movement and, in 1944, co-director of its newspaper *Combat*.

The latter part of 1952 until 1954-55 signals a brief return of man to nature. Two short essays in *L'Été* illustrate Camus' change in attitude towards the man-nature theme. They are "Retour à Tipasa" (1952) and "La Mer au plus près" (1953).

In 1952, sensing that he had moved far away from his source in nature, Camus made a special trip to Algeria in search of his original inspiration. There he met with success: "Je retouvais ici l'ancienne beauté, un ciel jeune...."\(^6\)

In 1954 came a retreat from political and literary life, and a trip to Italy, evidence of Camus' continued desire

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in this period to escape the involvements of Europe and to re-capture
his youthful joy in nature.

La Chute (1956) and La Femme adultère (1953) mark the last
period and man's most complete exile from nature.

It is impossible to state whether there was any single
influence which led to this most pessimistic period of Camus. Perhaps
the hostile reception he received in Algeria in January 1956 was a
cause of deep disappointment. When he publicly appealed for a truce
to end the Algerian war, he was booed by many of his compatriots. On
his return from Algeria, he wrote to Gillibert: "Je suis rentré
d'Algérie, assez désespéré.... C'est pour moi un malheur personnel." 7

7 Théâtre, récits, nouvelles d'Albert Camus, ed. Roger Quilliot (Paris,
CHAPTER I

Mediterranean Summer

In the work of Camus, the first attitude to be studied concerning the relationship between man and nature is man in communion with nature. At least three major works illustrate this attitude: two autobiographical volumes, *L'Envers et l'endroit* and *Noces*, and one work of fiction, *L'Etranger*. They all belong to Camus' early period, 1935 to 1940.

The essays in *L'Envers et l'endroit* were written in 1935 and 1936, when Camus was only twenty-two. They relate his experiences as a child and youth in close communion with nature, and the thoughts which arise from this communion.

The preface to the collection, written in 1954 and published in 1958, just two years before his death, is perhaps the most important single statement we have by the author on the meaning and place of nature in his life. In retrospect, Camus sees the tremendous value of this little book as a testimony of his original inspiration and the valuable first truths it taught him. Indeed, it is the seminal work in his career: "...*L'Envers et l'Endroit*, dont on voit les traces dans tout ce que j'ai fait ensuite...."8

Most artists have a particular source of inspiration, a life-long truth which stimulates them throughout their career, Camus believes. His is to be found in *L'Envers*:

*Pour moi, je sais que ma source est dans *L'Envers et l'Endroit*, dans ce monde de pauvreté et de lumière où j'ai longtemps vécu....*9

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9 *ibid.*, p. 13.
This is the world of his childhood and youth. This "monde de pauvreté" centres around the small filthy dwelling where he grew up in the care of his grandmother and mother. This "monde...de lumière" refers to the sun-drenched beaches of Algeria where he played long hours as a child, and the olive-trees on the parched hills of Majorca and Italy, which he visited as a young man.

Camus claims that, years afterwards, it was the memory of this "monde...de lumière" which inspired him to revolt against the violence and injustice done to men. He wanted all men to be free from oppression, so that they might enjoy the "lumière" as he had. His revolts, he writes, "furent presque toujours...des révoltes pour tous, et pour que la vie de tous soit élevée dans la lumière."^10

Although revolt would later upset the equilibrium of his daily life, for the moment Camus was "...placé à mi-distance de la misère et du soleil".^^11

During his childhood and youth, nature was Camus' most vital interest. It aroused in him an "appétit désordonné de vivre"^12 which remained with him all his life, but never again with such intensity.

In addition to arousing a tremendous "joie de vivre" in Camus, nature also consoled him for the discomforts of poverty he suffered. He had the sun, the sea, the sky — what more could he ask of life?

^10 Camus, L'Envers, pp. 13-14.
^12 ibid., p. 27.
Nor does he envy anyone. He himself has never desired material goods. In fact, even when prosperity came his way in 1954, he stated: "Bien que je vive maintenant sans le souci du lendemain, donc en privilégié, je ne sais pas posséder."\(^{13}\) For Camus the acquisition of material goods means a loss of liberty; one becomes a slave to possessions. Rather, Camus treasures his liberty. It affords him far greater joys than any possessions would:

the joys of a life close to nature.

Pendant huit jours, il y a longtemps, j'ai vécu comblé des biens de ce monde: nous dormions sans toit, sur une plage, je me nourrissais de fruits et je passais la moitié de mes journées dans une eau déserte.\(^{14}\)

In "Entre oui et non", the second essay in *L'Envers*, Camus, now a youth, returns home after a short absence. Seated in a café in the Arab quarter he recalls some moments from the past. Two aspects in particular are of interest in this short essay. Here is an example of the importance of nature to Camus as a child, as well as the first instance of a scene in nature inducing a mood and arousing various thoughts in the person who beholds it. Camus remembers summer evenings long ago when the workers used to sit on their balconies. The Camus family, who had no balcony, sat outside their house instead. They used to gaze long hours at the sky. For the rich, Camus notes, the

\(^{13}\)Camus, *L'Envers*, p. 18.

\(^{14}\)ibid., pp. 17-18.
sky is but a natural boon, but

...au bas de l'échelle, le ciel reprend tout son sens:
une grâce sans prix. Nuits d'été, mystères où crépitaient
des étoiles!\textsuperscript{15}

In a rare lyrical outburst, he praises the sky in a vocabulary
strongly reminiscent of the Romantics.

From the café, Camus watches the sun cast red reflections
on the walls. The air turns cool suddenly, and the whistle of a
boat sounds from the sea. Far off, he hears the vague rumble of
waves: "...le monde soupire vers moi dans un rythme long et m'apporte
l'indifférence et la tranquilité de ce qui ne meurt pas".\textsuperscript{16}

For Camus and his characters, twilight always induces a
mood of tranquility and indifference. It is a time when man is
above and beyond the preoccupations and stresses of daily life.
It is an hour between yes and no; that is, man does not feel obliged
to take any stand towards life - or death. During this moment,
suspended from time, man glimpses a deeper reality than that of his
daily life. This is the same concept as that held by Henri Bergson,
and at least one writer influenced by him, Virginia Woolf.\textsuperscript{17} They
both believed that the real truths of life are apprehended during
those moments when one is suddenly suspended from daily routine
and concerns. Then, the conscious mind is relaxed and one is able
to intuit what is timeless, the true reality. In this case, Camus

\textsuperscript{15}Camus, \textit{L'Envers}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{16}ibid., p. 62.
\textsuperscript{17}See Virginia Woolf, \textit{To the Lighthouse} (London, 1962).
apprehends two truths: firstly, he perceives that there are moments of pure emotion in one's life which are never forgotten, for example: the scenes of childhood recalled here. Secondly, he understands why people may want to die, because "...au regard d'une certaine transparence de la vie, plus rien n'a d'importance".\footnote{Camus, \textit{L'Envers}, p. 71.}

In "Amour de vivre", the fourth essay in \textit{L'Envers}, Camus records various psychological experiences he had in the Balearic Isles, in particular at Palma and Ibiza. So deep is his communion with nature here that sometimes Camus has the pantheistic illusion that he is some object or phenomenon in the natural world. The scene in which he describes his walk at noon around the deserted quarter of the cathedral in Palma, Majorca, provides a striking example. Sight and smell are confused at first: "...les rues aux odeurs d'ombre..."\footnote{ibid., p. 110.} Then, he has the sensation of melting "...dans cette odeur de silence..."\footnote{ibid., pp. 110-111.} which issues from the court-yards and empty streets. At last:

\begin{quote}
...je perdais mes limites, n'étais plus que le son de mes pas, ou ce vol d'oiseaux dont j'apercevais l'ombre sur le haut des murs encore ensoleillé.
\end{quote}

The little Gothic cloister of San Francisco offers Camus yet another truth. In the garden, the sun shines on the yellow stones of the colonnade. Women draw water from the well. At the
sound of the dry beating of wings from a flock of pigeons taking flight Camus has a sudden happy feeling of lucidity. He realizes that this moment, like the moment of twilight in the café is suspended from time. Expectantly, he waits for some action to break its spell. Maybe the pigeons will stop in flight and fall to the ground with folded wings. But no, the spell continues. This experience is a moment of revelation for the young Camus:

 Là était tout mon amour de vivre: une passion silencieuse pour ce qui allait peut-être m'échapper....\(^{21}\)

Certain moments in life are precious, simply because they are not eternal. Therefore, let us treasure life and cultivate our "amour de vivre".

At Ibiza, Camus perceives once more his great "amour de vivre". Seated in a café, after a long day spent close to nature, he watches the evening draw near. The hills seem to descend into the sea. In the distance, a soft breeze turns the arms of a windmill. The evening light becomes greenish: "dans ce court instant de crépuscule, régnait quelque chose de fugace et de mélancolique...."\(^{22}\)

As in the little cloister of San Francisco, Camus realizes that his communion with nature is part of time; any moment it will slip away from him. This realization inspires in him a hunger for more such experiences, for more living.

\(^{21}\)Camus, L'Envers, p. 112.

\(^{22}\)ibid., p. 114.
The Mediterranean countries in general have special significance for Camus throughout his career: "J'admire qu'on puisse trouver au bord de la Méditerranée des certitudes et des règles de vie...." In these countries he learns to love life, to revel in the beauties of nature. He learns as well to fear death. In landscapes such as those of the Balearic Isles, "des paysages écrasés de soleil," he glimpses "Nada." It is then that he learns perhaps his most important lesson in life: that life and death are inextricably one, "Il n'y a pas d'amour de vivre sans désespoir de vivre." 

In "La Mort dans l'âme", Camus visits Central Europe for a short time, then returns south to the Mediterranean. This essay clearly shows that Camus' sensitivity to nature is indeed limited to nature in sun-lit Mediterranean countries. Unlike André Gide, who seemed sensitive to a great variety of landscapes, Camus only feels a response to the sunny landscapes of Algeria, Greece, Italy, or Spain. Any description of nature in other countries is brief: "...le petit cimetière gothique de Bautzen, le rouge éclatant de ses géraniums, et le matin bleu" or sombre and lacking in enthusiasm: "...des longues plaines de Silésie, impitoyables et ingrates." This is true in "La Mort dans l'âme" as it is in some of his later works, *Le Malentendu* and *La Chute*, for example.

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24ibid., p. 94.
In the preface to *L'Envers* Camus notes:

On trouve dans le monde beaucoup d'injustices, mais il en est une dont on ne parle jamais, qui est celle du climat.\(^25\)

Fortunately, he himself has never had to suffer this injustice as have those who dwell in the horrible suburbs of France's cities. There, a dreadful climate is allied to poverty in what is truly "l'injustice dernière, et la plus révoltante".\(^26\) Such a climate Camus experiences in Prague. Here, he finds no soft breezes nor murmuring sea, but only museums, cathedrals, and art galleries. These offer no comfort whatsoever to his desperately lonely soul. The sun alone in this city makes life bearable for the young Camus. Each night when it disappears below the horizon fear grips him again, "à l'heure où le soleil déclinait...la panique me reprenait".\(^27\)

Only once during his stay in Prague does nature almost deliver him from his anguish. It is a nature, however, that is strongly reminiscent of the Mediterranean, in particular the Balearic Isles. In no way is it distinctive of Prague. Again, as in "Amour de vivre"\(^28\), Camus is in a cloister at the twilight hour, and, again, he watches a flock of pigeons take flight. In short, Camus is only sensitive to the nature in Prague which reminds him of his beloved Mediterranean climate. Moreover, his

\[^25\] Camus, *L'Envers*, p. 16.

\[^26\] *ibid.*, p. 17.

\[^27\] *ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

\[^28\] *ibid.*, p. 111.
one experience of closeness to nature in Prague is expressed in quite imprecise terms. He describes, for example, "quelque chose...comme un parfum d'herbes et de néant".29

One day in Prague, Camus' loneliness reaches a crisis. A confrontation with death makes him recall his tremendous joy in living, and the expression of this joy in the nature of his native land. An unknown boarder in the hotel room next to that of Camus is found dead. That morning, a copper-coloured light is shining over the city. Outside the half-open door leading to the room where the dead man lies, Camus watches the wall. There, the light projects the shadow of the body and its guard: "Cette lumière me bouleversa. Elle était authentique, une vraie lumière de vie.... Lui était mort."30 Returning to his room, Camus is full of despair at the certain death which awaits him as it did his neighbour.

Alors, je pensai désespérément à ma ville, au bord de la Méditerranée, aux soirs d'été que j'aime tant, très doux dans la lumière verte...."31

For Camus, life, symbolized by the copper-coloured light, and death, seen in the shadow on the wall, are related. Because certain death awaits man, life is extremely precious to him. In the above episode, confrontation with death makes Camus realize that he too will die; this makes him feel despair. Yet, at the

29Camus, L'Envers, p. 87.
30ibid., p. 92.
31ibid., p. 93.
same time, he remembers his great "amour de vivre" and the joy he experienced immersed in the beauties of nature in Algeria.

Soon after his experience in the hotel, Camus leaves Prague. On the train, passing through Germany and Poland, he describes various landscapes, but they are — unlike those of the Mediterranean — grim and gloomy.

Un vol pesant d'oiseaux passait dans le matin brumeux et gras, au-dessus des terres gluantes....la Moravie tendre et grave...ses chemins bordés de pruniers aux fruits aigres. 32

These landscapes do not penetrate his soul; he is always an outsider to them, a mere observer. They neither arouse his emotions nor his mind.

Although Camus was unhappy in Prague, he appreciates the good effects that this change of scene had upon him. Because he was isolated in a foreign land, his soul was purged, so to speak. Now, he feels even more receptive to nature's beauties than before his trip. A change of "climate" is often beneficial in this way, writes Camus: "...le moindre arbre isolé devient la plus tendre et la plus fragile des images." 33

32 Camus, L'Envers, p. 94. Contrast with the flight of pigeons from the cloister in "Amour de vivre", p. 111. In the latter essay, the birds seem to represent serenity and peace. Here, the flight is "pesant", that is, foreboding.

33 Ibid., p. 88.
The second part of the essay "La Mort dans l'âme" deals with Camus' visit to Vicenza in northern Italy. Here, surrounded by a countryside "fait à mon âme", Camus forgets his loneliness and despair in an intense enjoyment of nature's beauties. His enjoyment is evident in the descriptions of the Italian countryside and Vicenza in particular. These descriptions provide an excellent indication of his deep sensitivity to nature.

In this essay, nature is present in such intensity that it seems to come alive for Camus. In a Cinderella-like image he depicts the end of the day: "...la journée s'est enfuie, me laissant sa douceur." The personification of light is even more exciting:

Toute la lumière...dévalait la pente des collines, habillait les cyprès et les oliviers, les maisons blanches et les toits rouges, de la plus chaleureuse des robes, puis allait se perdre dans la plaine qui fumait au soleil.

Camus reacts to nature primarily through his sight, as can be seen in the above description. Often, however, the other senses come into play more strongly. Years afterwards, for example, these six days at Vicenza come back to Camus "dans un parfum de romarin". At times, even his senses become

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34 Camus, L'Envers, p. 95.
35 ibid., p. 98.
36 ibid., p. 99.
confused in a beautiful image of "correspondances": "...le parfum d'eaux et d'étoiles...."  The chirping of the cicadas gives depth and distance to the scene. First, it is heard interspersed with the clucking of hens. Then, Camus hears them far off in the distance. As he walks along, they stop one by one. Soon, all are quiet. As he passes by, they start up in crescendo until they are in full voice again.

The figurative description of nature found in these pages is an important illustration of Camus' ability to commune with the elements and his joy in doing so. But, he writes,

...je sépare mal mon amour de la lumière et de la vie d'avec mon secret attachement pour l'expérience désespérée...  

The latter experience is that of despair at imminent death. Just as Camus sees landscapes at Vicenza which arouse in him an "amour de vivre", so he sees others which communicate despair to him. They represent death. Here is an example of such a landscape — the adjectives in particular convey the idea of sterility and absence of life: "rasées", "crouètes", "brûlées", "dépouillée":

...dans ces plaines tourbillantes au soleil et dans la poussière, dans ces collines rasées et toutes crouètes

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Camus, L'Envers, p. 97.
ibid., p. 101.
For similar landscapes see p. 13 of thesis.
The themes of life and death present in "La Mort dans l'âme" are repeated in the essay "L'Envers et l'endroit", which gives its title to the collection. In this essay, as in "Amour de vivre", and "La Mort dans l'âme", Camus concludes that life and its joys are inseparable from death. For him, both constitute reality. Thus, "le grand courage, c'est encore de tenir les yeux ouverts sur la lumière comme sur la mort."\(^{42}\) There are moments in life, however, when either life or death preoccupies man. Sometimes, that moment is prolonged for months or years, as in the case of the old lady who built her tomb before she died. Then, turning her back on life, she saw only death. This is "l'envers du monde". As for others, death is forgotten in an ecstatic communion with nature: "A cette heure tout mon royaume est de ce monde"\(^{43}\), Camus writes. Seated at his window, he describes such a moment. The sun and shadow play on the white curtains. The faint scent of dried herbs is wafted in the window by a breeze. This is "l'endroit du monde". At such a moment, Camus feels that he is most true to himself: "...quand donc suis-je plus vrai que lorsque je suis le monde?"\(^{44}\)

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\(^{42}\)ibid., p. 125.

\(^{43}\)ibid., p. 123.

\(^{44}\)ibid., p. 124.
The second work by Camus which illustrates man in harmony with nature is *Noces*. The essays in this collection were written in 1936 and 1937, immediately after *L'Envers et l'endroit*. In *Noces* as in *L'Envers*, Camus enters into communion with various elements in nature. In the later work, this communion sometimes results in a merging or marriage with nature. Then, Camus enjoys "un jour de noces avec le monde".\(^{45}\)

From his communion in *Noces* Camus derives two major convictions. Firstly, he believes that his principal "métier d'homme" is to enjoy life, and in particular nature, as much as possible. "Noces à Tipasa", the first essay, is a description of his great "joie de vivre". Secondly, he believes that the consciousness of death, its horror and finality, is an integral part of his joy in living. This belief arises from his communion with the wind, described in "Le Vent à Djémila". Although joy in living and despair at death are entirely contrary emotions, Camus sees them as an equilibrium of interdependent attitudes. This balance is personified in the Algerian race, he believes ("L'Été à Alger"), as well as in various Italian landscapes ("Le Désert").

Germaine Brée writes that in *Noces* Camus is following great masters, Chateaubriand and Barres, both of whom are adept at combining landscapes

and the emotions they evoke with meditations on man's fate.\(^46\)

The first essay in *Noces* opens with a description of the town of Tipasa and the surrounding countryside. Initially, this countryside has a deep emotional effect on Camus which leads him later to various thoughts about life. Unlike the sentimental descriptions of nature found in Chateaubriand and Barres, Brée notes, Camus' descriptions are "violently sensuous"\(^46\) in emotional tone. The extreme degree of sensuousness in "Noces à Tipasa" is an important indication of Camus' deep capacity to lose himself in nature.

In the first essay he is particularly sensitive to colour. Everything is coloured. Approaching the town of Tipasa, Camus observes "la mer cuirassée d'argent, le ciel bleu écru...la masse noire du Chenoua...le village...jaune et bleu."\(^47\) Although colour is always noted, often it is not very precise. The flowers at Tipasa are almost all red or a shade of red:

...des bougainvilles rosats...des hibiscus au rouge...
de longs iris bleus...fleurs violettes, jaunes et rouges...les géraniums rouges.\(^48\)

\(^{46}\)Camus, (New Brunswick, 1959), p. 78. This technique is called "paysage moralisé". In *Les Mers et les prisons, essai sur Albert Camus* (Paris, 1956), p. 49, Roger Quilliot notes that Rousseau was one of the first French writers to "conférer un sens au paysage: la montagne lui révélait la pureté". Chateaubriand continued the tradition. "Chez eux, pourtant, la méditation commentait l'émotion et la réduisait en idées claires. Chez Camus...la méditation recouvre étroitement la sensation et s'y imbrigue."

\(^{47}\)Camus, *Noces*, pp. 11-12.

\(^{48}\)Ibid., pp. 12, 13, 15.
Hibiscus and geraniums are not the same shade of red! What are "fleurs...rouges"? It must be admitted, however, that the repetition of one colour does give a certain visual intensity to the scene.

The smells too are described vaguely. Only one odour is mentioned specifically: "l'absinthe". Nevertheless, the smells assault the senses very powerfully, so powerfully that Camus personifies them: "...le soupir odorant et âcre de la terre d'été en Algérie."49

Sounds do not usually play an important role in Camus descriptions of nature. There is only one in this scene, but it is memorable in its unpleasantness: "...la mer suce avec un bruit de baisers."50

Camus observes the colours and scents of Tipasa through a haze of suffocating heat and blinding light. In fact, the sun and its effects dominate the description. Again and again, Camus refers to them. In the first fifteen lines of the essay there are six references to the sun. Similar references occur like a leitmotif throughout the scene:

"...le soleil...nous chauffe un seul côté du visage, nous regardons la lumière descendre du ciel... 50 ...ce ciel gorgé de chaleur.51

In the first three paragraphs of the essay, Camus is essentially a spectator of nature. He observes the town of Tipasa

49Camus, Noces, p. 12.
50ibid., p. 13.
51ibid., p. 16.
and its natural surroundings. Then, he records his impressions in terms of colour and smell in particular. Upon leaving the outskirts of the town he notes: "...pour la dernière fois nous sommes spectateurs."  

As soon as he enters the ruins of Tipasa Camus is caught in the grip of nature: "...le grand libertinage de la nature et de la mer...m'accapare tout entier." In the same way as nature dominates the author here, so it predominates over the works of men in the past. The fine buildings constructed long ago by the Romans at Tipasa are now in ruins. They have become mere stones again in the vast natural universe: "...et perdant le poli imposé par l'homme, elles sont rentrées dans la nature." It should be emphasized, however, that Camus, here as elsewhere, never completely loses himself in nature. Even in his most profound communion with nature he retains a certain consciousness of his own identity. Thus, he writes of Tipasa: "Tout ici me laisse intact, je n'abandonne rien de moi-même...."

First a spectator of nature, then caught in its grip, Camus now becomes an active participator in the natural world. A swim in the sea marks this stage in his relationship to nature. For Camus, the act of swimming is always the most perfect expression of man's union with nature. In a highly sensuous description the author

52 Camus, Noces, p. 13-14.
53 ibid., p. 15.
54 ibid., p. 21.
records his complete joy in swimming. It is to be noted that all his senses come acutely into play: sight, smell, touch, taste and sound:

Entre dans l'eau, c'est le saisissement, la montée d'une glu froide et opaque, puis le plongeon dans le bourdonnement des oreilles, le nez coulant et la bouche amère.... Sur le rivage, c'est la chute dans le sable...rentré dans ma pesanteur de chair et d'os, abrutì de soleil....

Parts of the description have strong sensual overtones:

"...la course de l'eau sur mon corps, cette possession tumultueuse de l'onde par mes jambes...." The sea which Camus describes here — and in his works on the whole — is seen in relation to the earth, and it is man who provides the link in the relationship between them. Either he observes the sea from a point on land, or else he enters the sea in the act of swimming and returns to the beach to sunbathe. For Camus, the sea and the earth are two major elements in the physical world with which man communes and with which he can enter into a union. Here is an excerpt describing this union of man, sea and earth:

Il me faut être nu et puis plonger dans la mer, encore tout parfumé des essences de la terre, laver celles-ci dans celles-là, et nouer sur ma peau l'étreinte pour laquelle soupirent lèvres à lèvres depuis si longtemps la terre et la mer."

Similar to the joy arising from swimming in the sea is that

56 Camus, Noces, pp. 19-20.
57 ibid., p. 19.
58 ibid., p. 19.
experienced in embracing a woman, Camus writes. Indeed, in *L'Etranger* these two joys are merged into one when Meursault and Maria swim and caress each other in the sea.  

In short, three scenes in nature: the deserted town of Tipasa, its surrounding landscape, and the sea and sand, all arouse an emotional response in Camus. His experience of them is always sensuous.

In addition to stimulating an emotion in Camus, these scenes also lead him to form certain beliefs. He writes: "A Tipasa, je vois équivaut à je crois...." In other words, the nature which the author experiences at Tipasa is a symbol of what he believes:

Tipasa m'apparaît comme ces personnages qu'on décrit pour signifier indirectement un point de vue sur le monde. Comme eux, elle témoigne, et virilement. Elle est aujourd'hui mon personnage....

There is one belief in particular at which Camus arrives through his communion with nature at Tipasa: the conviction that "joie de vivre" is an adequate philosophy of life.

Throughout the essay, enthused by the beauties of nature, Camus expresses his joy in living, and the pride he feels in this joy: "J'aime cette vie avec abandon et veux en parler avec liberté: elle me donne l'orgueil de ma condition d'homme." For the moment, it is sufficient for him to cultivate this joy: "Il me suffit de vivre de tout mon corps et de témoigner de tout mon cœur. Vivre Tipasa, témoigner.... Il y a là une liberté."  

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61 ibid., p. 21.

62 ibid., p. 25.
"Le Vent à Djémila" is a parallel essay to "Noces à Tipasa". Nature in both essays has an emotional effect on Camus. Both towns inspire in him certain convictions about life, and both are the symbols of these convictions: "Ce que Tipasa est à la vie, Djémila l'est à la mort." Tipasa symbolizes life and joy in living while Djémila symbolizes death and despair at death:

Ce grand cri de pierre que Djémila jette entre les montagnes, le ciel et le silence, j'en sais bien la poésie: lucidité, indifférence, les vrais signes du désespoir ou de la beauté.

Even the topography of Djémila is suggestive of death. It is "la ville morte" and "inhumaine", surrounded by ravines. It seems to lead nowhere, and rises up "sur un plateau aux couleurs éteintes, enfoncé entre de hautes montagnes, son squelette jaunâtre comme une forêt d'ossements...."

Although the sun beats down on Djémila as it does on Tipasa, there is nothing else in common between these two towns. The brilliant colours and intoxicating scents of Tipasa are absent from Djémila. A terrible silence reigns instead. It is a silence which symbolizes absence of life rather than absence of sounds, for sounds can be heard, far-off and unreal:

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63 Quilliot, Mers et prisons, p. 53.
64 Camus, Noces, p. 49.
65 ibid., p. 35.
66 ibid., p. 43.
67 ibid., p. 35.
...le son feutré de la flûte...un piétinement de chèvres, des rumeurs venues du ciel...un claquement sec, un cri aigu....

However, the wind is the real hero of this essay and the dominant element in nature. Like a wild giant animal:

Il soufflait depuis une trouée entre les montagnes... accourait du fond de l'horizon et venait bondir en cascades.... Sans arrêt, il sifflait...tournait dans un cirque...baignait les amas de blocs grêlés, entourait chaque colonne...et venait se répandre en cris incessants sur le forum....

The repetition of the verbal form in this passage conveys well the wind's continual motion and violent action.

Créer des morts conscientes, c'est diminuer la distance qui nous sépare du monde, et entrer sans joie dans l'accomplissement, conscient des images exaltantes d'un monde à jamais perdu. Et le chant triste des collines de Djémila m'enfonce plus avant dans l'âme l'amertume de cet enseignement.

The hills of Djémila, the wind and the sun teach Camus the lessons of death. Through communion with them, he re-discovers that death is horrible, certain and final. Moreover, Camus believes,

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68 Camus, Noces, pp. 33-34.
69 Ibid., pp. 36-37.
70 Ibid., p. 47. "Créer des morts conscientes", that is, make people for whom death is inevitable be conscious of this death. This, in fact, is what Caligula sets out to do in the play Caligula.
71 Camus discovered this first at Vicenza in L'Envers, cf. p.18 of thesis.
man must be conscious of it, if he is to enjoy life fully. In short, consciousness of death is necessary in any philosophy of "joie de vivre". Camus sees death as "une aventure horrible et sale". Yet, although it arouses his indignation, he accepts it as unavoidable. But he refuses to alleviate his horror of death by deluding himself with the belief of immortality. This is a myth perpetrated by Christianity in the western world. Moreover, it is a harmful myth because it directs a man's thoughts to the future and prevents him from enjoying the present:

Si je refuse obstinément tous les "plus tard" du monde, c'est qu'il s'agit aussi bien de ne pas renoncer à ma richesse présente.

The present is all that man possesses. Therefore, he should experience as much of life as he can in each "present". In "Le Vent à Djémila" Camus further realizes that joy in each moment of life is even greater for him because he knows he must

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72 Camus, Noces, p. 41.


74 Camus, Noces, p. 40.

75 Like Don Juan, who had so many lovers, man should try to multiply his experiences in life. "...ce que Don Juan met en acte, c'est une éthique de la quantité, au contraire du saint qui tend vers la qualité." Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe (Paris, 1942), pp. 100-101.
die; and because he enjoys living so much, death seems all the more horrible:

...toute mon horreur de mourir tient dans ma jalousie de vivre.  

Because horror of death increases his taste for life, Camus feels a strong attachment to it. This attachment he shares with Djémila:

...je suivais tout le long de ce pays quelque chose qui n'était pas à moi, mais de lui, comme un goût de la mort qui nous était commun.

In the third essay, "L'Ete à Alger", Camus communes with nature as at Tipasa and Djémila, and once more are performed "les noces de l'homme et de la terre.

The city of Algiers itself offers a great profusion of nature's beauties: "...la mer au tournant de chaque rue, un certain poids de soleil..." These beauties, however, can only be appreciated by those who are young at heart. They alone have the "joie de vivre" which Algiers demands. They alone are prepared to live in the present exclusively, without any hope of immortality. Once they lose this attitude to life, perhaps because they have contemplated death too long, then Algiers has nothing to offer: "...rien où s'accrocher et pas un lieu où la mélancolie puisse se sauver d'elle-même."
The Algerians are a young people who live each moment of their lives as if it were their last:  

Ce peuple tout entier jeté dans son présent vit sans mythes, sans consolation. Il a mis tous ses biens sur cette terre....

Like his compatriots, Camus enjoys life intensely. For them as for him, "amour de vivre" is best expressed in sunning and swimming. These pleasures are "des joies saines. Il faut bien croire qu'elles constituent l'idéal de ces jeunes gens." All summer — and winter too — the beaches of Algiers are covered with half-nude sun-bathers. "On ne mesurera jamais assez haut l'importance de cette coutume pour notre époque!" Camus writes. For the first time since the Greek age man is free to bathe and sun half-naked in close contact with nature. Also at Algiers, Camus recalls swimming in the bay years ago, in and out among the cargo ships which smell of far-off lands, of wood from Norway and oil from Germany.

The summer at Algiers and immersion in the sun and sea's delights teach Camus a lesson, as did his union with nature at Tipasa and Djémila. Indeed, the lesson is not new although stated in somewhat different terms. As at Tipasa, Camus realizes that happiness is a thing of the moment, to be found in a close relationship with nature. In such a relationship man becomes his essential self, "un homme pur" , that is, he has found once more:

81 In fact, one of Camus' chief aims in this essay is to show how the joy in living and despair at death which he experienced at Tipasa and Djémila respectively are personified in the Algerian people: "Il y a des peuples nés pour l'orgueil et la vie.... C'est aussi chez eux que le sentiment de la mort est le plus repoussant." Camus, Noces, p. 71.

82 ibid., p. 77.

83 ibid., p. 58.

84 ibid., p. 80.
...cette patrie de l'âme où devient sensible la parenté du monde, où les coups du sang rejoignent les pulsations violentes du soleil....  

Any belief in a future happiness, in a life-after-death, is meaningless for Camus. He remarks sarcastically: "...je ne trouve pas de sens au bonheur des anges." Hope, which inspires one to wish for immortality, is for Camus the ugliest of all sentiments:

De la boîte de Pandore où grouillaient les maux de l'humanité, les Grecs firent sortir l'espoir après tous les autres, comme le plus terrible de tous. Camus condemns hope because it teaches resignation to a present situation in anticipation of a better one to come: "Et vivre, c'est ne pas se résigner." Life, here and now, is what matters, and hope destroys one's enjoyment of it. This is "l'âpre leçon des étés d'Algérie".

In the fourth essay, "Le Désert", the setting changes from Algeria to Italy. Here, as in the other essays of Noces, Camus discusses his close relationship to various landscapes and the truths they teach him.

In Florence, Camus is again caught up in the spectacle of nature, "cette entrée de l'homme dans les fêtes de la terre et de la beauté". On this occasion, nature is like a god to him to whom he abandons "la petite monnaie de sa personnalité".

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84 Camus, Noces, p. 80.
85 ibid., p. 83.
86 ibid., p. 114.
From the city, he climbs high up on a hill to the Boboli garden where he views Mount Oliveto. On the hilltops round about him he observes the olive-trees, "pâles comme de petites fumées"\(^{87}\) and "les jets plus durs des cyprès".\(^{87}\) A breeze comes up from time to time and blows away the low clouds on the horizon. In a fine example of "correspondances" Camus describes the movement of the clouds in musical terms:

...le même souffle...reprenait de loin en loin le thème de pierre et d'air d'une fugue à l'échelle du monde. A chaque fois, le thème diminuait d'un ton...j'embrassais d'un coup d'œil cette fuite de collines toutes ensemble respirant et avec elle comme le chant de la terre entière.\(^{88}\)

Then, Camus remarks of this landscape:

...il m'assurait que sans mon amour et ce beau cri de pierre, tout était inutile. Le monde est beau, et hors de lui, point de salut.\(^{89}\)

If man does not seek his salvation in a close relationship with the natural world here and now, then life has no meaning. Neither the soul nor the heart are of any importance. The sun-warmed stones and tree-clad hills "limitent le saul univers où 'avoir raison' prend un sens: la nature sans hommes".\(^{89}\)

Later, at the sight of some huge persimmons dripping syrup, Camus notes that with the fruit as well as with the cypresses

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\(^{87}\) Camus, *Noces*, p. 115.

\(^{88}\) *ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

\(^{89}\) *ibid.*, p. 117.
and olive-trees he feels a "fraternité secrète qui m'accordait au monde". This fraternity amounts to a "consentement" to life in this world and to joy in nature. It is balanced by a revolt at the idea of death:

*Florence! Un des seuls lieux d'Europe où j'ai compris qu'au coeur de ma révolte dormait un consentement.*

*L'Etranger* is the first work of fiction which is relevant to the discussion of man's close relationship with nature. In the early scenes of the novel, there is a treatment of man's communion with nature which differs little from the communion in *L'Envers* and *Noces*. In the climactic murder scene of the novel, however, nature comes to dominate man completely. The murder leads to an exile from nature and, eventually, death; but, before the end, man arrives at a new understanding of life and death, and returns to nature in a communion deeper than any before.

In many ways, Meursault, the hero of *L'Etranger*, resembles his fellow Algerians. Like them, he refuses to believe in immortality, preferring to enjoy life in the present. Indeed, if there were an after-life, Meursault envisages it as "une vie où je pourrais me souvenir de celle-ci". The closest affinity he has with his compatriots, however, is their common capacity to enter

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91 *ibid.*, p. 122.
92 *ibid.*, p. 77.
readily into the natural world. Like Camus and his family, Meursault enjoys sitting outside on a summer evening and watching the sky and the changing street scene. On one occasion he stays on his balcony from early afternoon until very late in the evening. Meursault is acutely aware of the changes which take place in the sky as the day progresses. Moreover, these changes very subtly mark the passage of time in the episode. Early in the afternoon he notes: "Le ciel était pur mais sans éclat." Later on, there is a suggestion of stormy weather: "...le ciel s'est assombri....", which is soon dispelled: "Il s'est découvert peu à peu...." With the coming of evening: "...le ciel est devenu rougeâtre." Finally, the lamps are lit in the dark streets: "Elles ont fait pâlir les premières étoiles...."

Contemplation of the sky above and the streets below him has a very relaxing effect — physically and mentally — on Meursault. The scene is so absorbing that he even forgets to change his sitting position. When he does get up he notices: "J'avais un peu mal au cou d'être resté longtemps appuyé sur le dos de ma chaise." Mentally, he is so involved in observing that nothing whatsoever troubles him during the entire episode. Eventually, when he comes back to himself, he remarks that "il n'y avait rien de changé".

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94 Camus, L'Envers, p. 63.
95 Camus, L'Etranger, p. 36.
96 ibid., p. 37.
97 ibid., p. 38.
98 ibid., p. 39.
Meursault and Marie's relationship is seen constantly in relation to nature. On their second meeting, for example, Meursault describes his girl-friend in an image drawn from the natural world: "...le brun du soleil lui faisait un visage de fleur." 99 Usually, their affaire is carried on in close contact with nature. 100 Sometimes, they play games at the seaside. In childlike delight, they fill their mouths with water, then lie on their backs in the sea and squirt it up into the air. Other times, they embrace in the rollers or swim in unison. Then, Meursault notes: "...nous nous sentions d'accord dans nos gestes et dans notre contentement." 101 Thus, he and Marie feel in accord with each other and with nature around them.

On the beach as in the sea, nature is an important element in their sensual relationship:

Elle était toute visqueuse d'eau salée.... Elle s'est allongée flanc à flanc avec moi et les deux chaleurs de son corps et du soleil m'ont un peu endormi. 102

Even when they make love in Meursault's apartment, nature accompanies their act: "J'avais laisse ma fenêtre ouverte et c'était bon de sentir la nuit d'été couler sur nos corps bruns." 103

With the evening sky and the sea Meursault is able to commune, but with the sun no dialogue is possible. The sun predominates over him. This change in Meursault's relationship with nature is first glimpsed on the day of his mother's funeral during the

99 Camus, L'Etranger, p. 53.
100 Joy in nature is compared to the joy of embracing a woman in L'Envers, p. 25 of thesis.
101 Camus, L'Etranger, p. 76.
102 ibid., p. 77.
103 ibid., pp. 54-55.
procession to the grave. Not death, as one would expect, but the sun preoccupies Meursault that day. It is no wonder; the sun is beating down unmercifully. Before the procession starts out, the sunlight already fills the sky. The day is getting hotter by the minute. Very soon, the sun reaches its zenith. Meursault notes:

Autour de moi c'était...la...campagne lumineuse gorgée de soleil. L'éclat du ciel était insoutenable.  

In fact, so intense is the sunlight that it makes the countryside appear "inhumain et déprimant"\textsuperscript{105} to Meursault. He himself feels:

...un peu perdu entre le ciel bleu et blanc et la monotonie de ces couleurs, noir gluant du goudron ouvert, noir terne des habits, noir laqué de la voiture. Tout cela...me troublait le regard et les idées.\textsuperscript{106}

This is the first indication that Meursault is not completely master of himself in respect to nature. While contemplating the sky from his balcony and swimming in the sea with Marie, he was in active communion with nature, but here he has lost some of his self-control and his lucidity of mind in his relationship with nature.

In the murder scene, a new stage is reached in man's relationship with the physical universe. For the first time in Camus' works man becomes the pawn of nature. Here, the natural world gradually takes complete control of Meursault and drives him to commit murder.

\textsuperscript{105}ibid., p. 26.
\textsuperscript{106}ibid., p. 28.
On the day of the murder, Meursault had gone to a beach in the suburbs of Algiers with Marie and his friend Raymond. That day, he notes, "le soleil était...écrasant. Il se brisait en morceaux sur le sable et sur la mer." On the beach, only the sun, the sand, the sea and a spring seem to have any reality for Meursault. When he encounters the Arabs with his friends Raymond and Masson, Meursault himself has no motive to kill. One of the Arabs has taken Raymond's girl-friend away from him; it is Raymond, therefore, who is seeking vengeance.

During the second encounter with the Arabs, Meursault finds himself with a revolver in his hand. At this point he sees that a choice of action lies open to him: "...on pourrait tirer ou ne pas tirer." Whether he kills the Arab or not matters little to Meursault. Because he has all he wants in life — the physical enjoyment of a woman and of nature — he is completely indifferent to anything else: death, marriage or murder. Unlike a Sartrian hero, he makes no decision at this point, and the choice never presents itself so clearly again.

As the day progresses, the heat becomes more and more intense. It is like a "pluie aveuglante." Back at Masson's cabin, Meursault finds the heat unbearable. For no particular reason, almost as if he were impelled by fate, he returns to the beach a third time. Now, he has to actively fight the heat in order to advance along the

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107 Camus, L'Etranger, p. 82.
108 ibid., p. 84.
...je serrais les dents, je fermais les poings... je me tendais tout entier pour triompher du soleil et de cette ivresse opaque qu'il me déversait.\textsuperscript{109}

At the same time as the heat seems to oppose Meursault's advance, the little spring where the Arabs were situated earlier seems to attract him like a magnet. It would be such a cool relief, if he could reach it:

\[ J'avais envie de retrouver le murmure de son eau, envie de fuir le soleil...envie enfin de retrouver l'ombre et son repos. \textsuperscript{109} \]

When Meursault arrives at the spring, however, the Arab whom Raymond wanted to kill is there, stretched out on the sand. At this point, Meursault is again aware of the terrible heat. For two hours, the sun has been shining with the same intensity: "...deux heures qu'elle \[\textit{la journée}\] avait jeté l'ancre dans un océan de métal bouillant."\textsuperscript{110} Meursault cannot face the thought of retracing his steps: "...toute une plage vibrante de soleil se pressait derrière moi."\textsuperscript{111} As a result: "J'ai fait quelques pas vers la source."\textsuperscript{111} Soon, drops of perspiration gather on his eyebrows. His forehead is aching. His veins throb. The sun burns his cheeks: "A cause de cette brûlure que je ne pouvais plus supporter, j'ai fait un mouvement en avant."\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109} Camus, \textit{L'Etranger}, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{110} ibid., p. 86.

\textsuperscript{111} ibid., pp. 86-87.

\textsuperscript{112} ibid., p. 87.
This is the fatal step. Seeing Meursault advance, the Arab draws his knife. It glitters in the sunlight, blinding Meursault:

C'est alors que tout a vacillé.... Il m'a semblé que le ciel s'ouvrait sur toute son étendue pour laisser pleuvoir du feu.\(^{113}\)

He shoots four times into the inert body. At once, a feeling of release comes over him: "J'ai secoué la sueur et le soleil."\(^{113}\) And, at the same time: "J'ai compris que j'avais détruit...le silence exceptionnel d'une plage où j'avais été heureux."\(^{113}\)

In jail, after the murder, Meursault longs for nature from which he is exiled:

...l'envie me prenait d'être sur une plage et de descendre vers la mer. A imaginer le bruit des...vagues...l'entrée du corps dans l'eau et la délivrance que j'y trouvais...."\(^{114}\)

Faced with death, Meursault comes to a new understanding of life, and a final deep communion with nature. "L'accord de Meursault avec sa nature (l'assomption de sa vie totalisée) est aussi un accord avec la nature."\(^{115}\) In a heated argument with the prison padre, who is trying to convert him to Christianity, Meursault discovers that he is perfectly justified in leading the life he did. He was right to enjoy each moment and to immerse himself in the beauties of nature because of these he was sure; of an after-life he was not:

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\(^{113}\) Camus, \textit{L'Etranger}, p. 88.

\(^{114}\) ibid., p. 109.

...j'étais sûr de moi, sûr de tout, plus sûr que lui, sûr de ma vie, et de cette mort qui allait venir.  

He realizes, moreover, that life is absurd. No matter how much man longs for it to continue, it always ends in death:

...pendant toute cette vie absurde que j'avais menée, un souffle obscur remontait vers moi, à travers des années.  

The "souffle" is certain death, over which man has no control. It makes Meursault indifferent to everything: the death of his mother or his love for Marie. Because everyone must die sooner or later, any sentiment expended on them is pointless.

After his meeting with the padre, Meursault falls asleep in his cell. On awakening, he has a wonderful sense of peace:

...je me suis réveillé avec des étoiles sur le visage. Des bruits de campagne montaient jusqu'à moi. Des odeurs de nuit, de terre et de sel rafraîchissaient mes tempes. La merveilleuse paix de cet été endormi entrait en moi comme une marée.  

Meursault is at peace with himself because he feels vindicated for the way he has lived. His peace is expressed in terms of nature. For him, nature means life and happiness. This is perhaps the moment of his deepest communion with nature because, confronted with death, he is now fully conscious of the joys which nature offers, and the necessity to enjoy them while one is still able.

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116 Camus, L'Etranger, p. 169.
117 ibid., p. 171.
118 In Camus, pp. 66-67, Brée notes that in Camus' first novel,"La Mort heureuse" (unpublished), the hero, Patrice Mersault, who bears many resemblances to Meursault, "...accomplishes his human destiny, losing himself at last in the cosmos.... In the full blaze of sun and sea Patrice Mersault goes to his ecstatic death." Moreover; "The radiant sun of life and the 'black sun' of death are one and the same."
"Le Minotaure" or "La Halte d'Oran", the first essay in the collection *L'Été*, was written in 1939. In part, it is reflective of the first period in Camus' works in which man has a close relationship with nature; yet, it also contains certain elements which forecast his second period in which man is in exile from nature.

In "Le Minotaure" Camus discusses the landscapes and people of Oran. Two landscapes in particular interest him here: "les terres de l'innocence"\(^{119}\) and "le désert"\(^{120}\). The "terres de l'innocence" are those landscapes with which man often finds himself in close harmony. They themselves are not innocent, but man's enjoyment of them is; that is, man enjoys them completely, free of any political or social concerns.\(^{121}\)

In the summer, "les terres de l'innocence" in and around Oran present their beauties to all men. Here, as in Majorca and Italy, Camus is remarkably sensitive to nature. Sometimes, he sees everything in brilliant patches of colour:

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La mer est outremer, la route couleur de sang caillé, la plage jaune. Tout disparaît avec le soleil vert; une heure plus tard, les dunes ruissellent de lune.... Des orages les traversent parfois, et les éclairs...mettent sur le sable et dans les yeux des lueurs orangées.\(^{122}\)
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Even the people of Oran Camus observes in terms of nature. In a fine example of pathetic fallacy he describes young girls on the beaches of Oran as flowers in various stages of growth:

\(^{119}\)Camus, *L'Été*, p. 60.

\(^{120}\)Ibid., p. 28.

\(^{121}\)The expression is a transferred epithet.

\(^{122}\)Ibid., p. 59.
Chaque année, sur ces rivages, c'est une nouvelle moisson de filles fleurs. Apparemment, elles n'ont qu'une saison. L'année suivante, d'autres corolles chaleureuses les remplacent que, l'été d'avant, étaient encore des petites filles aux corps durs comme des bourgeons.\textsuperscript{123}

Or in terms of the sea:

A onze heures du matin, descendant du plateau, toute cette jeune chair, à peine vêtue d'étoffes bariolées, déferle sur le sable comme une vague multicolore.\textsuperscript{124}

Unfortunately, "ceci ne peut se partager. Il faut l'avoir vécu."\textsuperscript{125} Although Camus himself has a close relationship with nature, he cannot transmit his experience to others: to the "Oranais", for example. Here is a group of people who have turned their backs on nature: "Ils ont fermé la fenêtre, ils se sont enmurés, ils ont exorcisé le paysage."\textsuperscript{126} Because nature is absent from their lives, they are filled with a tremendous "ennui."\textsuperscript{127} The minotaur, the mythical monster of Greek antiquity which ate human flesh, is the symbol of the "ennui" which devours them. Their emptiness finds an echo in the countryside of Oran. Most of the year, Oran is like a desert. When the flowers are gone, its only outstanding feature is stone. Here, in fact, "le caillou est roi".\textsuperscript{127} Even the sky is "minéral".\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{123}Camus, L'Eté, pp. 57-58.
\textsuperscript{124}ibid., p. 58.
\textsuperscript{125}ibid., p. 59.
\textsuperscript{126}ibid., p. 55.
\textsuperscript{127}ibid., p. 29.
\textsuperscript{128}ibid., p. 32.
Moreover, there is little green to be seen because dust covers all the vegetation. In this city, nature is held prisoner, so to speak: "...elle pousse ses cris violents entre chaque maison et au-dessus de tous les toits."\(^{129}\) Only high up above the city do the sun and wind enjoy full power again. There, they "aèrent et confondent la ville débraillée, dispersée sans ordre aux quatre coins d'un paysage rocheux."\(^{128}\)

With this essay ends the first period of Camus' works in which man's greatest happiness is to be found in a union with "la nature sans hommes".\(^{130}\)

\(^{128}\)Camus, \textit{L'Eté}, p. 32.

\(^{129}\)ibid., p. 31.

\(^{130}\)Camus, \textit{Noces}, p. 89.
CHAPITRE II

Exile

Germaine Brée comments that, after Camus had finished "Le Minotaure", "...his essays changed greatly. The grandiose and luxurious universe exemplified by his African landscapes disappeared." This statement can quite easily be applied to Camus' works in general from 1940 to 1952. The deep communion of man with nature found in L'Envers, Noces, and L'Etranger is now usually absent from his writings. Nature is no more than a memory or something longed for. In fact, man is in exile from nature and any enjoyment of it in the present. In Caligula he is in exile because the "absurd" preoccupies him; in Le Malentendu, because of circumstances of birth and lack of money, and in La Peste, because of a plague. The change in man's relationship with nature can be seen in Camus' own attitude during the years 1940 to 1952. Two short essays in L'Été, "Les Amandiers" (1940) and L'Exil d'Hélène (1948), show that during this period, Camus had far more pressing concerns than his own enjoyment of nature.

Although Camus was far from his homeland when he wrote "Les Amandiers", memories of its beauties and those of Italy and Majorca, are still strong in him:

...quand le poids de la vie devient trop lourd dans cette Europe...je me retourne vers ces pays éclatants où tant de forces sont encore intactes.132

In "Les Amandiers", the almond-tree provides an ideal for Camus to follow. This tree has certain virtues, "la vertu de la

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132Camus, L'Été, pp. 73-74.
blancheur et de la sève." Man too must possess virtues in order to resist the evil present in war-torn Europe. He must have strength of character, pride, courage and wisdom. Then he will be able to end violence and arrive at peace. Like the tender white blossoms of the almond-tree, which resist rains and winds until the fruit is brought forth, man will be successful, if he is full of virtues.

It should be noted here that Camus has reversed the technique which he used in the three major works previously considered. In these, the beauties of nature led him to certain convictions about life. Here, on the contrary, he seeks in the natural world a symbol to support an already-formed thought. Nature is not so much an inspiration any more as an example of "the good" as opposed to the evil which Camus finds in the political and social world of Europe.

By 1948, Camus sees European man in complete exile from nature. In "L'Exil d'Hélène, he praises the equilibrium maintained by the Greeks: "...cet équilibre supérieur où la nature balançait l'histoire, la beauté, le bien..." To-day, this balance has been destroyed. Men have turned their backs on nature:

...le monde a été amputé de ce qui fait sa permanence: la nature, la mer, la colline, la méditation des soirs.

Even from European literature nature is absent. There are no landscapes in Dostoyevsky, for example. Nor does European philosophy discuss the natural world; reason is all that interests modern philosophers.

133 Camus, L'Été, p. 75.
134 ibid., p. 111.
135 ibid., p. 112.
Christianity is originally responsible for man's desertion of nature, Camus writes. "C'est le christianisme qui a commencé de substituer à la contemplation du monde la tragédie de l'âme."\textsuperscript{136} Now that God is dead\textsuperscript{136}, however, it is history that controls the minds of men. Europe to-day (1948) has moved away from its vital source in nature, in an effort to make its mark on history:

...notre époque...se raidit pour atteindre l'absolu et l'empire, elle veut transfigurer le monde avant de l'avoir épuisé, l'ordonner avant de l'avoir compris.\textsuperscript{137}

The drive to conquer and go on conquering predominates. Man does not seem to realize that the historical approach to life is limited:

L'Histoire n'explique ni l'univers naturel qui était avant elle, ni la beauté qui est au-dessus d'elle. Elle a donc choisi de les ignorer.\textsuperscript{136}

At this point, Camus makes a crucial statement which will determine the entire course of his future life. No longer is he capable of glorying in a "nature sans hommes".\textsuperscript{138} No matter how he is tempted to turn his back on Europe and its problems, he cannot. He must commit himself to a life with others:

...cette époque est la nôtre, et nous ne pouvons vivre en nous haïssant...nous lutterons pour celle de ses vertus qui vient de loin...l'amitié...\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{136}Camus, \textit{L'Eté}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{137}ibid., p. 116.
\textsuperscript{138}Camus, \textit{Noces}, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{139}Camus, \textit{L'Eté}, p. 118.
This is the beginning of Camus' own exile from nature, which is reflected constantly in his oeuvre from 1941 to 1952.

Caligula, written in 1939, is the first major work to be considered in the second period of Camus' oeuvre. The hero of this play, Caligula, has had at one time a close relationship with nature. During the action of the play, however, he is no longer able to enjoy such a relationship because he is obsessed by "l'absurde".

At the death of his beloved sister Drusilla, the young Roman emperor Caligula fled into isolation. There he discovered an all-important truth: "Les hommes meurent et ils ne sont pas heureux." This is the "absurd" which haunts Caligula from the moment he is aware of it. Back in his palace, he decides to impose unreasonable and unlimited death on his subjects in an effort to make them revolt against death; for only by revolting will they learn to prize the wonderful life which is their's in the present.

The absurd preoccupies Caligula to such an extent that he has no time for anything else in his life. He is especially anxious to make his empire aware of the "absurd" by initiating a programme of death. Thus, when Hélicon, his friend and adviser, suggests: "...tu devrais d'abord te reposer," Caligula replies: "...cela ne sera plus jamais possible." No time to rest means no leisure, and leisure is essential to the contemplation and appreciation of nature.

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140 Although Caligula, written in 1938, is chronologically a work of the first period, it belongs, in its approach to the man-nature theme, to the second period.


142 ibid., IV, 9, p. 207. Cf. L'Envers, p. 113: "Il n'y a pas d'amour de vivre sans désespoir de vivre."

143 ibid., I, 4, p. 113.
Before the death of Drusilla, Caligula probably enjoyed a close relationship with nature. Once he becomes obsessed with the "absurd", however, communion with nature is no longer a completely satisfying experience for him: "...je sais trop la force de ma passion pour la vie, elle ne se satisfaira pas de la nature." Joy in nature is not an adequate approach to life for Caligula because it is not eternal. Since death cuts short his enjoyment of nature, he must take death into account in his passion for life. Caligula makes the mistake, however, of suppressing his joy in nature's beauties and dwelling on death alone. Only a balance of the two: joy in nature and despair at death, is a solution to the absurd. Thus, Caligula's solution fails.

Although Caligula has no time for nature, there are moments when he longs for its pleasures:

...si du moins, au lieu de cette solitude empoisonnée de présences qui est la mienne, je pouvais goûter la vraie, le silence et le tremblement d'un arbre.

Eventually, dulled by the many deaths he has imposed, Caligula loses his sensitivity to nature altogether: "Ce quelque chose en moi, ce lac de silence, ces herbes pourries."

By Act III, Caligula is in complete exile from nature. At

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144 See p. 47 of thesis.
145 Camus, Caligula, II, 14, pp. 163-164.
146 ibid., II, 14, p. 165.
147 ibid., II, 14, p. 164.
this point, he suspects for the first time that arbitrary death is not the solution to the absurd: "...trop de morts, cela dégarnit."\textsuperscript{148}

By then, however, it is too late for him to turn back. The life he led before Drusilla's death, in which communion with nature had an important role, is now an impossibility. He must continue his programme of death: "...il faut poursuivre la logique. Le pouvoir jusqu'au bout... one ne revient pas en arrière...."\textsuperscript{148}

Although Caligula is dominated by the absurd throughout the play, he is unable to completely suppress his fundamental love of nature. Manifestations of the joy he once found in nature are expressed in various reminiscences and in his manner of speaking.

Caligula's love for Scipion\textsuperscript{149}, the young poet, is based largely on their common joy in nature's beauties. In fact, Caligula admits, himself, to Scipion: "...nous aimons les mêmes vérités."\textsuperscript{150}

They discover this mutual love of nature when Scipion recounts the contents of a poem he has just written:

\begin{quote}
J'y parlais d'un certain accord de la terre...et aussi de la ligne des collines romaines et de cet apaisement fugitif et bouleversant qu'y ramène le soir...
\end{quote}

Caligula interjects:

\begin{quote}
du cri des martinets dans le ciel vert.
\end{quote}

Scipion continues:

\begin{quote}
Et de cette minute subtile où le ciel encore plein d'or
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{148}Camus, \textit{Caligula}, III, 5, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{149}Caligula's solution to the absurd demands that he be friends with no one so that he may be perfectly objective in meting out death. Caligula, however, cannot suppress his deep affection for the young Scipion.

\textsuperscript{150}ibid., II, 14, p. 163.
brusquement bascule et nous montre en un instant son autre face, gorgée d'étoiles luisantes.

Again, Caligula interjects:

de cette odeur de fumée, d'arbres et d'eaux qui monte alors de la terre vers la nuit.

Scipion goes on:

Le cri des cigales et la retombee des chaleurs...

And for the third time, Caligula completes Scipion's thoughts:

et les chemins noyés d'ombres dans les lentisques et les oliviers. 151

This scene clearly indicates that Caligula understands the experience of a close relationship with nature. Moreover, it implies that he himself has, at one time, been in close communion with nature. Here, however, his communion is no longer a reality, but a fond recollection.

Not only his reminiscences but also the figures of speech which Caligula uses suggest a sensitivity to nature. At the beginning of the play when he returns from isolation, Caligula expresses in terms of nature the burning desire he once had for immortality: "Je voulais la lune." 152 Only once or twice, however, has he ever had the moon. One such occasion was the previous summer, he explains. Then, in a deep union with nature, he felt for a moment part of the timelessness of the natural world. In a lovely sensual description he depicts the moon as a beautiful woman who came to sleep with him:

151 Camus, Caligula, II, 14, pp. 162-163.
152 ibid., I, 4, p. 110.
...c'était pendant une belle nuit d'août.... Elle était d'abord toute sanglante, au-dessus de l'horizon. Puis elle a commencé à monter, de plus en plus légère.... Plus elle montait, plus elle devenait claire...comme un lac d'eau laiteuse au milieu de cette nuit pleine de froissements d'étoiles. Elle est arrivée alors dans la chaleur, douce, légère et nue...jusqu'à mon lit, s'y est coulée et m'a inondé de ses sourires et de son éclat. 153

Since this experience, Caligula has not been able to find the moon again. In other words, he realizes that immortality is an impossible dream; death cannot be avoided. There is only the "absurd". Therefore, he decides to upset the order of the world. Again, he expresses himself in terms drawn from nature: "Je veux meler le ciel à la mer, confondre laideur et beauté, faire jaillir le rire de la souffrance." 154

By the end of Act IV, Caligula seems to tacitly admit a new attitude to existence. In Scene 13, he holds a poetry contest; the subject is death. It is Scipion's poem which to Caligula seems to contain "les vraies leçons de la mort". 155 Scipion writes:

Chasse au bonheur qui fait les êtres purs,
Ciel où le soleil ruisselle,
Fêtes uniques et sauvages, mon délire sans espoir. 155

Death, the horrible and final end of all men is depicted in terms of life's enjoyments: a sky streaming with sunshine. Not just death alone, but joy in life and despair at death are the dual

154 ibid., I, 11, p. 126.
155 ibid., IV, 12, p. 216. Like Caligula, Scipion eventually finds enjoyment of nature an inadequate approach to life; and, like Caligula, he realizes its inadequacy once he is confronted with death. In Act IV, Scene 13, p. 217, he tells Caligula: "..je crois que je t'ai compris.... Je vais partir très loin chercher les raisons de tout cela", that is, he is going to seek a deeper understanding of the absurd by meditating in solitude as Caligula did.
realities of existence, and the dual response to the "absurd".

Man's exile from nature is also a major theme in the next work to be studied: Le Malentendu. In this play, written in 1943, Martha, the heroine, suffers exile from nature in two ways. She is subjected to one climate she detests and longs for another which she is never able to reach. This dual attitude to nature, repulsion and attraction, provides her chief motivation for murder.

Somewhere in Europe, Martha and her old mother own a little-frequented inn. Like the young Camus in Prague, Martha loathes the unjust climate of Europe. She reproaches her mother for giving birth to her in this "pays de nuages". Spring, which is generally a joyous awakening of nature, is "aigre" in this land:

Ce que nous appelons le printemps, ici, c'est une rose et deux bourgeois.... Un souffle plus puissant les fanerait....

Martha feels like a stranger in this climate. It arouses only "ennui" and unhappiness in her. She wants desperately to escape from it to a sunnier land: "...je suis lasse à mourir de cet horizon fermé." Thus it is that she and her mother rob and murder those who come to stay in their inn. When they have enough money accumulated, they plan to leave Europe for good:

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158 ibid., II, 1, p. 56.
159 ibid., II, 1, pp. 56-57.
160 ibid., I, 8, p. 48.
Quand nous aurons amassé beaucoup d’argent et que nous pourrons quitter ces terres sans horizon...cette auberge et cette ville pluvieuse...ce pays d’ombre...ce jour-là, vous me verrez sourire.  

Martha is led to commit murder not only because she is repelled by the climate of Europe, but also because she is attracted to the sun and sea of southern lands. The sun represents oblivion for Martha; she hopes it will destroy the memory of misery and murder:  

J’ai lu...qu’il mangeait jusqu’aux âmes et qu’il faisait des corps resplendissants, mais vidés par l’intérieur.  

The sea, on the other hand, "holds out liberty" to Martha, that is, freedom from hard work and from the oppressive climate of Europe. 

In the opening scene of the play, Martha and her mother decide to commit one last murder before leaving Europe. Unfortunately, however, their next victim turns out to be Martha’s brother. Neither the mother nor the daughter recognize Jan, who had left home as a boy twenty years before. For five years now, he has been living happily with his wife Maria in North Africa "dans un pays que nous aimions, devant la mer et le soleil."  

The evening Jan arrives at the inn, he has an important conversation with Martha during which he describes the beauties of

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161 Camus, Le Malentendu, I, 1, p. 16.  
162 Like Martha, Meursault is led to commit murder because of the attraction and repulsion of nature; p. 38 of thesis.  
163 Camus, Le Malentendu, I, 1, p. 19.  
164 S. John notes: "...the sun is doubly destructive because it can only be enjoyed over the corpses of Martha’s victims and it annihilates conscience and thought, and so voids man of his humanity." "Image and Symbol in Albert Camus", FS, 9, No. 1 (January 1955), pp. 42-53.  
Africa to her: "Le printemps...vous prend à la gorge, les fleurs éclosent par milliers...l'odeur de miel des roses jaunes." Autumn is like a second spring; colourful leaves replace the flowers. In the early morning, the beach is covered with the delicate tracks of birds. The evening is overwhelming, full of "des promesses de bonheur." Jan's glowing description of Africa makes Martha even more discontented with her lot:

Je n'ai plus de patience en réserve pour cette Europe où l'automne a le visage de printemps et le printemps odeur de misère

she remarks bitterly during her conversation with Jan. He has strengthened her desire to go to Africa and, thus, given her "des armes contre lui":

Il a réveillé en moi des désirs qui, peut-être, s'endormaient.... Mon goût pour la mer et les pays du soleil finira par y gagner.

Although her mother is uneasy about killing this guest, Martha determines to go ahead. Jan is drugged, robbed and dumped into the river. After the murder, Martha feels much closer to her goal: "Il me semble que j'entends déjà la mer." She is to be

166 Camus, Le Malentendu, II, 1, p. 56.
167 ibid., II, 1, p. 51.
168 ibid., II, 1, p. 57.
169 ibid., II, 8, p. 72.
170 ibid., II, 1, p. 59.
171 Martha is primarily responsible for the murder of Jan. Her mother helps her because she wants Martha to achieve happiness. As for her: "Je me soucie peu de mourir devant la mer ou au centre de nos plaines...." Camus, Le Malentendu, I, 1, p. 18.
172 ibid., III, 1, p. 74.
disappointed, however, in her dream. When an old servant brings the news of her victim's identity, Martha receives it calmly. She feels neither love nor pity for Jan. He has experienced all the joys in life: the sun, the sea, another's love. Sooner or later, he had to pay for his happiness. She, who has never had these pleasures, is the one who deserves pity. Her mother, on the other hand, is horror-stricken at their crime. Minutes after she discovers her son's identity, deaf to Martha's pleas, she drowns herself in the river.

Then occurs a curious change in Martha. Because she now has enough money, one would expect her to leave for the south, despite her mother's death. Confronted for the first time, however, by the death of someone she loves, Martha suddenly becomes aware of the "absurd": "Pourquoi crier vers la mer ou vers l'amour? Cela est dérisoire", she says to Jan's wife, Maria. Nothing has any meaning — nature or love — when man cannot prevent the certain death which faces him, this "injustice qu'on fait à l'homme". She is doomed, therefore, to remain in Europe, exiled forever from the joys of nature she desires:

...je reste solitaire, loin de la mer dont j'avais soif....

Toute ma vie s'est passée dans l'attente de cette vague qui m'emporterait et je sais qu'elle ne viendra plus! Il me faut

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173 Camus, Le Malentendu, III, 3, p. 94. Caligula made a similar discovery at the death of Drusilla. He says at one point to Caesonia: "L'amour ne m'est pas suffisant....", Camus, Caligula, IV, 13, p. 223; and to Scipion: "...l'amitié me fait rire." Camus, Caligula, I, 10, p. 123.

174 Camus, Le Malentendu, III, 3, p. 94.
demeurer avec...une foule de peuples et de nations, de plaines et de montagnes, qui arrêtent le vent de la mer et dont les jacassements et les murmures étouffent son appel répété. 175

As Martha sees it, the "absurd" leaves man only two choices:
"Vous avez à choisir entre le bonheur stupide des cailloux et le lit gluant où nous vous attendons" 176, she tells Maria. 177 In other words, there is only resignation to death or suicide. In a mood of utter despair, Martha chooses to die as Jan and her mother did — by drowning in the river.

"La Peste" is the next work to be considered in the discussions of the man-nature theme. This novel, written in the years 1941-1943, depicts man's isolation from nature in two ways. The central characters, quarantined in the plague-ridden city of Oran, are separated from the natural world they love, and condemned to suffer the hostilities of a nature which is the very symbol of the plague.

Already in "Le Minotaure" Camus had discussed Oran and its surroundings 178. Here again, he describes this city which is completely devoid of nature's beauties:

175Camus, Le Malentendu, III, 2, p. 83.
176ibid., III, 3, p. 94.
177Martha's despairing end is quite different from Meursault's, for example. He manages to find an equilibrium between joy in nature and despair at death. Martha, who has never known life's pleasures, experiences only despair, and despair alone must result in suicide. Other frigid women in Camus' works end in self-destruction too: Dora in Les Justes and Janine in La Femme adultère.
178p. 42 of thesis.
La cité...est laide...une ville sans pigeons, sans arbres, sans jardins...ni battements d'ailes ni froissements de feuilles, un lieu neutre....179

Yet, it lies in a beautiful setting:
...elle s'est greffée sur un paysage sans égal, au milieu d'un plateau nu, entouré de collines lumineuses, devant une baie au dessin parfait.180

Unfortunately, however, the city was built with its back to the bay.

Suddenly, one day, the plague hits Oran. Alarmed by the steadily increasing number of deaths, the municipal government takes various preventive measures against the spread of the epidemic. Most important among these is the quarantine of the city, no one can enter nor leave it until the plague is over. In addition, the city's beaches are declared closed. These two measures combine to isolate the inhabitants of Oran from any enjoyment of nature. For the duration of the plague, they are exiled to this city "sans végétation". Ordinarily, with the approach of summer, the "Oranais" would have been joyous; but the summer of the plague is quite different: "...la mer proche était interdite et le corps n'avait plus droit à ses joies."181 Gradually, the forbidden sea becomes less and less real to the "Oranais". For them, as for Martha, it is a symbol of freedom, a symbol which "recedes from minds that no longer dare to dwell on freedom".182

Not even the birds care to visit this city from which nature is absent:

179Camus, La Peste, p. 135.
180Ibid., p. 16.
181Ibid., p. 129.
182John, "Image and Symbol", p. 50.
Des bandes silencieuses d'étourneaux et de grives, venant du sud, passèrent très haut, mais contournerent la ville, comme si le fléau...les tenait à l'écart.\textsuperscript{183}

The "Oranais" sense vaguely that their isolation from nature is harmful:

...soudain conscients d'une sorte de séquestration, sous le couvercle du ciel...ils sentaient confusément que cette réclusion menaçait toute leur vie...\textsuperscript{184}

The outsiders who happened to be caught in Oran when the city was closed are the most unfortunate exiles of all. Their eyes closed to the realities of Oran, they spend their days and nights recalling nature in their own native land:

...une terre où une certaine lumière, deux ou trois collines, l'arbre favori et des visages de femmes composaient un climat pour eux irremplaçable.\textsuperscript{185}

Man's exile from nature is also registered in the Christian world. The trite nature imagery used by Father Paneloux in his sermons suggests a total lack of any real sensitivity to nature. Thus, he harrangues his congregation:

Dans l'immense grange de l'univers, le fléau implacable battra le blé humain jusqu'à ce que la paille soit séparée du grain.\textsuperscript{186}

There must be "des semaines qui prépareraient les moissons de la

\textsuperscript{183}Camus, \textit{La Peste}, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{184}ibid., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{185}ibid., p. 88.
\textsuperscript{186}ibid., p. 110.
Only then will "cette lueur exquise d'éternité...éclaire...les chemins crépusculaires" of their life. By contrast to Paneloux's banal expression of nature, the living nature outside the church seems fresh and real:

...un vent violent s'engouffra par la porte entrouverte et assaillit en pleine face les fidèles. Il apportait dans l'église une odeur de pluie, un parfum de trottoir mouillé.\(^{189}\)

Nature, at first merely absent from men's lives, soon becomes a definite annoyance to them. The coming of the hot season coincides with the outbreak of the plague. The sun beats down unmercifully on the city. The terrible heat, the bright light, the dust, all combine to make the exiled "Oranais" uncomfortable:

La mer...prenait des éclats d'argent ou de fer, douloureux pour la vue.... Dans la ville...à peine ouverte sur la mer, une torpeur morne régnait.... On se sentait un peu prisonnier du ciel.\(^{190}\)

The wind too is unpleasant. For days on end, it blows violently from the sea over the plain, caking the city with dust and increasing the fire hazard.

Eventually, nature joins the plague and becomes an aggressor against the "Oranais". It is the heat which is responsible for multi-

\(^{187}\)Camus, *La Peste*, p. 112.

\(^{188}\)ibid., p. 113.

\(^{189}\)ibid., p. 248.

\(^{190}\)ibid., p. 43.
plying the germs at a terrific rate: "Chacun comprenait avec effroi que les chaleurs aideraient l'épidémie." Indeed, nature becomes the very symbol of the plague. Constantly it is linked and even confused with the plague. People close their doors and windows, for example.

...sans qu'on pût savoir si c'était de la peste ou du soleil qu'on entendait ainsi se protéger. Moreover, nature and the plague have similar characteristics:

Ce silence, cette mort des couleurs et des mouvements, pouvaient être aussi bien ceux de l'été que ceux du fléau. On ne savait si l'air était lourd de menaces ou de poussières et de brûlure. Thus, the "Oranais" find it hard to separate the two:

...ce ciel d'été, ces rires qui pâlissaient; sous les teintes de la poussière et de l'ennui, avaient le même sens menaçant que la centaine de morts dont la ville s'alourdissait chaque jour.

About two o'clock every day, nature and the plague hold a rendez-vous in the streets:

...le silence, la poussière, le soleil et la peste se rencontrent dans la rue.... Ce sont de longues heures prisonnières.... At twilight, however, comes a respite from the plague and nature. The

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191 Camus, La Peste, p. 128.
192 ibid., p. 127.
193 ibid., p. 158.
194 ibid., p. 129.
195 ibid., p. 137.
sun, sinking low on the horizon seems to lose some of its awful power over the plague-infested city.

Toute l'angoisse qui se peint dans la journée sur les visages se résout alors, dans le crépuscule ardent et poussiéreux.\textsuperscript{195}

Eventually, nature and the plague release their terrible grip on the "Oranais". Before the final liberation, however, there is a partial release enjoyed by the two main characters: Tarrou and Rieux. Early in the novel, Tarrou is depicted as a lover of nature. Since the beginning of spring, he has been seen sunning on the beaches of Oran and swimming in the sea. In the thick of the plague, he and Rieux decide one day to disregard the law and go for a swim in the sea.\textsuperscript{196}

Peu avant d'y arriver, l'odeur de l'iode et des algues leur annonce la mer.... Elle sifflait doucement... épaisse comme du velours, souple et lisse comme une bête.\textsuperscript{197}

The sea inspires in the two a feeling of happiness which they have not experienced during all the long months of the plague:

Rieux était plein d'un étrange bonheur. Tourné vers Tarrou, il devina... ce même bonheur qui n'oubliait rien, pas même l'assassinat.\textsuperscript{197}

For these two, the swim is taken "pour l'amitié"\textsuperscript{198}, as a consecration of their friendship. In the water they swim "dans le même rythme..., ils avancèrent avec la même cadence et la même vigueur... ils avaient

\textsuperscript{195} Camus, \textit{La Peste}, p. 137.

\textsuperscript{196} This is the only episode in the novel in which the characters are depicted in close communion with nature.

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{ibid.}, p. 277.

\textsuperscript{198} \textit{ibid.}, p. 276.
Beyond an expression of friendship, the swim is also "an act of purification from the plague...and a means of recovering freedom". Returning home after their union in nature, Tarrou and Rieux realize that they must resume their fight against the plague so that eventually they may be free again to enjoy life, that is to say, the pleasures of nature and friendship.

With the arrival of winter — the cold, the grey clôuds and the pale sunlight — the plague loses its force. Then, the quarantine is lifted and the "Oranais" freed from their terrible exile:

Pour eux tous, la vraie patrie se trouvait au-delà des murs de cette ville étouffée. Elle était dans ces broussailles odorantes sur les collines, dans la mer...c'était vers elle, c'était vers le bonheur, qu'ils voulaient revenir.

Search

"Retour à Tipasa", in the collection L'Été, was written in 1952. It is a very important work in that it states clearly the change in Camus' attitude towards nature between the second and third periods of his work. In content it concerns two trips which Camus made to Algeria. One, shortly after the war, describes his sense of exile from nature, thus placing it in the second period. The other, taken in 1952, describes his rediscovery of the pleasures of nature and their significance in his life. It introduces the third period of Camus' work, in which man returns for a brief time to a close relationship with nature.

199 Camus, La Peste, p. 278.
200 John, "Image and symbol", p. 51.
201 Camus, La Peste, p. 322.
The exile which Camus experienced in his first return to Tipasa is announced already in the epigraph to the essay:

Tu as navigué d'une âme furieuse loin de la demeure paternelle, franchissant les doubles rochers de la mer, et tu habites une terre étrangère. ( Médée )  

When he was young, Camus was very sensitive to Tipasa's natural beauties, tiny roses in bloom, the chirping of cicadas, the acrid odour of absinthe. However, the war and its aftermath, "la nuit d'Europe, l'hiver des visages" took him far away from nature, both in body and spirit: "C'est le temps de l'exil, de la vie sèche, des âmes mortes." Soon after the war, therefore, Camus decided to return to Algeria, to Tipasa in particular, in search of "une liberté que je ne pouvais oublier", a liberty which comes from a close communion with nature. Yet, when he sees Tipasa again, it has changed from the Tipasa of his childhood. The ruins through which he wandered are now surrounded by barbed wire; walking at night is prohibited. Fittingly enough, rain falls over all the ruins.

Like Tipasa, Camus and his contemporaries have also changed:

...j'avais commencé par la plénitude. Ensuite étaient venus les barbelés, je veux dire les tyrannies, la guerre, les polices, le temps de la révolte.
Sous la lumière des incendies, le monde...avait vieilli d'un seul coup, et nous avec lui.

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202 Camus, L'Eté, p. 141.
203 Cf. the first period, p. 22 of thesis.
204 Camus, L'Eté, p. 144.
205 ibid., p. 150.
206 ibid., p. 145.
207 ibid., pp. 147-148.
The war has been responsible for what Camus terms a loss of innocence. Before the war, he and other men had enjoyed a life close to nature, blissfully unaware of the horrors men could perpetrate against one another. Once conscious of these horrors, however, their childhood innocence was for ever destroyed and, with it, their capacity to love:

C'est que le sang, les haines décharment le cœur lui-même;
la longue revendication de la justice épuise l'amour qui
pourtant lui a donné naissance. 208

On his first return to Tipasa, Camus has no success at all in communing with nature; he feels unable to love and admire its beauties "dans cette Tipasa boueuse, le souvenir lui-même s'estompait". 209

During the years which followed, Camus was haunted by his exile from nature. His constant battle against injustice had made his life far too one-sided:

La beauté isolée finit par grimacer, la justice solitaire finit par opprimer. Qui veut servir l'une à l'exclusion de l'autre ne sert personne, ni lui-même, et, finalement sert deux fois l'injustice. 210

Both the love of beauty in nature and the fight against injustice were necessary elements in his life.

Camus' second trip to Algeria in 1952 introduces a sharp reversal in his attitude towards nature. This reversal marks the third period of his work. For a brief interlude, in 1952 and 1953, Camus

208 Camus, L'Été, p. 157.
209 ibid., p. 148.
210 ibid., p. 150.
returns to a close relationship with nature, similar to the one he had enjoyed in the first period.

Tipasa, on the second viewing, appears to Camus in all its beauty and sensuality. His description of Chenou mountain is especially indicative of Camus' renewed sensitivity to nature. From a distance, the mountain is but a "vapeur bleue et légère qui se confond encore avec le ciel". Soon, however, "elle se condense peu à peu...jusqu'à prendre la couleur des eaux qui l'entourent, grande vague immobile". Then, up close, it seems to come to life:

...voici sa masse sourcilleuse, brune et verte, voici le vieux dieu moussu que rien n'ébranlera, refuge et port pour ses fils, dont je suis.

Once more, Camus feasts his eyes on the city of Tipasa: "...on ne voyait que des pierres grêlées et des absinthes, des arbres et des colonnes parfaites dans la transparence de l'air cristallin."

The sounds especially seem to besiege his senses, many of which he has never described before:

...la basse continue des oiseaux, les soupirs légers et brefs de la mer...la vibration des arbres, le chant aveugle des colonnes, les froissements des absinthes, les lézards furtifs....Un merle...

The birds burst forth in joyous song, a song which his heart echoes also after its long exile: "...j'écoute aussi les flots heureux

\[212\] ibid., pp. 153-154.
\[213\] ibid., p. 155.
\[214\] ibid., pp. 155-156.
In this moment of happiness, Camus finds himself purged miraculously from the burden of the war years and their aftermath. He has found the source of strength for which he has been searching:

...je redécouvrais à Tipasa qu'il fallait garder intactes en soi une fraîcheur, une source de joie, aimer le jour qui échappe à l'injustice, et retourner au combat avec cette lumière conquise.

He discovers also that his joy in nature, which has been lying dormant since the beginning of the war, will never completely leave him: "Au milieu de l'hiver, j'apprenais enfin qu'il y avait en moi un été invincible. This joy has always prevented him from completely despairing over the injustices he saw. It has been a constant reminder that there is something in a man's existence that makes it worthwhile.

Dans tout ce que j'ai fait ou dit jusqu'à présent, il me semble bien reconnaître ces deux forces.... Je n'ai pu renier la lumière où je suis né et cependant je n'ai pas voulu refuser les servitudes de ce temps.

"La mer au plus près", the last essay in L'Été, was written in 1953. It is a series of impressions of the sea recorded by Camus on a trip he made to South America in 1945. These selections, like "Retour à Tipasa", register Camus' renewed joy in nature; yet, his descriptions of nature in this period are often lacking in freshness and enthusiasm.

214 Camus, L'Été, pp. 155-156.
215 ibid., pp. 157-158.
216 ibid., p. 158.
217 ibid., p. 159.
In the introduction to these selections, Camus expresses his deep sense of exile from the sea, and from nature, prior to his trip:

J'ai grandi dans la mer et la pauvreté m'a été fastueuse,
puis j'ai perdu la mer, tous les luxes alors m'ont paru gris, la misère intolérable. Depuis, j'attends. 218

Life for him is but a series of meaningless gestures. He is remote from its realities. Even his existence has no meaning: "On me somme enfin de dire qui je suis. 'Rien encore, rien encore...'." 219

Sometimes, he has a brief respite when the sound of the sea comes to him in a dream:

Je me réveille, ainsi, dans la nuit, et, à demi endormi,
je crois entendre un bruit de vagues, la respiration des eaux. 220

Once the dream is ended, however, Camus is plunged into a deeper despair than before.

On other occasions, surrounded by masses of human beings, in New York, for example, his terrible feeling of exile causes him to panic. Yet, he is saved from complete despair because he knows that somewhere the sea is waiting for him:

Ceux qui s'aiment et qui sont séparés peuvent vivre dans la douleur, mais ce n'est pas le désespoir: ils savent que l'amour existe. Voilà pourquoi je souffre, les yeux secs, de l'exil. J'attends encore... 221

In the selections following the introduction, Camus describes his return to the sea, which he has desired for so long. Here, as in

218 Camus, L'Été, p. 167.
219 ibid., p. 168.
220 ibid., p. 169.
221 ibid., p. 170.
Noces, he joins in a marriage with nature: "J'épouse la mer." In all its moods, the sea and its wild life delight him: at dawn, at noon, at dusk, at dark.

The selection describing Camus' departure is one of the richest in imagery. It illustrates that Camus still has a strong sensitivity to nature; yet, he is unable to register what he senses in startling new images. As in Noces, he describes the sea in terms of an animal:

Les eaux sont lourdes, écailleuses, couvertes de baves fraîches...les vagues jappent contre l'étrave; une écume...s'éparpille en dessins mourants et renaissants, pelage de quelque vache bleue et blanche, bête fourbue, qui dérive encore longtemps derrière notre sillage.

Moreover, Camus' description of the noon-day sun on the sea is not notably different from that in L'Etranger, for example:

A midi, sous un soleil assourdissant, la mer se soulève à peine, exténuée...elle fait siffler le silence. Une heure de cuisson et l'eau pâle, grande plaque de tôle portée au blanc, grésille. Elle grésille, elle fume, brûle enfin....

As in Noces and La Peste, there is a swimming scene. This time, the setting is a deserted island in a foreign sea. Yet it is in no way distinctive. Camus could easily be somewhere in Algeria:

...quelques oiseaux de mer se disputent dans le ciel des morceaux de roseaux.... Le soir venu, sous le ciel qui

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222 Camus, L'Eté, p. 174.
223 Camus, Noces, p. 13: "La mer sans une ride et le sourire de ces dents éclatantes", and Noces, p. 17; "Ses chiens blancs."
224 Camus, L'Eté, p. 171.
225 Cf. p. 38 of thesis.
226 Camus, L'Eté, pp. 172-173. The sibilants in the first two lines of this passage convey a good sense of heavesness and drowsiness.
The obvious pleasure which Camus finds in swimming and sunning is not overtly expressed here. Instead, his youthful enthusiasm is restrained and the act of swimming reduced to a simple statement: "...toute la journée, nous entrons dans l'eau puis nous nous séchons sur le sable."\(^{228}\)

On the other hand, there are some fresh descriptions of nature among these impressions. The shore-line of South America, for example, offers a multicoloured new landscape to Camus:

...des lagunes émeraudes, baie tranquille, pleine de voiles rouges, sables de lunes.... Un ipé jaune ou un arbre aux branches violettes....\(^{229}\)

His description of nightfall, in fact, is quite memorable in its originality. It seems like a nightfall in reverse!

La nuit ne tombe pas sur la mer. Du fond des eaux, qu'un soleil déjà noyé noircit peu à peu de ses cendres épaisses, elle monte, au contraire, vers le ciel encore pâle.... Le temps de fermer les yeux, de les ouvrir, les étoiles pullulent dans la nuit liquide.\(^{230}\)

The effect which the sea has upon the author in "La Mer" is by no means a new experience in the works of Camus. For Rieux and Tarrou, as for Camus, the sea has a cleansing and liberating value.\(^{231}\)

"Elle nous lave et nous rassasie dans ses sillons stériles, elle nous

\(^{227}\)Camus, L'Été, pp. 186-187.

\(^{228}\)ibid., p. 186.

\(^{229}\)ibid., p. 184.

\(^{230}\)ibid., p. 176.

\(^{231}\)p. 62 of thesis.
libère et nous tient debout." Moreover, it is something to love, something with which to counter-balance the hatred and tyranny of the contemporary world:

Si je devais mourir, entouré de montagnes froides, ignoré du monde, renié par les miens, à bout de forces enfin, la mer, au dernier moment...viendrait me soutenir au-dessus de moi-même et m'aider à mourir sans haine.

It is his religion, in fact: "Grande mer, toujours labourée, toujours vierge, ma religion avec la nuit!"

Unfortunately, Camus' renewed joy in nature is short-lived. Already in "La Mer" there are indications that his joy is ephemeral.

As previously mentioned, the impressions recorded in "La Mer" are often lacking in freshness and enthusiasm. In addition, mechanical elements, signs of the civilized world, sometimes intervene forcefully in the midst of Camus' effusions about the sea. Thus, there occurs a rather long passage about a previous trip to South America by aircraft:

...dans le cercueil barbare d'un avion...j'attendais la mer sans jamais l'atteindre. Le monstre hurlait...tremblait de convoitise devant de nouveaux espaces vides à dévorer...avec une lenteur convulsée, obstinée, une énergie hagarde et fixe, intoxiquées. Je mourais alors dans ma cellule métallique, je rêvais de carnages, d'orgies.

In clarity, sincerity and strength of expression, this is certainly one of the finest passages in "La Mer", but it emphasizes the civilized world, not nature.

\(^{232}\)Camus, L'Été, p. 187.
\(^{233}\)ibid., pp. 187-188.
\(^{234}\)p. 66 of thesis.
\(^{235}\)Camus, L'Été, pp. 182-183.
La Chute, written in 1956, introduces a fourth period in Camus' work in which man is again plunged into a terrible exile from nature's beauties. The hero, Clamence, is in exile, but he is conscious of it. The people of Amsterdam too are exiled, but they are unaware of it. The tale ends optimistically, however, with a promise of deliverance.

Before his isolation, Clamence had been in close contact with nature's beauties, but he only felt at ease in certain locales:

En montagne, je fuyais les vallées encaissées pour les cols et les plateaux; j'étais l'homme des pénèplaines au moins.... Les sautes, les cales, les souterrains, les grottes, les gouffres me faisaient horreur. 237

This preference for high places is an important clue to Clamence's personality at this point in his life. He enjoys feeling superior to other human beings. High places allow him to look down on "foumis humaines". 238

One night in Paris, returning home along the Seine, he hears the sound of a body striking the water. He looks around, sees nothing, so continues on his way, telling no one of his experience. In the weeks that follow, the events of this evening keep haunting Clamence. Several times he thinks he hears screams. On one occasion, at sea, he finally

236 Amsterdam's canals are like the concentric circles of Dante's inferno. The people in Amsterdam are on the bottom-most circle, about to plunge headlong into nothingness. At night they rest, only to fall again at dawn. This act of falling is a kind of exile intensifying as time goes on.


238 ibid., p. 1486.
realizes that he will never forget his experience, because that evening he lost his innocence:

...j'étais toujours coincé...il fallait m'en arranger. Finie la vie glorieuse.... Il fallait se soumettre et reconnaître sa culpabilité. Il fallait vivre dans le malconfort. 239

Clamence's discovery drives him into exile from the city he loves, Paris, and "la douceur du soir". 240 He takes refuge in Holland, "un désert de pierres, de brumes et d'eaux pourries". 241 Amsterdam, the setting of the tale, is the symbol of a sort of hell: "L'enfer bourgeois". in which man in exile from the eternal beauties of nature pursues a meaningless existence in a mechanical world:

Ils viennent de tous les coins de l'Europe et s'arrêtent autour de la mer intérieure. Ils...cherchent en vain la silhouette des bateaux dans la brume, puis.... Transis, ils viennent demander...du genièvre...." 243

The boats which would carry them to sun-lit isles are nowhere to be found. They are unable to sail on the sea, therefore, which promises them deliverance.

The dismal climate of Amsterdam denotes it as a city of death: no sunlight, no colourful vegetation, only rain: "Il y a des siècles que

239 Camus, La Chute, p. 1529. According to Camus, life is a collective venture. Therefore, every man is responsible for his brother: "Chaque homme témoigne du crime de tous les autres, voilà ma foi, et mon espérance." Camus, La Chute, p. 1530.

240 ibid., p. 1492.

241 ibid., p. 1533.

242 ibid., p. 1481.

243 ibid., Amsterdam is symbolic of many other cities, and its people of many other people: "...il est double. Il est ici et il est ailleurs." p. 1480.
des fumeurs de pipe y contemplent la même pluie tombant sur le même canal."\textsuperscript{244} The evenings in this city are especially depressing: "...l'air est si lourd qu'il pèse sur la poitrine."\textsuperscript{245}

Clamence likes Amsterdam, however. The lifeless climate keeps him ever mindful of death and his guilt:

\begin{quote}
J'aime le souffle des eaux moisies, l'odeur des feuilles mortes...et celle, funèbre, qui monte des péniches pleines de fleurs...ce goût...c'est, chez moi, un parti pris.\textsuperscript{246}
\end{quote}

Like Oran, the city of the plague, Amsterdam is deserted by the birds. Doves hover above the city, but are unable to descend. Creatures of the physical universe, they seem to symbolize hope: the promise of man's renewed communion with nature:

\begin{quote}
...le ciel de Hollande est rempli de millions de colombes, invisibles tant elles se tiennent haut.... Les colombes attendent là-haut...voudraient descendre. Mais il n'y a rien, que la mer et les canaux, des toits couverts d'enseignes, et nulle tête où se poser.\textsuperscript{247}
\end{quote}

Although the Dutch live in a country where death is in the very air they breathe, they seem oblivious of it. For them, Holland is "un songe d'or et de fumée".\textsuperscript{248} They are lost, "dans cette brume de néon, de genièvre et de menthe qui descend des enseignes rouges et vertes".\textsuperscript{248} They are like Lohengrins: "filant rêveusement sur leurs noires bicyclettes...cygnes funèbres qui tournent sans trêve, dans
toule pays, autour des mers."\textsuperscript{248}

Unaware of death, the Dutch are also isolated from the enjoyment of nature. As a result, they substitute dreams for reality, dreams of far-off sunny islands: "Ils sont partis à des milliers de kilomètres \textellipsis vers Java, l'île lointaine."\textsuperscript{248} Their dreams are induced by liquor sometimes; at other times, by prostitutes who offer them for a short time and a small price

..le voyage aux Indes! Ces personnes se parfument aux épices. Vous entrez, elles tirent les rideaux et la navigation commence. Les dieux descendent sur les corps nus et les îles dérivent, démentes, coiffées d'un chevelure ébouriffée de palmiers sous le vent.\textsuperscript{249}

Clamence, like the Dutch, dreams of a nature which is unattainable. He loves especially the landscapes of Italy — from the top of Mount Etna, Java — when the trade-winds blow, and, above all, Greece. Thus, he describes a trip he once took there:

Sans cesse, de nouvelles îles apparaissaient sur le cercle de l'horizon. Leur échine sans arbres traçait la limite du ciel, leur rivage rocheux tranchait nettement sur la mer....
Depuis ce temps, la Grèce elle-même dérive quelque part en moi...inlassablement.\textsuperscript{250}

Despite the heavy pessimism throughout \textit{La Chute}, the end is optimistic. In the closing scene, snow and the doves descend on Amsterdam, completely covering the city. They seem to cleanse the inhabitants temporarily, preparing them, as Clamence hopes, to receive both the despair of death and the joys of nature:

\textsuperscript{248} Camus, \textit{La Chute}, p. 1480.
\textsuperscript{249} ibid., p. 1481.
\textsuperscript{250} ibid., p. 1523.
Amsterdam endormie dans la nuit blanche, les canaux de jade sombre sous les petits ponts neigeux...ce sera la pureté, fugitive...les énormes flacons. Ce sont les colombes.... Elles se décident enfin à descendre.... Quelle invasion! Espérons qu'elles apportent la bonne nouvelle. Tout le monde sera sauvé...les richesses et les peines seront partagées.  

La Femme adultère, written in 1953, marks a new stage in man's exile from nature. Paradoxically, the exile of Janine, the heroine of this tale, is described in terms of a communion with nature, but the communion is both sterile and immoral.

On a business trip to North Africa, Janine and her husband, Marcel, find themselves in a thoroughly unpleasant land:

...le désert...était...seulement la pierre, la pierre partout, dans le ciel où régnait encore, crissante et froide, la seule poussière de pierre, comme sur le sol où poussaient seulement, entre les pierres, des graminées sèches.

Over the bitterly cold expanses of this desert, the wind blows continually, driving the sand in all directions. With the dust, the fog combines to blot out the sun and the land. Even the oasis where the couple stop for the night seems part of the desert. The trees in its garden are "des...arbres minéraux."

251 Camus, La Chute, p. 1548.
252 Camus, La Femme adultère, in Quilliot, Théâtre, récits, nouvelles, p. 1560.
253 The desert is a recurring landscape in Camus' works: in L'Envers, p. 18 of thesis; Noces, p. 26 of thesis.
254 Camus, Femme adultère, p. 1564.
Like the desert, which is, in fact, a mirror of her soul, Janine too is barren:

Elle sentait seulement sa solitude, et le froid qui la pénétrait, et un poids plus lourd à l'endroit du cœur.

When they were first married, Janine and Marcel had lived close to the outdoors. In those days, Marcel had often taken his wife to the beach; however, he was not really fond of physical exercise. Besides, business was far more absorbing to him. Now "l'été, les plages, les promenades, le ciel même étaient loin". Thus, when Janine tries to approach the oasis, the symbol of life and nature's beauties, she is held back.

A sa gauche...les premiers palmiers de l'oasis et elle aurait voulu aller vers eux. Mais...le froid était vif; le vent la fit frissonner.

Like the middle-aged Camus, who returned to Tipasa in search of his source, Janine dreams of a renewed communion with nature: "Elle rêvait aux palmiers droits et flexibles, et à la jeune fille qu'elle avait été."

One day, Janine and her husband climb to the terrace of a fort in the town where they are staying. The day is dry and cold. To Janine, the sky seems a confusion of sound and light:

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255 The description of the desert here is what T.S. Eliot terms an objective correlative. In the physical sense too, Janine is barren; she has no children.

256 Camus, "Femme-adultère", p. 1563.

257 ibid., p. 1560.

258 ibid., p. 1562.
This passage announces a crisis much as the confusion of sound, light and heat in *L'Etranger* precedes the murder scene. Looking out across the oasis to the desert, Janine feels as if something awaits her there where the sky and land meet: "...quelque chose...qu'elle avait ignoré jusqu'à ce jour et qui pourtant n'avait pas cessé de lui manquer." For the first time in many years, Janine has a brief sensation of freedom. Then, she sees the nomads camped by the wadi: "...seigneurs misérables et libres d'un étrange royaume." At the sight of them, she feels a great sadness. They are free and close to the earth, but she is tied to an unhappy and barren marriage. Only death awaits her: "...elle allait mourir...sans avoir été délivrée.

The following night, Janine awakes from a deep sleep. As if in answer to a summons, she stealthily leaves the hotel room and rushes out into the night. Like the resurrected Christ, she calls out to the night: "Je reviens." That night, she enters into a communion with nature, not with the luxurious landscapes of Tipasa, however, but with the cold sterile desert.

Le froid, qui m'avait plus à lutter contre le soleil, avait envahi la nuit.... Aucun souffle, aucun bruit, sinon, parfois,

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260 This is a good example of synesthesia.
262 *ibid.*, p. 1571.
le crêpitement étouffé des pierres que le froid réduisait en sable...."263

Like a sky on a canvass of the demented Van Gogh, the star-filled sky above Janine begins to whirl around and around: "Janine ne pouvait s'arracher à la contemplation de ces feux, à la dérive.263

Then, gradually, the cold desert night takes her as its lover:

Janine s'ouvrait...à la nuit.... Les dernières étoiles des constellations laissèrent tomber leurs grappes un peu plus bas sur l'horizon du désert, et s'immobilisèrent. Alors, avec une douceur insupportable, l'eau de la nuit commença d'emplir Janine, submergea le froid, monta peu à peu du centre obscur de son être et déborda en flots ininterrompus jusqu'à sa bouche pleine de gémissements. L'instant d'après, le ciel entier s'étendait au-dessus d'elle, renversée sur la terre froide.264

Although her communion is an adulterous one with a sterile nature, thus emphasizing her continued exile from her innocent childhood close to nature, Janine, nevertheless, benefits from her experience. For a brief moment at least she forgets the past twenty years:

...elle oubliait le froid, le poids des êtres, la vie démente ou figée, la longue angoisse de vivre et de mourir.... En même temps, il lui semblait retrouver ses racines, la sève montait à nouveau dans son corps qui ne tremblait plus.263

264 ibid., pp. 1572-1573.
CONCLUSION

With La Femme adultere, the pattern of the man-nature theme in Camus' works is complete: Mediterranean summer, exile from nature's beauties, brief return to nature and final exile and sterility. The happy years which Camus spent as a youth close to nature's beauties left an indelible impression on him during his entire life. His early experience of nature is repeated again and again in his writings. Hanna notes that the images from Noces "never cease to haunt the literary and philosophical works of Camus". After 1941, however, Camus never again experienced nature with such intensity. The war years and their aftermath left a more powerful and lasting impression on him than nature ever had. From 1941 until 1952, Camus became deeply involved in political and social problems; as a public man, he had no more time for meditating on nature. His works in this long second period are a plea for the end of violence, for justice and, above all, for peace; yet, the man-nature theme keeps recurring like a leitmotif throughout these years. Except for a brief attempt in 1952-1955 to recapture his youthful experience of nature, Camus moved steadily away from the physical universe from 1941 on, and his works are a faithful reflection of his own progressive exile. Roger Quilliot notes that for Camus increasingly:

L'exil est devenu la loi du monde.... La nature et l'amour sont en effet plus précaires que jamais.... Son œuvre même, il lui a fallu tolérer qu'elle se dessèche au contact de la morale, rongée par le cancer des villes et des civilisations....

Thomas Hanna, The Thought and Art of Albert Camus, Chicago, 1958, p. 4.
Les visages ont effacé les paysages; la verve poétique, rigoureusement canalisée, n'affleure qu'à de rares instants. 266

266 Quillot, Mers et prisons, p. 254.
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