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**Identity and Diversity in Albert Camus's *The Stranger*
And Saul Bellow's *Herzog***

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Dedications:

I dedicate this work:

To my parents for their overwhelming love and for whom I owe a great deal in achieving this research;

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to make a comparative study about identity in Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1957) and Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964) in the light of Stuart Hall's theory of identity. It aims at showing the positions of the two authors toward identity in the modern era. To achieve our purpose, we have used the biographies of both the authors along with summaries and the historical background of their works. After enumerating the results of our research, we will move to the most detailed part of our memoir which is the discussion section. This section is divided into three major parts .The first explores the main character in Albert Camus's *The Stranger*. In fact, this part deals with the identity of Meursault and his relationship with the external world which surrounds him. However, the second part is concerned with the way in which Saul Bellow portrayed the protagonist of his novel and how was its relation with his society. And the last part deals with the main similarities between the two novels and a conclusion which sum up all the points treated in this study.

I. Introduction:

The following research is a comparative study of Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964) and Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1957). The authors of the two novels share same visions in many areas. The area on which this study will focus on is identity.

In recent years, many scholars have taken an immense interest in questions concerning identity. Despite this vastly increased and broad-ranging interest in "identity", the concept itself remains something of an enigma. In fact, the meaning of "identity" as we currently use it is not well captured by dictionary definitions, which usually reproduce older senses of the word. Our present idea of "identity" is a fairly recent social construct, and a rather complicated one. Even though everyone knows how to use the word properly in everyday discourse, it proves quite difficult to give a short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its present meanings.

The fundamental paradox of identity is inherent in the term itself. From the Latin root *idem*, meaning "the same," the term nevertheless implies both similarity and difference. On the one hand, identity is something we uniquely possess: it is what distinguishes us from other people. Yet on the other hand, identity also implies a relationship with a broader collective or social group of some kind. When we talk about national identity, cultural identity, or gender identity, for example, we imply that our identity is partly a matter of what we share with other people. (Taylor 1989).

In fact, in the context of Post-Modernity, the definition of identity has been strongly influenced by globalization, an economic, social and cultural process that made originally steady cultural borders permeable to outer influences. In today's world, the concept of identity has consequently been adjusting itself to a new reality that constantly evolves and mutates as a result of continuous structural and institutional changes. Contradicting the conceptions of

Enlightenment theories, a subject's identity is no longer unified and stable, self-centered and parted from social context. In opposition, it is undefined and decentralized. It is the result of new life forms that inhibit individuals to have a fixed, essential and permanent identity. In the face of contemporary social diversity and therefore having to simultaneously act in different cultural systems, each individual may assume many 'identities', some even contradictory, which are continuously formed and transformed. In a social context of continuous exchanges like ours, modern subjects will inevitably experience a great variety of developments and metamorphosis or even feel different identifications over the course of their lives. And this is a circumstance that unquestionably confirms my initial thought that identity is indeed a very complex topic, which should be, first and foremost, perceived as a plural and dynamic idea.

In today's world, it is very significant to identify oneself with at least one thing (ones ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, or a particular belief). Many people still grapple with the notion of identity in many countries, regions, and various ways in order to fit or adapt into any environment (social, economic, cultural, political, etc). Ones identity determines ones position or situation in society wherever one lives. However, finding the right type of identity can be challenging for many people sometimes because of the difficulties they face in the process of choosing their identities.

Review of Literature:

As far as literature is concerned, Many novels of the past few decades have been characterized by themes which emphasize human freedom, rebellion, fatalism, mechanical necessity, and obsession. In addition to the tendency of the "modern hero" to vacillate in a somewhat precarious way between the prevalent themes of Promethean defiance and Sisyphean despair, there seems to have developed a pattern in modern literature, ironic and paradoxical, that involves the hero in a struggle for identity as in Albert Camus's *The Stranger*

(1957) and Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964).After the publication of the two novels , we have noticed that both of them were objects of a great deal of critics.

Herzog gained popular and critical success after its publication in 1964. Critics praised its examination of Western intellectual traditions, its colorful characterizations, and its innovative narrative structure. Keith M. Opdahl, in an article on Bellow for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, notes the novel's historical relevance when he wrote : "The prose is charged, rich, full of the specifics and precisely defined impressions that create the feel of mid-1960s American life." (Keith, 56). Opdahl argues that *Herzog* "is perhaps most notable for the style, which represents Bellow at his very best." He concludes, "Herzog's double remove permits Bellow to dote on detail, to slow the action when necessary to make the scenes live." (Ibid: 56).

Herzog (1964) is Saul Bellow's sixth novel. It probes the modern intellectual's crises and their multiplicity within society. The novel had acquired a highly critical acclaim since its publication, and occupied the first place at the best-seller list for a number of successive months. What makes it achieve this appreciation, according to Bellow, is that *Herzog* "described a common predicament," and appealed "to those who have been divorced, to those who talk to themselves, to college graduates, to readers of paperbacks, autodidacts, to those who yet hope to live a while. . . ." (Ibid: 58). Indeed, these are the main themes in *Herzog*.

One year after its publication, the novel made Bellow win the second National Book Award for fiction in United States of America. Many notable critics agree that *Herzog* is one of the substantial and controversial novels of ideas in post-war America. It is regarded as the culmination of Bellow's literary career too, for it seems to summarize and contain all the questions, the problems, the feelings, the plights, and the aspirations in modern age. Bellow emphasizes the role of the intellectual who is overwhelmed and overburdened by personal and impersonal crises in a perplexed society.

These crises penetrate the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels. They attribute to the everlasting conflict within one's self, between his mind and heart, his intellect and emotions, interests and ideals, which constitute a predominant dichotomy in the novel. The novel is concerned with the eponymous character, Moses E. Herzog. He is a middle-aged intellectual, author, professor, and Ph.D. holder, who is divorced twice. *Herzog* is a blending of the probing, introspective, well-made novel of ideas with the fast and loose, free-swinging picaresque quest novel to convey his themes freely.

Nonetheless, many scholars assert that Bellow is Jewish "to the marrow." In his biographical work, *Bellow*, James Atlas indicates that "however secular, American and universal, [Bellow's] work was profoundly rooted in his identity as a Jew. His characters, so robustly American in their actions and appearance, were [yet] unmistakably Jewish in their sensibilities and the intonations of their speech". (James.A, 1957:12). In short, there is a contradiction between what Bellow really is and what he claims to be. Although he renounces his Jewishness, he cannot escape it because, "the marginal Jew oscillates forward and backward, out of his group and then back into his group" (Stonequist, 1937:33).

As far as Albert Camus's *The Stranger* is concerned, it was published in 1942 during the Nazi Occupation of France. Most commentators agree that the book's appearance was permitted because its initial printing circulation was small and because it possessed no apparent relevance to political concern. *The stranger* soon attained underground literary status among Parisian intellectuals, who, according to English Showalter, Jr. : "Saw it both as the work of a brilliantly original new talent and as a traditional French mixture of art and moral concern". (English showalter Jr: 2). The first English translation of *the stranger* in 1946 drew mixed reviews. Many critics compared the book to James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, also citing parallels with the works of William Faulkner and Earnest

Hemingway. Camus later admitted to using American novels as models for his method of narration.

In addition to being a celebrated wartime hero, Camus was one of the most influential voices in the intellectual life of the postwar years. In what O'Brien calls "the loose literary and journalistic terminology of the period ... in which existentialism meant finding life meaningless but finding reasons for carrying on all the same." (Justin O'Brien : 1991) Camus was sometimes bracketed with Sartre as an existentialist. Though he objected to this description of his philosophy, and though he may have been right on technical grounds to distinguish between Sartre's existentialism and his own "absurdist" perspective as developed in his long essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), the difference between the two was not easily apparent.

Connor Cruise O'Brien's *Albert Camus* is one of the numerous critics made about Camus. Since, in his perspective O'Brien discusses the characters on *The Stranger*. His reputation for morality and decency has led many authors to examine the details of his life and writings. Among these secondary works, two detailed biographies provide information on Camus's personal influences as well as his sensitivities and reactions to the political events that transpired during his life. One of the two biographies, Herbert Lottman's work, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, is a more detailed account of Camus's life, but he does not address the problem that Camus faced when attempting to uphold affirmative values in a chaotic world. Lottman offers descriptions of the various influences on the young Camus, such as his father's repulsion to the death penalty and his high school philosophy professor's aversion to political orthodoxy. Obviously, these experiences held some importance in Camus's recognition of values, but Lottman offers little more than a description of these experiences. He does not consider how these experiences developed into Camus's affirmation of certain values. Oliver

Todd's biography, unlike Lottman's, acknowledges the challenge that Camus faced while attempting to develop and maintain positive values in a world devoid of transcendent meaning.¹ Commenting on Camus's progression after completing his dissertation, Todd writes, "Camus had freed himself from God, but not from the need to construct a code of behavior."² This freedom from God would undoubtedly develop into the notion of absurdity, but Todd argues that Camus's attitude towards absurdity continuously evolved, changing noticeably with the emergence of *The Plague*. He claims that during this period, Camus began to distance himself from the absurd and to recognize the necessity of value judgments in the idea of revolt.³ Although Camus probably recognized the consequences of absurdity much earlier than Todd suggests, the biographer astutely realizes that these consequences created a dilemma for Camus. "Like his characters Rieux, Peneloux, and the journalist Rambert, Camus sought a foundation for his values."⁴ Todd does not speculate on how one may identify this foundation, but he claims that Camus was envious of the unambiguous foundation of Christian values. According to Todd, Camus liked the fact that Christian values are provided in advance, but he considered these values to be irreconcilable with the world.⁵ Todd's biography reveals that Camus admired the certainty of religious values, but he would not acquiesce to a foundation that he considered dishonest. Focusing upon the political dispositions of twentieth century French intellectuals in his book, *The Burden of Responsibility*, Tony Judt dedicates a chapter to Camus and his politics entitled "*The Reluctant Moralist*." In this fairly typical characterization of Camus as a moralist, Judt argues that Camus became increasingly apolitical after witnessing the ease with which Vichy collaborators were marked for death after the German occupation of France.⁶ This experience, Judt argues, caused Camus to develop a suspicion of power, which led to his theory of limits as a necessary check on rebellion.⁷ In fact, Camus's responsibility was to uphold the value of life above abstract political values. According to Judt, Camus wished to call upon "absolute

standards and measures of morality, justice and freedom whenever it was appropriate to do so”⁸ rather than having to balance the injustices of the East and the West in order to appear nonpartisan.

In referring to absolute standards of morality, Judt argues that Camus’s task of establishing values would have been easier if he had identified an honest and definitive foundation of these values. Apparently, Judt does not think that Camus ever developed these absolute standards, and his failure to do so left him vulnerable to criticism by intellectuals of the right and left.

For instance, Stephen Eric Bronner, who also classifies Camus as a moralist, identifies the challenge faced by Camus in developing values without a sturdy foundation. *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he writes, “offers a new existential challenge: the possibility of experiencing happiness without hope.”⁹ His two books on Camus are partially biographical and partially critical, but neither provides specific detail on Camus’s development of positive values. He gives ample biographical descriptions of the young writer’s influences such as his poor upbringing, the “pagan preoccupation” of his high school philosophy professor, Jean Grenier, his early bouts with death and illness, and his Catholic upbringing.¹⁰ These influences are important, but Bronner does not discuss how these influences contributed to Camus’s development of values. He writes, “[Camus] is willing to rely neither on formal logic nor experience. He sees his method, which he never really articulates, as standing somewhere between reason and intuition.”¹¹ Although this description is not specific, it reveals that Camus relied on his “feelings” in the form of intuition with an appeal to reason for lucid judgment. Recognizing that any systematic development of values is absent from Camus’s work, Bronner comes to the conclusion that Camus’s “Mediterranean thinking” serves as a moderating device to confront nihilism.¹² Mediterranean thinking refers to the prevailing mentality of citizens living in countries that border the Mediterranean Sea. With an emphasis

on physical experience, happiness, and creativity, the Mediterranean mentality stands in opposition to that of Western European society which is preoccupied with rationality and efficiency. Absent from Bronner's analysis is a discussion of how Mediterranean thinking and the various influences of Camus's life guided his moral progression.

Scholars who admire or condemn Camus's ethical stance have attempted to follow his moral progression logically. Thomas Landon Thorson, for example, follows this progression logically from the basis of the absurd. In an article written only four years after Camus's death, Thorson upholds Camus as the epitome of a political philosopher. "Like Plato," he writes, "his [Camus's] major task as an intellectual became the search for reasons which would support the restoration of order and justice."¹³ Unlike Plato, Camus could not appeal to transcendence in support of these values. Thorson argues that the idea of transcendence had been considerably discredited before Camus's lifetime due to "persuasive negations contained in the philosophy of his immediate predecessors."¹⁴

Works Cited:

1 Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography* (Corte Madera: Ginko, 1997), pp. 23-24, 86.

2 Oliver Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, trans. Benjamin Ivry (New York: Carol & Graf Publishers, 2000), p. 45.

3 Ibid, pp. 167-68.

4 Ibid, p. 215.

5 Ibid, p. 215.

6 Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 107.

7 Ibid, p. 127.

8 Ibid, p. 124.

9 Ibid, p. 115.

10 Stephen Eric Bronner, *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 47.

11 Stephen Eric Bronner, *Albert Camus: The Thinker, The Artist, The Man* (Danbury: Franklin Watts, 1996), pp. 13-19.

12 Bronner, *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist*, pp. 44-45.

13 Ibid, p. 48

14 Thorson, Thomas Landon. "Albert Camus and the Rights of Man." *Ethics* 74, No. 4 (1964): 281-91.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

From this review of the literature about Saul Bellow and Albert Camus, one can notice that many studies have already dealt with their novels. Although the authors of *The Stranger* (1957) and *Herzog* (1964) have written their works in different languages and countries, they share common principles, attitudes and positions mainly on the question of identity in general, and the way on which the two protagonists of the two novels are portrayed.

Indeed, this dissertation analyses the idea of identity as it is articulated in Camus' *The Stranger* and Bellow's *Herzog*. My intention throughout this dissertation is to demonstrate that the two authors share the same idea, vision and position about identity.

The comparison between *The Stranger* and *Herzog* will be developed through Stuart Hall's theory of identity. Throughout the discussion, three major points are to be discussed.

The first one will deal with the main character in Albert Camus *Stranger*. In fact, this part deals with the identity of Meursault and his relationship with the external world which surrounds him.

The second will discuss the way on which Saul Bellow portrayed the protagonist of his novel and how was his relationship with his society.

The last part will provide us with the main similarities between the two writings and a conclusion to sum up all the points treated throughout the study .

Methodological Outline:

We intend to write our memoir through the IMRAD method. Our dissertation begins with an introduction that stresses our main assumptions; it also restrains our review of some literature written on Albert Camus and Saul Bellow as well as their works. We have initiated our issue and working hypothesis along with methodological outline of our comparison. Besides, the material level provides us with the biographies of both the authors along with summaries and the historical background of their works.

After enumerating the results of our research, we will move to the most detailed part of our memoir which is the discussion section. Indeed, we will study in particular the identity of the protagonists in *The Stranger* (1957) as well as *Herzog* (1964) in the light of Stuart Hall's theory on identity. This section is divided into three parts on which we will study the way on which the main character in Albert Camus' *Stranger* is portrayed. In fact, this part deals with the identity of Meursault and his relationship with the external world which surrounds him. The second will discuss how Saul Bellow portrayed the protagonist of his novel and how was his relationship with his society. The third part will provide us with the main similarities between the two works. Finally, we will end up with a conclusion that will sum up the main problematic that we have raised along our work.

II. Method and Materials :

a)- Method:

In order to achieve our purpose, the method that will be followed in this research paper will be based on Stuart hall approach to identity.

Stuart Hall is a professor of sociology. He writes on politics, race and culture. He did extensive work on cultural identity. A number of his writings have been collected as *'The Hard Road to Renewal'*. He established the meaning and definitions of identity in 'the Third World'. He says that "identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation".¹

Stuart Hall stressed on the importance of the question of identity. He argued that the question of identity is not the same with its traditional meaning. In a book titled *Theories of Race and Racism*, he speaks about identity as a point at which ,on the one hand, a whole set of new theoretical discourses intersect and where ,on the other, a whole new set of cultural practices emerge.

In addition, Hall claimed that identity contains the notion of the true self which is a kind of guarantee of authenticity. For Hall, this authenticity gives us a sense of depth, of the individual and society and "it helps us to sleep well at night" (Hall.2000:146)

More importantly, Stuart Hall identifies identity as the process of identification of saying that this here is the same at that, or we are the same together. But something we have learnt from the whole discussion of identification is always constructed through ambivalence. It means, acquiring identity through our experience in our society.

Hall suggests that identity of the past was perceived as a centered, unified and rational one. Identity according to the sociological subject reflected the growing complexity of the modern world and awareness that individuals were not autonomous and self-sufficient beings. Identity developed between what was viewed as the 'personal' sphere of how we present ourselves in terms of our cultural identities and the 'public' sphere where meanings and values are internalized. In a similar way to how symbolic interactionists would argue our identities develop in through the interaction with others. In this sense Hall suggests our identity is stabilized, unified and predictable. (Hall 1989)

Hall moves on to suggest the identities of the past which were viewed as unique are becoming fragmented or incomplete and in always construction in post-modern society. They are no longer composed of a single identity but several identities that can become contradictory. Hall argues that the concept of individualization began when individuals were freed from religious traditions and structures.

Hall examines the character of change in late modernity and the arguments put forward by others writers in relation to his analysis. Hall agrees with Marx who suggested modern society experienced constant, rapid and permanent change. It is this constant, rapid and permanent change Hall argues, is the principle distinction between 'tradition' and 'modern' societies.

It is important to understand how and why change has created an uncertainty in our sense of identity. Hall uses the example of Judge Thomas, a black judge of conservative political views accused of sexual harassment. The example demonstrates how the fragmentation or plurality of identity can contradict between society and the individual. Some people supported or opposed the judge on the basis of their racial identity and others on the basis of their political identity. Therefore a woman may oppose Judge Thomas because she believes he has committed a crime but feel the need to support him because of the lack of

highly positioned black judges in America and herein lays the contradiction. This example demonstrates how identity can shift in accordance to how the subject is addressed or presented. What became evident according to Hall is how in a post-modern society there is no longer a single identity to act as a 'master' one over other prevailing identities. In the past, class acted as a master identity for everyone. Hall argues how the new social movements have helped to create these new kinds of identities.

1 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1990, p. 222.

b)-Materials:

1. Biographie of Albert Camus:

Albert Camus is a French-Algerian writer. He was a journalist, playwright, novelist, writer of philosophical essays, and Nobel laureate. Though neither by advanced training nor profession a philosopher, Camus through his literary works and in numerous reviews, articles, essays, and speeches made important, forceful contributions to a wide range of issues in moral philosophy – from terrorism and political violence to suicide and the death penalty. In awarding him its prize for literature in 1957, the Nobel committee stressed the author's persistent efforts to clarify the problem of the human conscience in our time, and it is pre-eminently as a writer of conscience and as a champion of imaginative literature and as a vehicle of philosophical insight and moral truth that Camus was honored by his own generation and is still admired today.

Unfortunately Camus's successful life was brought to an end on January 4, 1960, at the age of forty-six. He was negotiating with Andre Malraux, the Minister of State and Cultural Affairs, to buy Recamier Theater in Paris. On returning to Paris, in a car driven by his friend Michel Gallimard, he was killed in a horrible car accident. The car went out of control and crashed into a tree on the side of the road. The tragedy brought an end to a great writer and role model who is still known as one of the greatest authors of all times.

According to Sartre's perceptive appraisal, Camus was less a novelist than a writer of philosophical tales and parables in the tradition of Voltaire. This assessment accords with Camus' own judgment that his fictional works were not true novels (French *Romans*), a form he associated with the densely populated and richly detailed social panoramas of writers like Balzac, Tolstoy, and Proust, but rather *contes* ("tales") and *récits* ("narratives") combining philosophical and psychological insights.¹

In this respect, it is also worth noting that at no time in his career did Camus ever describe himself as a deep thinker or lay claim to the title of philosopher. Instead, he nearly always referred to himself simply, yet proudly, as *unécrivain* – a writer. This is an important fact to keep in mind when assessing his place in intellectual history and in twentieth-century philosophy. For by no means does he qualify himself as a system-builder or theorist or even as a disciplined thinker. He was instead a sort of all-purpose critic and modern-day *philosophe*: a debunker of mythologies, a critic of fraud and superstition, an enemy of terror, a voice of reason and compassion, and an outspoken defender of freedom – all in all a figure very much in the Enlightenment tradition of Voltaire and Diderot. For this reason, in assessing Camus' career and work, it may be best simply to take him at his own word and characterize him first and foremost as a *writer* – advisedly attaching the epithet *philosophical* for sharper accuracy and definition.

The Stranger (1942) – from its cold opening lines, “Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday; I can't be sure,” (Albert.Camus.1957:4) to its bleak concluding image of a public execution set to take place beneath the “benign indifference of the universe,” Camus' first and most famous novel takes the form of a terse, flat, first-person narrative by its main character Meursault, a very ordinary young man of unremarkable habits and unemotional affect, who inexplicably and in an almost absent-minded way, kills an Arab and then is arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. The neutral style of the novel serves as a perfect vehicle for the descriptions and commentary of its anti-hero narrator, the ultimate “outsider” and a person who seems to observe everything, including his own life, with almost pathological detachment.

Camus's deepest philosophical interests were in Western philosophy, among them Socrates, Pascal, Spinoza, and Nietzsche. His interest in philosophy was almost exclusively moral in character. Camus came to the conclusion that none of the speculative systems of the

past could provide and positive guidance for human life or any guarantee of the validity of human value. Camus also concluded that suicide is the only serious philosophical problem. He asks whether it makes any sense to go on living once the meaninglessness of human life is fully understood.

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stranger by Albert Camus A_Critical_Introducton.

2. Biography of Saul Bellow:

Saul Bellow (1915-2005) is an American novelist, playwright, essayist, and short story writer. He is the Nobel Prize winner in literature in 1976. He is recognized as a novelist of the intellectuals for all his works are concerned with the figure of the intellectual who goes through multiple crises. Son of Russian Jewish immigrants, Bellow grew up in the slums of Montreal, Canada, before moving with his family to Chicago, in the USA. He began his academic life studying English literature, switching later on to Anthropology and Sociology. Bellow's multicultural background aided his remarkable intellect and added richness to his literary works. In fact, he has been exhaustively studied lately both for his style and his conscious involvement with the problems of contemporary man.

W.J. Sewell says that "Saul Bellow represents a post-modern writer, that is, a writer whose fiction has turned away from a concern with social values to embrace the inner values of the individual,"¹ Indeed, the critical studies of Saul Bellow as a writer and those of this literary work which we have examined, including essays, articles, and doctoral theses are mainly oriented towards the idea of Bellow's being an "inward-turning writer," committed to the affirmation of the individual. Patricia W. Williams asserts that "much of theoretical attention focused on the eight novels of Saul Bellow deals with the philosophy he develops."²

Bellow has a keen interest in the suffering of humanity. His fiction includes blistering criticism of post World War II life in modern America. It has been claimed that he is one of the greatest humanistic authors of his time. He is also an ardent socialist who believes that "it [is] the rights of the individual that [matter]" (Atlas: 65). His concerns about humanity and advocacy of individuality are, however, dualistic in nature as they include certain races and exclude others.

Identity plays an important role in the life and art of Saul Bellow. He is highly aware of ethnic identity as an identifier of the individual, as well as a determining factor of the individual's fate. Therefore, he insists on being identified as an American writer rather than a Russian, Canadian, or Jewish immigrant. He seems keen on rejecting any classification of himself as a minority member and refuses to be marginalized .2

Bellow voices his rejection of Jewishness in several interviews. Unwilling to be fettered by his past, he refers to his roots in an interview in 1973 with Joyce Illig as "tangled old wires" . More emphatically, Bellow asserts in an interview with Rockwell Gray in 1984: "I knew there would be no place for me as a Jew in that kind of civilization" (Ibid). Bellow's inferiority complex stimulates him to assimilate into the dominant American culture.

In 1976, Bellow won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The committee commended him for his outstanding portrayal of "a man who keeps on trying to find a foothold during his wanderings in a tottering world, one who can never relinquish his faith that the value of life depends on dignity, not its success, and that truth must triumph at last." A host of other works followed, including plays, journalistic accounts, short stories, critical essays, and social and political commentary: *To Jerusalem and Back* (1976), *The Dean's December* (1982), *More Die of Heartbreak* (1987), *A Theft* (1989), *The Bellarosa Connection* (1989), *Something To Remember Me By* (1991), *It All Adds Up* (1994), *The Actual* (1997), and *Ravelstein* (2000). Today, Bellow is considered a quintessential post-war American writer. His Russian-Jewish heritage and Canadian upbringing, as well as his exuberant and candid voice, are all essential aspects of his unique portrayals of the American spirit and the raw energy of Chicago.

Towards the end of his life, Bellow frequently commented on the decline of culture in the West and the urban environment's failure to meet the demands of the soul. In 1987, Bellow composed the foreword to the controversial book *The Closing of the American Mind*,

written by the University of Chicago's conservative social philosopher Alan Bloom. Bellow's final novel, *Ravelstein*, is an homage to the man and their friendship.

In 1989, Bellow married Janis Freedman. The couple moved to Boston, where their daughter, Naomi, was born in 1999. Bellow died in his home on April 5, 2005.

1 WILLIAMS, Patricia. *Saul Bellow's Fiction: A Critical Question*. Thesis. — Ph.D. Texas, A & M University , 1972, 256 p.

2 Harper, Gordon Lloyd. “*The Art of Fiction: Saul Bellow*.” In *Conversations with Saul Bellow* edited by Gloria L. Cronin and Ben Siegel, 58-77. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

3. Summaries of the two novels:

Meursault, the narrator, is a young man living in Algiers. After receiving a telegram informing him about his mother's death, he takes a bus to Marengo, where his mother had been living in an old persons' home. He sleeps for almost the entire trip. When he arrives, he speaks to the director of the home. The director allows Meursault to see his mother, but Meursault finds that her body has already been sealed in the coffin.

That night, Meursault keeps vigil over his mother's body. Much to his displeasure, the talkative caretaker stays with him the whole time. Meursault smokes a cigarette, drinks coffee, and dozes off. The next morning, before the funeral, he meets with the director again. The director informs him that the old Thomas Perez, who had grown very close to Meursault's mother, will be attending the funeral service. The funeral procession heads for the small local village, but Perez has difficulty keeping up and eventually faints from the heat. Meursault reports that he remembers little of the funeral. That night, he happily arrives back in Algiers.

The next day, Meursault goes to the public beach for a swim. There, he runs into Marie Cardona, his former co-worker. The two make a date to see a comedy at the movie theater that evening. After the movie they spend the night together. When Meursault wakes up, Marie is gone. He stays in bed until noon and then sits on his balcony until evening, watching the people pass on the street.

The following day, Monday, Meursault returns to work. He has lunch with his friend Emmanuel and then works all afternoon. While walking upstairs to his apartment that night, Meursault runs into Salamano, an old man who lives in his building and owns a mangy dog. Meursault also runs into his neighbor, Raymond Sintes, who is widely rumored to be a pimp.

Raymond invites Meursault over for dinner. Over the meal, Raymond recounts how he beat up his mistress after he discovered that she had been cheating on him. As a result, he got into a fight with her brother. Raymond now wants to torment his mistress even more, but he needs Meursault to write a letter to lure his mistress back to him. Meursault agrees and writes the letter that night.

The following Saturday, Marie visits Meursault at his apartment. She asks Meursault if he loves her, and he replies that “it didn’t mean anything,” (Camus.A.1957:24)but probably not. The two then hear shouting coming from Raymond’s apartment. They go out into the hall and watch as a policeman arrives. The policeman slaps Raymond and says that he will be summoned to the police station for beating up his mistress. Later, Raymond asks Meursault to testify on his behalf, and Meursault agrees. Marie asks Meursault if he wants to marry her. He replies indifferently but says that they can get married if she wants to, so they become engaged. The following Sunday, Meursault, Marie, and Raymond go to a beach house owned by Masson, one of Raymond’s friends. They swim happily in the sea and then have lunch. That afternoon, Masson, Raymond, and Meursault ran into two Arabs on the beach, one of whom is the brother of Raymond’s mistress. A fight breaks out and Raymond is stabbed. After tending to his wounds, Raymond returns to the beach with Meursault. They find the Arabs at a spring. Raymond considers shooting them with his gun, but Meursault takes the gun away. Later, however, Meursault returns to the spring to cool off, and, for no apparent reason, he shoots Raymond’s mistress’s brother. Meursault is arrested and thrown into jail. His lawyer seems disgusted at Meursault’s lack of remorse over his crime, and, in particular, at Meursault’s lack of grief at his mother’s funeral. Later, Meursault meets with the examining magistrate who cannot understand Meursault’s actions. The magistrate brandishes a crucifix and demands that Meursault put his faith in God. Meursault refuses, insisting that

he does not believe in God. The magistrate cannot accept Meursault's lack of belief, and eventually dubs him "Monsieur Antichrist." (Ibid: 45)

One day, Marie visits Meursault in prison. She forces herself to smile during the visit, and she expresses hope that Meursault will be acquitted and that they will get married. As he awaits his trial, Meursault slowly adapts to prison life. His isolation from nature, women, and cigarettes torments him at first, but he eventually adjusts to living without them, and soon does not even notice their absence. He manages to keep his mind occupied, and he sleeps for most of each day.

Meursault is taken to the courthouse early on the morning of his trial. Spectators and members of the press fill the courtroom. The subject of the trial quickly shifts away from the murder to a general discussion of Meursault's character, and of his reaction to his mother's death in particular. The director and several other people who attended the vigil and the funeral are called to testify, and they all attest to Meursault's lack of grief or tears. Marie reluctantly testifies that the day after his mother's funeral she and Meursault went on a date and saw a comedic movie. During his summation the following day, the prosecutor calls Meursault a monster and says that his lack of moral feeling threatens all of society. Meursault is found guilty and is sentenced to death by beheading.

Meursault returns to prison to await his execution. He struggles to come to terms with his situation, and he has trouble accepting the certainty and inevitability of his fate. He imagines escaping and he dreams of filing a successful legal appeal. One day, the chaplain comes to visit against Meursault's wishes. He urges Meursault to renounce his atheism and turn to God, but Meursault refuses. Like the magistrate, the chaplain cannot believe that Meursault does not long for faith and the afterlife. Meursault suddenly becomes enraged, grabs the chaplain, and begins shouting at him. He declares that he is correct in believing in a meaningless, purely physical world. For the first time, Meursault truly embraces the idea that human

existence holds no greater meaning. He abandons all hope for the future and accepts the “gentle indifference of the world.” (Ibid: 76) This acceptance makes Meursault feel happy.

Concerning *Herzog*, it is set in 1964 in the United States, and it is about the midlife crisis of a Jewish man named Moses E. Herzog. At the age of forty-seven, he is just emerging from his second divorce, this one particularly acrimonious. He has two children, one by each wife, who have grown up without him. His career as a writer and an academic has floundered. He is in a relationship with a vibrant woman, Ramona, but finds himself running away from commitment.

Herzog's second marriage, to the demanding, manipulative Madeleine, has recently ended in a humiliating fashion. While still actively married, Madeleine convinced Moses to move her and their daughter Junie to Chicago, and to arrange for their best friends, Valentine and Phoebe Gersbach, to move as well, securing a solid job for Valentine. However, the plans were all a ruse as Madeleine and Valentine were carrying on an affair behind Moses's back, and shortly after arriving in Chicago, Madeleine throws Herzog out, securing a restraining order (of sorts) against him, and attempting to have him committed to an asylum.

Herzog spends much of his time mentally writing letters he never sends. These letters are aimed at friends, family members, and famous figures. The recipients may be dead, and Herzog has often never met them. The one common thread is that Herzog is always expressing disappointment, either his own in the failings of others or their words, or apologizing for the way he has disappointed others.

The novel opens with Herzog in his house in Ludeyville, a town in the Berkshires in western Massachusetts. He is contemplating returning to New York to see Ramona, but instead flees to Martha's Vineyard to visit some friends. He arrives at their house, but writes a

note saying that he has to leave: "Not able to stand kindness at this time. Feeling, heart, everything in strange condition. Unfinished business."(*Herzog:14*) He heads to New York to start trying to finish that business, which includes regaining custody of his daughter Junie. After spending a night with Ramona, he heads to the courthouse to discuss his plans with his lawyer. He ends up witnessing a series of tragicomic court hearings, including one where a woman is charged with beating her three-year-old to death by flinging him against a wall. Moses, already distraught after receiving a letter from Junie's babysitter about an incident where Valentine locked Junie in the car while he and Madeleine argued inside the house, heads to Chicago. He goes to his stepmother's house and picks up an antique pistol with two bullets in it, forming a vague plan of killing Madeleine and Valentine and running off with Junie. Through the flashbacks that litter the novel, many other critical details of Herzog's life.

4- The Historical Background of Camus's *The Stranger*:

Albert Camus was influenced by a diverse collection of foreign authors and philosophies in the 1930s. The mood of Nihilism was high. Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky had remained significant in thought since the turn of the century. German phenomenology was flowing into France. Sartre was struggling against the shallow rationalism of Cartesian thought. Faulkner, Hemingway, and Dos Passos were translated into French and many observe that their styles and concepts made their way into the philosophy of Camus at this time. These influences and moods helped formulate the philosophies of Existentialism and The Absurd as associated with Sartre and Camus. Due to Camus' working-class upbringing, he grows up with a suspicion toward idealism and introspection. He was never one to invest in dreaming. He was interested in living life and the struggle for meaning without the distraction of dreams and fabrications.

Although Camus later tried to distance himself from the concept of Existentialism, critics still place him there and his own ideas were influenced by the forum of Sartre and other Existentialist philosophers of the time. The disappearance of truth and goals gives way to the absurdity of existence. Yet, Camus too is concerned with the creation of meaning in a meaningless world through the process of living life. The mood of pessimism, which many would take from Existentialism and the Absurd, was strengthened by the political developments of the 1930s. The rise in power of the authoritarian dictators as Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco had a harmful effect on the countries of Europe and did not bode well for the upcoming years. The authoritarian regimes solidified Camus as a strong supporter of the Left.

Camus fought stubbornly against war. One can notice the effects of malaise in Camus' earlier writings, reflecting the conflicts of war as well as Franco-Algerian tensions. Economic

difficulties in Algeria had increased the conflict. Officially Arabs were equal citizens to the French but they were often treated as a conquered people. When the Popular Front failed to enact a plan increasing Arab franchise, radical Arabs moved toward Nationalism. Conflict also existed between French interests and the pied-noirs, who were also treated as second class citizens but needed French protection in order to compete for working-class jobs against cheap Arab labor. Meursault of *The Stranger* belongs to this group and one can understand his feelings toward French institutions as well as the tension between those of Arab and French origin in the story by taking this into account. The myths of the French-Algerian are evident throughout the novel, such as the notion that they live on the frontier, are pagans, are sexualized, live through their bodies and sport, and oscillate between indolence and intense emotion. Camus wrote of Arab issues in the paper, *Alger-Republican*, and campaigned for Arabs who had been wrongly accused. He also wrote of the inadequate French social policy concerning schools and medical care. It was at this time that he began writing *The Stranger*.

By 1939, *Alger-Republican* was campaigning heavily against the war. Camus placed hope in Neville Chamberlain and wanted concessions to be made. After the newspaper was banned in 1940, Camus left Algeria in search of a job. Working at *Paris-Soir*, Camus finished the manuscript of *The Stranger* by May of that year. During that time he also worked on the drafts of a play, *Caligula*, and an essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which he felt, with *The Stranger*, would be parts of one whole, constituting the cycle of the Absurd. Camus revised *The Stranger* while living back in Algeria with his wife's family and then sent an edition to Lyon in April 1941 where Gallimard agreed to publish it. In the context of Occupation, the book was celebrated for its focus on the illegitimacy of authority, a world without values, and the primacy of the individual. It soon became a classic of French literature in many circles and Camus was quickly recognized as a great French/European writer of the 1940s.

Although *The Stranger* is the first novel of Albert Camus, a well-known twentieth century French author, it is usually considered his best work. The book is written in an autobiographical mode with Camus incorporating a part of his early personal life into its pages. In spite of its autobiographical nature, Camus maintains a critical distance with the reader through his use of the narrator/protagonist,

The Historical Background of Saul Bellow's *Herzog*:

Most Americans in the 1950s retained conservative attitudes towards sexuality: they did not openly discuss sexual behavior, and promiscuity— especially for women—was not tolerated. However, traditional attitudes about sex began to change during this era. Dr. Alfred Kinsey's reports on the sexual behavior of men and women (1948, 1953) helped bring discussions of this subject out in the open. Although many Americans clung to puritanical ideas about sexuality, they could not suppress questions that began to be raised about what constituted normal or abnormal sexual behavior. Movie stars like Marilyn Monroe and Brigitte Bardot, who openly flaunted their sexuality, intrigued the public, and *Playboy* magazine began in 1953, and gained a wide audience.

Nina Steers, a journalist, who once interviewed Bellow, said that his birth date was the only piece of information of which she could be sure. Bellow, known for turning down interviewers, has always kept his personal life very private. Nevertheless, the curious have been able to uncover a few facts over the years. (Nina Steers.1964:28)

Bellow was born of poor, Russian-Jewish parents. He grew up immersed in the Old Testament and learned Hebrew and Yiddish. His mother wanted her children to be Talmudic scholars. Bellow's father was a businessman, a bootlegger, and an importer. He wanted his

children to take advantage of the new world of economic opportunities before them by becoming professionals. Bellow gives all of his own early circumstances to his fictional creation, Moses Herzog. Much has been written about the autobiographical aspect of the novel, and some critics say that Bellow put a lot of himself into Herzog.

In 1924, Bellow moved to Chicago to attend high school and college. The urban landscape, which later appeared in his writing, began to infiltrate his consciousness. After attending the University of Chicago for two years, he was transferred to Northwestern University where he majored in Anthropology. After finishing his undergraduate studies, Bellow decided to continue graduate studies in the field of Anthropology. He went to the University of Wisconsin, but dropped out in order to get married. It was then that he decided to write.

Bellow came of age during the Depression and lived through World War II, serving shortly in the Merchant Marine. He saw the wartime economic boom of the forties and fifties, the Cold War, the anti-Semitism of the thirties and forties, the Civil Rights Movement, the end of segregation, and the seemingly endless Vietnam War. The fictional Herzog, who reaches his mid-forties in the 1960s, has lived through precisely the same events. Herzog lives against the backdrop of the Cold War.

During the course of his life, Bellow married three times, had children, and taught at numerous universities, including the University of Minnesota, New York University, Princeton, Bard, the University of Puerto Rico, and the University of Chicago. Saul Bellow has been the recipient of National Book Awards, two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Prix Littéraire International, the Jewish Heritage Award, the 1975 Pulitzer Prize, and the Nobel Prize in Literature, which he received in 1976.

Herzog (1964) is a novel which, while fulfilling the postmodern paradigm, also accomplishes a powerful literary unity. It fails to be overtly fragmented, religious, obscure, irrelevant, or even humanistic, yet it retains those aspects throughout. It is a novel which defies ostentations regarding the elements of genre, and exists for the plight of man, set in circumstances, who acts as he does because he is human. In the work's complex and varied treatment of the human, it develops itself into a work of postmodern humanism. While appealing to the side of postmodern society which cannot help but being fragmented, confused, and disassociated from meaning, it espouses the human spirit and its beauty in such a way as to assert humanity's importance, at least, if not moral righteousness. Some of the novel's defining characteristics which both question and assert meaning in humanity are its Jewish authorship and Jewish influences, closely tied to the autobiographical nature of the work, the obsessive neurosis of the protagonist Moses E. Herzog, and the transcendental nature of Herzog's progress.

Herzog's Judaism is an accompaniment to all that he does. As his mother "wanted Moses to become a rabbi" (Herzog, 1964: 438), so he later looks at himself, dressed a way which is "unable to live up to his Jewish, nineteenth century ideal of man" (Clayton, 1979: 202). This conflict between his sensuality, his worldliness, and his Jewish background produces in him a guilty complex and his complicated neurosis. For example, he is unable to separate feelings of tenderness towards others from his childhood experiences in Montreal and his Jewish upbringing. His "Jewishness" and "family feeling" are inextricably bound, even though he never consciously admits this fact" (Malin, 1967: 147) Thus, his relations with women are fraught with a sense of critical perception as they relate to his own Jewish sense, passed down from his parents, his father who was put out at four years old to study, away from home. Despite whatever attempts his father made to "become a modern European" (Herzog, 1964: 565), and later an American, that filial lineage of Jewish character persists in

Herzog, and confuses him as he comes into contact with the modern world, feeling ridiculous as he goes on dates with sensuous women and wears modern clothes.

III. RESULTS:

After reading and analyzing Albert Camus's *The Stranger* and Saul Bellow's *Herzog* we have noticed that although there was no contact between them and belonging to different countries, they share common attitudes and motivations toward identity. Both Meursault and Herzog are perfect examples of the tormented modern man.

In fact, each of them suffered first of an identity crisis then reach happiness. Both are not insensitive men and they are known for their extreme honesty. In addition, both experienced the hypocrisy of those moral arbiters of society. However, it is true to say that there is nothing extraordinary about Meursault and Herzog- they are like everyman - unimportant for our own existence, worthy of contemplation only for their unnerving adherence to objective truth.

We deduce that the two novels discuss the same themes such as family relation, death, sexuality, and love.

Moreover, we deduce that the two novels are autobiographies of the two authors. In fact, both the stories are nearly the same with that of the authors.

IV. Discussion

a) The identity of Meursault :

We do not know much about him. We do not even know his first name. Throughout the book he is simply: Meursault. The facts we do have:

He is now living in Algiers but previously he has lived in Paris. Since the time when his mother moved into an old people's home in Marengo, he has lived alone in their apartment. He moved all his things into his own bedroom, but in fact he has very little furniture and very few personal belongings. The other rooms in his home are empty. We see that he has very modest needs. We see in him an indifference to material possessions. Concerning his friends and associates, his two neighbors; he has a colleague at work called Emmanuel. The girl he goes around with, Marie, used to work at the same firm and that is where he started to fancy her. Céleste, the owner of the café where Meursault has lunch looks on him as a friend. As far as appearance is concerned, his physical appearance is never described. We assume he is quite young- perhaps in his thirties.

In addition, Meursault is not an insensitive man. The critic Germaine Brée had said of Meursault that he was a man with a narrow perspective, and with limited spiritual capacity. Camus replies to this in the Avant-propos, which he wrote to the 1955 edition of *The Stranger*, saying that he does not see Meursault as a social derelict as some readers do. He specifically denies the charge that Meursault is insensitive. To counter these misconceptions about his character, Camus points out the philosophical significance of Meursault: his passionate commitment to the truth about being and feeling. Meursault is psychologically detached from the world around him. Events that would be very significant for most people, such as a marriage proposal or a parent's death, do not matter to him, at least not on a sentimental level.

He simply does not care that his mother is dead, or that Marie loves him. Meursault believes that pure existence (i.e. being and feeling) is the only reality. He lives from day to day, completely in the present. He believes that all the conventional human values are pure deception. As far as Stuart Hall is concerned, he claimed that meaning depends on the individual interpretation and how the information is presented.

The notions he rejects are: First: the notion of God. This is clear when the priest asks Meursault why he has refused to see him: “J’ai répondu que je ne croyais pas en Dieu. Il a voulu savoir si j’étais bien sûr et j’ai dit que je n’avais pas à me le demander : cela me paraissait une question sans importance. (*The Stranger*, 1957:127). Second, Meursault does not believe on the Survival after death. The only reality to Meursault is the life we lead. Any idea of survival of the soul is mere speculation. When the priest insists that Meursault should describe another life than this, Meursault replies: “Une vie où je pourrais me souvenir de celle-ci” (Ibid: 130). In fact, Meursault’s rejection of God fits Stuart Hall opinion since he said that the concept of individualization began when the individuals were freed from religious traditions and structures.

Moreover, Meursault did not believe in Justice. The story of Meursault’s trial depicts the travesty of human justice. Meursault sums up the arbitrary nature of the sentence : « *Le fait que la sentence avait été lui a vingt heures plutôt qu' à dix-sept, le fait qu'elle aurait pu être tout autre, qu'elle avait été prise par des hommes qui changent de linge, qu'elle avait été portée au crédit d'une notion aussi imprécise que le peuple français (ou allemand, ou chinois), il me semblait bien que tout cela enlevait beaucoup de sérieux à une telle décision.* » (Ibid: 121)

To Meursault, questions of guilt or culpability are meaningless because, in the end there is only one life that we live. He tells the priest: « *J'aurais voulu essayer de lui expliquer*

cordialement, presque avec affection, que je n'avais jamais pu regretter vraiment quelque chose. J'étais toujours pris par ce qui allait arriver- par aujourd'hui où par demain »(Ibid:113)

By reading the book, one can feel Meursault's extreme honesty which means that he does not think of hiding his lack of feeling by shedding false tears over his mother's death. In displaying his indifference, Meursault implicitly challenges society's accepted moral standards, which dictate that one should grieve over death. Because Meursault does not grieve, society sees him as an outsider, a threat, even a monster. At his trial, the fact that he had no reaction to his mother's death damages his reputation far more than his taking of another person's life. As he tells his story, Meursault describes phenomena pure and simply. He will not make claims that he cannot justify or talk in terms of abstractions like love- right- wrong. Thus the death of his mother is just one reported event: "Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas." (Ibid: 7). When the magistrate asks him if he loved his mother, Meursault replies with merciless honesty "Oui comme tout le monde" .Similarly, he could have reassured the court about the deep distress that he held back on the death of his mother but he refuses to overstate his feelings. There were easy lies that he could have used to save his neck. His line should have been that of course he missed his mum when she went to the old folks' home and he badly wanted to see her. His relations with Marie were platonic and she had stayed with him just to console him as an old friend. Instead he told the truth indifferent to the outcome for him. He could have claimed to have fired the shots at the Arab in a terrified panic. Instead, Meursault insists on confining himself to a factual account, with an explanation that it was the fault of the sun. He was immediately aware of the feebleness of his case, but felt the obligation to tell the truth as he had experienced it. On most of the character issues that were to condemn him, Meursault had the chance to misrepresent events and facts and this would be the normal in the preparation of a legal defense. Meursault

chooses absolute honesty, whatever the consequences. In addition, characteristic of Meursault fits Stuart Hall's idea since he claimed that identity contains the notion of the true self which is a kind of guarantee of authenticity. For Hall, this authenticity gives us a sense of depth, of the individual and society and "it helps us to sleep well at night" (Hall, 2000:146). Moreover, Hall stressed on the notion of 'the true self' and explained:

*"The logic of identity is the logic of something like a "true self." And the language of identity has often been related to the search for a kind of authenticity to one's experience, something that tells me where I come from. The logic and language of identity is the logic of depth --in here, deep inside me, is my Self which I can reflect upon. It is an element of continuity. I think most of us do recognize that our identities have changed over time, but we have the hope or nostalgia that they change at the rate of a glacier. So, while we're not the fledglings that we were when we were one year old, we are the same sort of person."*¹

In addition, Camus described Meursault as an ideal and he defines his role in life as an outsider. Camus says that Meursault is a man who refuses to play the game and in that sense. In fact, Meursault's identity fits Stuart Hall's definition of identity in many ways. Our study shows that Meursault is condemned for what he is and for what he believes. He accepts to die for the truth but without any false heroics. He has no illusions about his forthcoming execution and is terrified of the dawn when they will come for him. We have seen how Meursault stands apart because of his individualistic character: taciturn and withdrawn, happy to be in his private world, to enjoy its sensual pleasures. This is exactly how Hall identifies identity when he says: "it (identity) is whole, centred, stable . . . or autonomous"²

Meursault lives a quiet life, content with his simple office job and uncomplicated way of living. He is a man without a past, without definable motivations; a blank canvas upon whom the reader is forced to project their own self, their own experiences, and identity with intimacy, provided they acknowledge their own inherent comradeship with him. But in a more perverse sense neither Meursault, nor we, have any history until we realize it in the face of our own mortality.

Moreover, Meursault's identity goes hand in hand with Stuart Hall conception of identity, arguably, he does not lie - adhering very strictly to his objective view of life - and refusing to alleviate the discomfort this causes others by joining in the small lies that hold society together. This dogmatic honesty is not born from a firmly held moral position, rather it grows out of his indifference as he reminds the reader constantly that he "doesn't mind" (*The Stranger*.1957:28) . Indeed, this indifference is Meursault's second defining characteristic; he feels no grief for his dead mother, has no romantic or career aspirations, and makes no moral judgment of others. He simply is, and is content with that.

In maintaining the highest levels of honesty, Meursault embodies many of the ideals that society is so keen to promote but, just as Stuart Hall who stressed on the importance of social convention , Camus demonstrates the impossibility of living a life of principled sincerity, of honesty without compromise. However, Meursault is underestimated by society for upholding their ideals to an extent that they themselves cannot; there is complete congruence between his emotions, thoughts, and acts, which is unpalatable to those who fall short of these standards. When faced with the realization of their idealized morality they cannot abide it, and persecute Meursault for the sake of their hypocritical, delusional society as much as for his crimes.

Meursault's behavior and ethos are entirely in line with the ideals of Hall's approach to identity. As the novel progresses, Meursault begins to see the hypocrisy of those moral arbiters of society, who are charged with upholding the ideals of such an ethos, and balks at the hollowness of their rhetoric. As he waits for death in prison, Meursault turns inwards for morality and develops an informed pathos, not about his own death, but about the absurdity of the life that surrounds him.

There is some disagreement about Meursault's awareness of the absurd. For some commentators, he is conscious of it before the book begins, for others though, the novel charts Meursault's transformation through experience, and his realization of the absurdity of life. Camus himself has said that Meursault was intended to be a character that was aware of the absurd throughout the novel, and it seems likely that, on some level, this is the case. Meursault himself is often considered *The Stranger*, and yet in many ways the novel's title is ironic; Meursault's realization of the absurdity of life gives him a divine knowledge of the world, and it is those who desperately cling to messianic ideologies and religious doctrines, for whom the world is but a transitory stepping stone on the road to eternity, that are the true outsiders. Meursault's belief that earthly life is one's only life makes death the ultimate act of nihilism, and with this knowledge Meursault achieves a level of authenticity at the novel's conclusion.

As an embodiment of humanity Meursault is paradoxically both impenetrably complex and risibly simplistic. There is an interesting interplay between the reader, narrator, and third-person characters, who all perceive Meursault's character differently. Whilst the reader may view Meursault as emotionally-stunted, there is little evidence that the other characters view him in this way, in fact they treat him as a fully-rounded human being, whose company and companionship is to be sought. However, whilst some characters form relationships with him, they are all one-sided, with Meursault indifferent to their friendship. Marie and Raymond - his

closest companions within the novel - take advantage of Meursault's passivity, ignoring responses they do not like and taking his lack of forceful disagreement as assent. They assume a bond, which Meursault himself does not feel. Indeed, the reader has a more objective viewpoint and is struck by Meursault's lack of emotion and his distance from Marie and Raymond, as well as from themselves. Indeed, Meursault does not endear himself to the reader as one might expect a protagonist to in a first-person narrative, and instead the reader feels as disengaged from Meursault as he does from the world. Where Marie and Raymond fail to see it, the reader recognizes the void in Meursault's life, and identifies him as 'the stranger'.

Meursault's unusual approach to human interaction has led some commentators to suggest he is of low-intelligence or mentally deficient in some manner. However, one need only look at the comparisons between Camus's own life and that of his narrator's to dispel this idea. Like Camus's, Meursault's father died before he was old enough to remember him and, like Camus, Meursault attended college. Characters often comment on Meursault's intelligence, and Raymond engages him to compose a letter of great emotional importance. Therefore one can conclude that Meursault is not lacking in intelligence, his autistic manner is as a consequence of his honesty not, as some critics have suggested, as a result of ignorance.

In his final days, Meursault recognizes that even in this world without meaning there is a sweet fraternity in the mutual indifference of men and the world and from this came a realization of happiness. He says: "Je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifférence du monde. De l'éprouver si pareil à moi, si fraternel enfin, j'ai senti que j'avais été heureux, et que je l'étais encore. (L'Etranger.1957: 133)

However, it is true to say that there is nothing extraordinary about Meursault - he is an everyman - a cipher for our own existence, worthy of contemplation only for his unnerving adherence to objective truth. He has no aspirations, other than to be allowed to continue life as

he has chosen to live it; he rejects his employer's offer of promotion, and is apathetic to Marie's proposal of marriage. Meursault is not disengaged, he is simply not committed to life in the way others are; he exists, and that, for Meursault, is enough. In this sense, Stuart Hall stated: "Identity is the ground of action (...) a notion of the continuous, self-sufficient, developmental, unfolding, inner dialectic of selfhood. We are never quite there, but always on our way to it, and when we get there, we will at last know exactly who it is we are"².

Camus's way of creating a contrast between the two faces of Meursault is by separating the book into parts. The first part describes Meursault as an indifferent character, the second as a changed and intellectual man. This separation is helpful in understanding the changing nature of Meursault. Part one of the novel is just Meursault's commentary on the events going on around him. Part two is Meursault's commentary on his life in which he attempts to understand existence and what it stands for. He is conscious of every aspect of his experience, both past and present. In Part one, the reader sees that Meursault is devoid of emotion and lacks the sort of emotion that makes a person vulnerable. However, in Part two, he has little choice but to reflect on his past because in his jail cell, that is the only thing he can do. He learns to do without the experiences he loves and he sleeps much of the time. However, he does suffer a great deal thinking about the executioner and his blade. For the first time in his life, he thinks about his relationship with society. The final encounter with the chaplain forces him to articulate his ideas on life and death. He is faithful to his beliefs, though they are limited. The confrontation with death causes Meursault to open up his heart to the indifference of the universe. The only thing that could make his death happy is to maintain his beliefs and set a standard for those to come.

By the close of the novel, Meursault has changed. He does not concentrate as much on the physical world. His greatest change comes in the form of deep thinking. He begins this

while in prison, where he has nothing else to do. This is definitely different from his former stance. He also discovers that there is something to live for: life itself.

1- McRobbie, A. (1996) 'Looking back at New Times and its critics', in D. Morley and K. Chen (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues and Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, pp. 238–61.

- 2- Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1990, p. 222.

b) The identity of Herzog :

Herzog, the main character of the novel, is a man in his forties, usually the most productive period of a human life, and he has to face a personal crisis he has got into. A total breakdown of former values, beginning with the break-up of his second marriage, leads him to reassess his view of reality and his existence. His desire to put some in order the injustices he did to others and especially the need of some explanation about why others treated him unfairly initiate the quest to find the real values of life. He feels oppressed by other people and as Marcus Klein points out: "Bellow's alienated hero before he is alienated is a terribly oppressed individual and it is with the feeling of his oppression that the fiction no doubt begins." (Klein, 1967: 95). This point echoes with Stuart Hall's conception of identity. Since, he claimed that identity is acquired through our experience in our society.

As a result, the grievance Herzog has against his ex-wife Madeleine and her accomplices on his personal catastrophe provokes the majority of his inner and outer actions. As a well-educated intellectual whose book on Romanticism won a lot of esteem among other academics, he appreciates all philosophers and scholars who influenced the way of thinking of each historical era. Accordingly, he experiences a requirement to make a synthesis of their ideas to find a universal truth about human life and happiness. Simultaneously, he looks for a narrative that will set the history of developing human consciousness in a clear order. (cf. Corner, 2000). The analysis of social and private tasks should help him to come to a definite conclusion about the worth of life. He appraises reality with eyes of an alienated individual whose personal life has been completely ruined. He feels estranged from society and its values, but also from those Jewish values and history his Jewish parents brought from Russia. Herzog himself was brought up very modestly, his family not having money to waste. Yet when he returns to the days of his childhood in his memories, an image of a contented family arises. The more they lacked money, the more their lives were rich in emotions, especially

love. Father Herzog was admired by his wife and his children, no matter what peculiar situation he has got himself into, no matter how little money he earned. Their love was not limited by any criteria, for he was loved as a bread-winner and a similar immense love Herzog felt for his mother. She yearned for an exquisite life of her children, regardless of the cost. Thanks to flashbacks Moses now realizes that his first marriage with Daisy was not as imperfect as he thought. It was quite peaceful, Daisy being an obedient and caring wife trying to manage the household the best way she could. They had some problems as in every partnership, but it was not anything serious. Regardless of how much Daisy tried, Herzog was not gratified. He thought life with her too ordinary, thus he craved for something more. As he later says: "I gave up the shelter of an orderly, purposeful, lawful existence because it bored me, and I felt it was simply a slacker's life." (Bellow, 1964: 340) His relationship with Madeleine was something diametrically opposite. Madeleine was more of a beauty than a home-bird. She had spectacular ambitions, starting from her conversion to Christianity and finishing with Herzog's defeat as a highly-esteemed scholar. Thanks to her faculty of an unnoticed manipulation of people, she managed to push Herzog to marry her and after some time she almost succeeded in the destruction of his life.

In addition to that, the letter-writing is meant to be a means of dealing with questions Herzog tries to answer. The most serious ones are concerned with modern society and the values of human life. Through the letters he could be in contact with people living or dead, even with God. One of the characters says: "A letter gives one a chance to consider – think matters over, and reach a more balanced view." (Ibid: 357) Yet, the communication he tries to undertake is only one-sided, thus nonfunctional. This could be one of the significant reasons why he gets into such a desperate state of existence. He never gets answers to his questions of the highest importance.

Additionally, there is the incapability of a meaningful two-sided communication among other characters. They are much too individualistic to find any common interest and there is always one of them subordinated to the other in some manner. This point echoes with Stuart Hall's idea of one's relation to society when he says: *"That is the politics of living identity through difference. It is the politics of recognizing that all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one. That we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms, and these may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions of marginality and subordination, but which do not yet operate on us in exactly the same way."*¹

Moreover, Madeleine, Herzog's second wife, feels the strong need to humiliate Herzog and one of her tools is communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication is connected with the system of sounds - language. Moses wants to reach the truth with written language as he is not very skilful when it comes to outer contact with people. Language is a tool he masters perfectly and feels confident using it. As MARTIN Corner highlights: "His [Herzog's] mind is predominantly verbal; because he experiences the world as a text, he seeks to represent it as a text." (Martin.c.2000:369) However, as he realizes during the metamorphosis of his self, the truth is hidden neither in questions, nor in answers. The core lies in the process itself. On that account, Martin Corner explains in his article on Herzog: "Thought can be no liberation from the confusions of life if it gives in to "the delusion of total explanations" (Ibid), the idiocy of having an answer for everything: "readiness to answer all questions is the infallible sign of stupidity" (H, p. 155). In this side, Herzog fits Stuart Hall's conception of identity. Since, Hall stressed on the fact that: *"identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and*

absolute Return. Identities are the “unstable points of identification . . . which are made, within the discourses of history and culture” (Hall.1996:395)

Truth, even the absolute truth of metaphysics, is not a claim to explain everything, to have all answers. Such a claim would represent the ultimate absorption of reality into thought, and Herzog, though engaged on an inclusive project of his own, is made to sense that total explanation is the defeat, not the fulfillment, of understanding. Each individual has his own “truth” or is influenced by other “truths”. This fact can be traced in history, as well as in the present day. Similarly, Stuart Hall argue for the importance of history in shaping one’s identity so he says:“ they contained within themselves, from the moment of their origin, some fixed and unchanging meaning or value’ (Hall.1996:166) . Any ideology is based on something that people accepting such an ideology call a truth, although such a phenomenon is not transmittable, but is highly subjective.

The arrangement of people to whom the letters are addressed is seemingly accidental. It is a mixture a different personalities and characters, from influential philosophers to people who are in some way related to the fate of Herzog. Yet, each letter and each person plays his own important part in the search of an identity of the main protagonist. In this sense,Hall stressed on the fact that identity is not composed of a single identity but several identities that can be contradictory.

It should be something real and deep, the essence of a human being and the sense of life. Herzog finds it very difficult in the modern time, under the influence of different ideologies, not to speak of science and modern technologies. This inner struggle is intensified by the fact that he is not able to deal with the outer world. He is not successful when it comes to contact with other people. He is imprisoned in his inability to act in the outer world and the crisis of his self, of his ideologies. Because the inner and the outer world influence each other and one cannot function without the other, he needs to solve both problems in his inner and

outer world. The crisis starts off with the break-down of his outer world: both his two marriages were a failure. The break up with his first wife Daisy was not easy and the only positive result which came from this relationship was their son Marcus. With Madeleine, it was a total catastrophe. It nearly ruined him. He tries to resolve his situation with letters, real or mental, because he is not able to defend himself when it comes to a face-to-face situation. The question is to what extent he is really incapable of taking a step forward and what is just laziness and fear of getting too involved with people (cf. Finkelstein, 1965).

Herzog is often called autobiographical, a claim not wanting in evidence. Bellow wrote the book in multiple locations, namely Puerto Rico, New York, and Chicago, while in the throes of a marital crisis. The crisis was rooted, to Bellow's shock, in the disloyalty of his closest friend, Jack Ludwig, who was found having an affair with Bellow's second wife, Sondra. Therefore Bellow's second marriage may very well have unraveled in a similar fashion to his protagonist's. Herzog's plight throughout the book reflects the difficulties endured by the author. At the end, having rediscovered a sense of security in himself, Herzog's need for catharsis through his letter-writing evaporates much as Bellow's need to write *Herzog* seems to ebb. In this way Bellow's affinity with his hero is transparent.

Their personal histories bear many telling similarities. Bellow was born in Quebec and, like Herzog, he was raised in Montreal and spent a considerable amount of time in Chicago. Both were raised Jewish, and the three languages featured in *Herzog* - French, English, and Yiddish - reflect Bellow's own trilingual heritage. Herzog's identity crisis stems in part from this heterogeneity of cultures; this surely reflects a similar dilemma in Bellow. In this sense Herzog and Bellow undergo similar ordeals, both in the immediate and the perpetual sense.

Bellow's hero is a contemporary portrait of the alienated American Jew in search of identity. He has been cuckolded by his best friend, Valentine Gersbach; both of his marriages

have failed; and he has failed to achieve his intellectual quest to resolve the philosophical problems of Romanticism. He is no longer sure of who he is and what his goals are. To penetrate the shells of appearance which have concealed his real self, he wanders from place to place. In the process of his journeys, he is moving inward through his own chaos, sorting out memories of his past failures, classifying philosophical and psychological ideologies, and learning what he must do to reclaim — and maintain — his own destiny. As far as the role of memories or experiences is concerned, Stuart Hall consents with the idea of choice of what we reclaim or maintain to construct our identity.

In fact, Herzog thinks this critically as he views graffiti on a train platform—“blacked-out teeth and scribbled whiskers, comical genitals like rockets, ridiculous copulations, slogans and exhortations” (Ibid: 594). He views these devaluations critically, yet this analysis touches upon one of his vital aspects. It is precisely his own coming-to-terms with this carnal world which affects and stimulates his own recovery. While Herzog is not becoming a Ginsberg, a Kerouac, a Donleavy, or even the earlier absurdist Sartre and Camus, he is reconciling his own sentiments with the material world.

On the novel, Herzog thinks upon when “he was overtaken by a man one dirty summer evening” (Herzog, 1964: 708-709) and sexually assaulted. This is paralleled by something said to him by a Christian women, directly after the assault in the narrative, “Good measure...shall men give into your bosom” (Ibid, 709). Thus, in this semantic opposition, there seems to be all the reason to espouse devaluation and the absurd philosophy. Instead, Herzog thinks on the “famous advice” to “forget what you can’t bear”, and at the same time denies that the world is “nothing but a barren lump of coke” (Herzog, 709). He grants himself psychological immunity from the pain, granting meaning to the world, and in the same vein disparages and hates its horrors. His childhood is filled with both the sentimental treasure of life and the horror of disassociation. After a long discourse on the death of humans and the

death of God, he thinks “At the bottom of the whole disaster lies the human being’s sense of a grievance, and with this I want nothing more to do. It’s easier not to exist altogether than accuse God. Far more simple. Cleaner. But no more of that!” (Herzog, 711).

It is not exactly clear if the problem is solved for Herzog, but it is viewed with, and not ignored or swept away into the disorganization. At the novel’s end, he begins to have surreal thoughts: “This strange organization, I know it will die. And inside-something , happiness... “Thou movest me” (Herzog, 762).

Furthermore, Stuart Hall stresses on the fact that the best solution to avoid identity crisis in modern societies is to refer back to older traditions of thought in addition to the new ones. Although the most difficult of Moses Herzog’s run-ins with the physical world seems to be over by the work’s close, it is clear that, despite his own recovery, the problems are left unanswered. Where is the human happiness amongst the massive deaths of the World Wars and the imminent possibility of earth’s untimely nuclear end? Herzog decides that it is not in these things, in an all-of-a-sudden swipe of past traditions of thought. He often refers back to older traditions of thought, not residing in them, but amongst them, with the modern world.

Although we must remain conscious of “the ironic distance between Bellow and Herzog”, we must note that “the novel’s ideas are often Bellow’s own” (Clayton.1979: 187).

Thus, Bellow can be imputed with, in the scheme of his other novels and his vital place in a Jewish tradition, a postmodern humanist outlook which belies other works of his time and guarantees his place in the American literary canon. It is this discourse of historical and personal semantic associations concerning the human spirit which, although difficult to decipher in terms of authorial motive, asks important questions which are not completely discontinuous from the currents of the 20th century. His work both recognizes and elaborates devaluation and artistic experimentation, but also denies that force with a satisfaction “to be

just as it is willed” (Herzog, 1964: 762) and not force the issue of impending death. Herzog, after the individual’s absurd retreat into the void, “discover[s] his solidarity with other isolated creatures” (Bellow, Nobel Prize Speech) and continues to live life, at the end of the novel with “no messages for anyone. Nothing. Not a single word” (Ibid:763).

V. Similarities Between the two novels:

Although they are written in different place and time, and by two different authors, the two novels discuss nearly the same topic which is identity. In fact, the first common point which can attract the readers is that each novel is an autobiography of its author because the personal histories of the two protagonists bear many telling similarities. (as mentioned earlier.)

The second pole on which the two novels are similar is the themes treated in each of them. For instance, the themes of love, hypocrisy, family relation and sexuality are extant in either text.

More importantly, in both the novels, "*The Stranger*" and "*Herzog*", the protagonists have a number of similarities. In "*The Stranger*", the author, Albert Camus, shows Meursault as a selfish and insensitive person who is psychologically detached from the world. Meursault is the kind of person who shows no feelings towards others and does not care what happens in his life. Events that usually have an impact or effect on a person's life don't affect him. In the novel we read: "*Maman died today or yesterday maybe, I don't know...it doesn't mean anything*" (Camus, 1957: 3). This can be seen in the first sentence of Bellow's novel: "If I am out of my mind, it's all right with me". (Herzog, 1964: 7).

VI. Conclusion:

The aim of this research paper has been the analysis of identity by two great writers in their famous framework of literature, under the light of Stuart Hall approach to identity. At this final stage, we can say that our study of Albert Camus and Saul Bellow novels led us to conclude that the two works had more in common than a simple reader can imagine since both *The stranger* and *Herzog* highlight the form of identity in the modern era.

In fact, both the novels portray a hero in a difficult, life-changing situation that leads to reconsideration of his life and a subsequent quest for identity. This is exactly what happens on the two novels: *Herzog* depicts a hero in a nearly mad state of mind, who has undergone a complicated divorce with his second wife. Owing to this break-up, he is forced to reconsider his former life and values and the letter-writing serves as a unique means of dealing with the oppressive reality. In *The Stranger*, Meursault is psychologically detached from the world around him. Events that would be very significant for most people, such as a marriage proposal or a parent's death, do not matter to him, at least not on a sentimental level. He simply does not care that his mother is dead, or that Marie loves him. At the novel's outset, Meursault's indifference seems to apply solely to his understanding of himself. Aside from his atheism, Meursault makes few assumptions about the nature of the world around him. However, his thinking begins to broaden once he is sentenced to death.

This comparative dissertation also leads to the following conclusion: although the two authors are of different geographical areas, cultures, languages and religions, the two literary figures share some characteristics. Both of them worked in different jobs: as teachers and as journalists. In addition, both of them had faced alienation.

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