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***The Myth of Sisyphus* and the Absurd Hero in *The Stranger*: A Comparative Analysis of Albert Camus' Philosophical Principles**

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Abstract

Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* are widely recognized as foundational texts in the philosophical exploration of absurdism. While previous studies have discussed their existential implications, fewer have examined the dynamic rapport between Camus' philosophical discourse and its narrative embodiment. This study fills the existing gap in literature by undertaking a comparative analysis of the two works, foregrounding the transformation of abstract philosophical ideas into literary form. It examines how Camus constructs Meursault not merely as a fictional character but as a lived representation of the "absurd hero," battling through a world stripped of inherent meaning. Adopting a qualitative approach, the research relies on close textual analysis to trace recurring themes such as rebellion, alienation and the pursuit of freedom. By applying existentialist and absurdist theoretical frameworks, it illustrates the consistency between the conceptual argument in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and its dramatization in *The Stranger*. In doing so, the study reveals that the novel functions as a philosophical extension indeed, a narrative enactment of Camus' central tenets concerning man's confrontation with an indifferent universe. This work contributes to literary and philosophical scholarship by demonstrating how literature serves not only as a reflection of philosophical thought, but also as a powerful mode of its articulation and critique.

Keywords: Absurd Hero, Camus, Existential Literature, Rebellion, Narrative Philosophy

Introduction

The development of French literature has followed a diverse and rich path marked by distinct periods that reflect cultural, social and philosophical changes both within France and globally. From the medieval chansons de geste which are typical epic poems of French literature, to the intellectual fervor of Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment, this literary genre has functioned as a reflection of the collective consciousness of the universe. Agwu & Ashabua (2024). In the mid-20th century, several contemporary authors emerged who played key roles in shaping a new wave of literary thought, challenging established norms and questioning the existential fabric of human existence. To them "these authors, alongside Albert Camus, contributed significantly to the literary field of the mid-20th century, challenging conventional narratives and fostering an in-depth investigation of existential and absurd themes". (47)

Albert Camus, a prominent French-Algerian philosopher, author and journalist, is widely recognized for his investigation of the human condition through the lens of absurdism. Born in 1913 in Mondovi, Algeria, Camus emerged as a leading intellectual voice in the mid-20th century, contributing significantly to existentialist and absurdist thought. According to Martinez, (2022), his philosophy of the absurd addresses the inherent conflict

between humans' innate desire to find meaning in life and the silent, indifferent universe that offers none. In another study, Agwu & Abutu (2022) states:

Albert Camus, who discovered his literary voice in his youth, spent the rest of his career philosophizing. His arsenal of literary imagery about the universe in which he lived often left his audience with ambiguous conclusions. Camus believed after the two World Wars and their horror effects that the world is meaningless, absurd, and indifferent to the plight of the individual. He further maintained that in the face of this indifference, the individual must revolt against the absurdity and uphold traditional human values, though he lived in self-fulfillment and in recognition of his sense of himself as a man. (121)

Camus not only pushed the boundaries of storytelling but also brought forth a unique blend of existentialism and absurdism. His works, firmly rooted in the post-World War II era, resonate with existential questions that probe the human psyche in the face of an indifferent universe. Agwu & Ashabua (2024). Camus' contributions to 20th-century philosophy are multifaceted and enduring. His seminal works, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* encapsulate his exploration of absurdism, presenting both philosophical discourse and literary embodiment of his ideas. O'Connor, (2022). In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus introduces the concept of the absurd and proposes that the appropriate response to recognizing this absurdity is a defiant acceptance, epitomized by the mythological figure Sisyphus who finds solace in his eternal struggle. Fernandez (2021). *The Stranger* further illustrates these principles through the protagonist Meursault, whose indifferent attitude toward societal norms and existential realities embodies the essence of the absurd hero. Furthermore, Garcia, (2023) maintains that Camus' influence extends beyond literature into various domains of philosophical and cultural studies. His insistence on confronting absurdity without succumbing to despair has inspired contemporary discussions on mental health, resilience and the search for meaning in modern society. More so, Mbatha, (2021) articulates that Camus' ideas have been instrumental in shaping post-colonial thought and existentialist ethics that offers a framework for understanding individual agency in the face of systemic indifference.

Existentialism and absurdism, though often conflated, present distinct philosophical inquiries into the nature of existence. Existentialism as articulated by philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, emphasizes individual freedom, choice and the responsibility that comes with creating one's essence in an inherently meaningless world Nguyen, (2020). In contrast, absurdism, primarily developed by Camus, focuses on the dissonance between the human quest for meaning and the universe's lack of inherent purpose, advocating for a life lived with full awareness of this absurdity without resorting to nihilism or despair Khan, (2023).

Despite Albert Camus' significant contributions to existential and absurdist philosophy, there remains limited attention in the scholarship regarding a comparative analysis of his philosophical principles as articulated in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and their embodiment in *The Stranger*. While numerous studies have examined each work independently, little literature is recorded on the relationship that exist between the two texts. By bridging this gap, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis that highlights the inter-textual dialogue between these works, with a particular focus on the concept of the absurd hero. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the existing scholarship by elucidating the ways in which Camus' philosophical perspectives are woven into his literary works.

Research Questions

This work is drawing on the following interrogations:

1. How does *The Myth of Sisyphus* articulate the concept of the absurd and how is this concept portrayed through Meursault in *The Stranger*?
2. In what ways do the protagonists in both works embody or reject Camus' notion of the absurd hero?
3. How do the philosophical principles discussed in *The Myth of Sisyphus* influence the narrative and character development in *The Stranger*?

Foundations of Existentialist and Absurdist Philosophies

Existentialism and absurdism are two closely related philosophical movements that emerged prominently in the 19th and 20th centuries, each addressing the fundamental questions of human existence, freedom and meaning. Existentialism as articulated by philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt, emphasizes individual freedom, choice and the inherent responsibility that comes with creating one's essence in an inherently meaningless universe. Blake, (2022). It posits that individuals must navigate their own paths and imbue their lives with personal meaning despite the absence of predefined purpose. According to Sartre quoted by Elikwu (2024), Existentialism posits that 'existence precedes essence' and asserts that individuals define themselves through their choices and actions. According to her, "Sartre's existential perspectives underline the inherent absurdity of an indifferent universe and stress the importance of making authentic choices in traverse this absurdity" (81). Freedom, for Sartre is both a burden and a source of existential fulfillment, as individuals bear the weight of responsibility for their actions and the creation of their own meaning in life. Sartre's philosophy encourages a radical embrace of one's freedom and the conscious shaping of one's identity through personal choices.

Absurdism, primarily developed by Albert Camus, builds upon existentialist ideas but introduces the concept of the "absurd," which arises from the conflict between humans' innate desire to find meaning and the silent, indifferent universe that offers none (Turner, 2023). Camus argues that this confrontation with the absurd does not necessarily lead to despair or nihilism but instead calls for a defiant acceptance and a continuous search for meaning through personal experience and rebellion against the absurdity Hernandez, (2024). While existentialism often focuses on the individual's role in creating meaning, absurdism explore the philosophical implications of meaninglessness and the appropriate human response to it.

Some key philosophers have significantly contributed to the development and understanding of existentialist and absurdist philosophies. Among them, Martin Heidegger is renowned for his analysis of Being and time, which emphasizes the importance of authenticity and the individual's relationship with existence Peterson, (2022) believes that Heidegger's existential analysis has been pivotal in shaping existentialist thought, particularly his concepts of "*being-toward-death*" and "*thrownness*." Hannah Arendt, another influential figure, expanded on existentialist ideas by focusing on the nature of power, politics and human action. In her seminal work, *The Human Condition*, Arendt examines the active life (*vita activa*) and introduces concepts such as "*the banality of evil*," highlighting the complexities of human agency and moral responsibility (Clark, 2023). Her contributions bridge existentialism with political philosophy, broadening its application to societal and ethical issues.

Furthermore, Friedrich Nietzsche, though predating existentialism and absurdism, laid the groundwork for these philosophies with his critique of traditional values and his proclamation of the "death of God" Olsen, (2021). Nietzsche's ideas on the *Übermensch* and the creation of personal values resonate with existentialist themes of self-determination and authenticity, influencing later existentialist and absurdist thinkers. Jean-Paul Sartre, often regarded as the leading figure in existentialism, is known for his assertion that "*existence precedes essence*," emphasizing that individuals first exist and then create their own essence through actions and choices Kim, (2023). Sartre's knowledge of freedom, bad faith and authenticity has been essential in shaping existentialist thought, highlighting the tension between individual freedom and societal constraints. More so, Simone de Beauvoir, a close associate of Sartre, expanded on existentialist ideas by focusing on ethics and feminism. In her seminal work, *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir examines the construction of gender and advocates for existentialist ethics that emphasize freedom and responsibility Lopez, (2024). Her contributions highlight the intersection of existentialism with social and political issues, broadening its scope beyond individual existence. Lastly, Søren Kierkegaard, often considered the father of existentialism, emphasized the importance of individual choice and subjective experience. His research of anxiety, despair and faith laid the foundational concepts that later existentialist and absurdist philosophers would expand upon Anderson, (2022).

Systematic Review of Previous Related Literature

This study is rooted in a systematic review of relevant literature. Albert Camus's philosophical investigations of absurdity and existentialism, particularly in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* remain central to understanding his approach to the human condition in a world devoid of inherent meaning. This review aims to ex-ray recent scholarly analyses of Camus's treatment of the absurd.

Agwu et al. (2025)'s study offers a fresh and compelling contribution to the vast body of literature on Albert Camus' *The Stranger* by shifting critical focus to an often-overlooked element: architectural and spatial symbolism. The study positions itself uniquely by attempting to bridge existentialist philosophy and architectural semiotics, a pairing that brings new interpretive depth to Camus' minimalist narrative style. The authors examine how interior spaces such as Meursault's apartment, the courtroom, and the prison operate not merely as settings but as symbolic extensions of the protagonist's internal condition. The work presents a refreshing angle, especially in light of Camus' consistent focus on the theme of absurdity and alienation. While much critical attention has been given to Meursault's psychological detachment and moral ambiguity, this study argues that the architecture around him also speaks volumes about his estrangement and confrontation with the absurd. The idea that architecture "mirrors" existential loneliness is compelling, especially in a novel where emotional detachment is mirrored by physical confinement and sterile environments. No doubt, the paper makes an important interdisciplinary intervention, marrying literary criticism with spatial theory and existential philosophy. It invites readers to consider how the architecture of alienation functions in one of the most iconic existential novels of the 20th century.

While Agwu et al. (2025) offer an insightful and original interpretation of *The Stranger* through the lens of absurdist architectural symbolism, their analysis remains primarily spatial and symbolic, concentrating on how physical environments reflect Meursault's psychological and existential condition. The study emphasizes interiority, isolation and alienation as conveyed through minimalistic depictions of space, but it does not engage directly or comparatively with Camus' theoretical formulation of the absurd as developed in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Moreover, the philosophical principles that underpin Camus' concept of the absurd rebellion, freedom, meaning-making and the notion of the absurd hero are referenced only tangentially and are not systematically traced between the essay and the novel.

Khudhair's (2024) article examine the concept of suicide as articulated in Albert Camus' seminal work, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The paper addresses Camus' philosophical propositions surrounding life, death and the search for meaning, grounding its argument in the notion of absurdity. The work is situated within the wider context of existentialism and absurdism, philosophies that emerged during times of heightened global crises and increased human disillusionment. By focusing on Camus' treatment of suicide, Khudhair places existential crisis at the forefront of the human condition and investigates how contemporary global challenges exacerbate this existential dilemma. The author echoes Camus' perspective on life as fundamentally absurd, describing how humans constantly seek meaning in a universe that offers none. Acknowledging that suicide often seems like a tempting solution to this inherent absurdity, the research ultimately asserts that life is made important not by external meaning but by the meaning individuals assign to it. He emphasizes Camus' argument that, instead of rejecting the absurd, humans should embrace it, seeing this acceptance as the pathway to peace. However, the article argues that, for Camus, suicide is not a valid answer. Camus believed that life, though devoid of inherent meaning, can still offer value through human experience, creativity, and rebellion against the absurd. Thus, the author concludes that Camus rejects the idea that death holds more significance than life, advocating for the conscious decision to live despite life's absurdities. It is imperative to note that Khudhair's article focuses primarily on *The Myth of Sisyphus* and its philosophical treatment of absurdity, specifically analyzing suicide as a response to the absurd condition. While the article effectively examines the central philosophical themes of the play, it leaves a significant gap in the broader analysis of how these principles are embodied in Albert Camus' other major works, particularly his novel *The Stranger*.

In another study, Kaur's (2021) paper critically analyzes the central protagonist of *The Stranger*, Meursault, through the lens of existentialism and absurdism. The study explores the identity crisis and existential dilemmas that plague Meursault, reflecting his detachment from societal norms and his confrontation with an

absurd, indifferent universe. She argues that Meursault represents an “absurd man” who does not shy away from the implications of living in an indifferent world. This theme echoes existentialist ideas, particularly those from Jean-Paul Sartre and Camus himself, regarding choice, responsibility and alienation in a universe lacking inherent meaning. The author also identifies the novel's broader philosophical concerns with absurdism, particularly how Meursault's detachment from traditional values leads to his sense of alienation. The analysis extends to how the absurd arises from a world that does not offer rational or coherent answers to life's fundamental questions, leaving Meursault and by extension, humanity, in existential despair. The paper further investigates key existentialist concepts such as bad faith, choice and responsibility. According to Kaur, “*Meursault's passive reactions to the world around him highlight his rejection of social expectations and his decision to remain emotionally indifferent. This detachment eventually leads to the destabilization of his identity, marking his journey toward accepting life's absurdity*” (46).

While Kaur's analysis is comprehensive in its philosophical examination of *The Stranger*, the paper does not engage in a comparative analysis between *The Stranger* and Camus' other major philosophical work, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. This gap provides an opportunity for further research on how the philosophical principles of absurdity and the absurd hero are expressed across both works. Additionally, the paper could delve deeper into the broader implications of Meursault's identity crisis for contemporary existential thought.

Similarly, Saadan M & AL-Hasani (2023) gives a psychological study of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, focusing on the themes of existentialism and absurdity. It analyzes how Camus employs narrative structure, character portrayal and philosophical reflection to communicate his ideas on the absurdity of life and existentialism. Specifically, the study focus on the figure of Meursault, the protagonist, as an embodiment of existentialist thought and an absurd hero. The authors argue that *The Stranger* is a quintessential existentialist novel that reflects Camus' philosophy of absurdity, developed during his experiences in Paris during World War II. Camus' view, as depicted in the novel is that life is meaningless and individuals must navigate this lack of meaning while recognizing the inevitability of death. The authors emphasize that Camus' ideas resonate with existentialist philosophers who focus on human agency, the unpredictability of life and personal responsibility. The paper positions Meursault as a unique protagonist in literature, one who embodies the absurd hero described by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Meursault's indifference, detachment from societal norms and emotional apathy make him a representation of someone who confronts life's inherent absurdity without resorting to false hope or illusions. Saadan and Al-Hasani highlight that Meursault's lack of emotional responses, particularly to his mother's death and the murder he commits exemplifies his acceptance of the absurd.

Though Saadan and Al-Hasani presents a thorough analysis of existentialism and absurdity in *The Stranger*, the study could benefit from a comparative approach that examines how these philosophical principles are treated across Camus' broader body of work, particularly in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Additionally, the paper does not engage with more recent scholarly debates on the implications of absurdism for contemporary existential thought, leaving room for future research on how these ideas have evolved.

While Khudhair (2024) analyses Camus's stance on suicide in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, emphasizing the importance of creating personal meaning, Kaur (2021) and Saadan & Al-Hasani (2023) focus on *The Stranger*, presenting Meursault as the embodiment of the absurd hero who confronts life's lack of rationality without resorting to illusions. Together, these studies underscore the philosophical depth of Camus's works, yet they reveal a gap in comparative analysis. Specifically, there is an opportunity to explore how the philosophical principles from *The Myth of Sisyphus* intersect with *The Stranger* to create a cohesive narrative on absurdism and existential thought. This review addresses this gap to set the stage for a broader understanding of Camus's contributions to existentialism and their relevance to contemporary discussions on human agency, responsibility and resilience in an indifferent universe.

Theoretical Perspective: The Absurd and the Absurd Hero

Albert Camus's philosophy of the absurd, as articulated in *The Myth of Sisyphus* hinges on the recognition of a fundamental dissonance between humans' inherent need for meaning and the universe's indifference to this

quest. In Camus's view, absurdity arises from the clash between human aspirations for clarity, order, and purpose and the chaotic, indifferent nature of existence itself. According to Camus, the absurd does not reside in the world or in humans themselves but in the encounter between human consciousness and the irrational world. This confrontation leads to a cognitive and existential impasse where the desire for meaning is met with an unyielding silence from the universe. Camus succinctly describes this experience, stating, "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" *The Myth of Sisyphus*, (1942).

For Camus, the recognition of the absurd is both an awakening and a challenge, as it strips away any illusions of a predetermined purpose or moral order in life. Rather than leading to despair or nihilism, however, this realization invites individuals to live with a heightened awareness of life's limitations while affirming their freedom to create meaning through action. In Camus's view, life gains value not through external or universal meaning but through the subjective meanings individuals construct within the constraints of absurdity. The challenge is to embrace life's inherent lack of meaning and, through conscious rebellion, to live with integrity in a way that resists false hope or self-deception.

Camus's notion of the absurd is pivotal in understanding *The Stranger*, particularly through the character of Meursault who symbolizes the "absurd hero." Meursault's life is marked by indifference, detachment, and a passive acceptance of life's unpredictability, traits that underscore his confrontation with the absurd. Unlike those who seek comfort in religious or societal values, Meursault faces life's meaninglessness head-on, refusing to fabricate a comforting illusion of purpose. He exemplifies the absurd hero, who accepts the limits of human understanding, choosing instead to live authentically and courageously despite the absence of higher meaning.

In the present study, Camus's concept of the absurd provides a lens to analyze how *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* interrelate through the theme of existential confrontation. By comparing Camus's theoretical articulation of the absurd with its narrative representation in *The Stranger*, this analysis seeks to reveal how Camus's characters embody a mode of existence that rejects conventional morality and social norms. Meursault's indifference, detachment and final acceptance of his fate reflect the philosophical assertions found in *The Myth of Sisyphus* where Camus argues that individuals must confront life's absurdity with defiance and without illusion. Through this theoretical framework, the study will examine Meursault as a representation of Camus's absurd hero while investigating how his journey reflects the struggles and affirmations associated with an absurd worldview.

Methodology: Qualitative Textual Analysis

This study adopts a qualitative textual analysis approach that focuses on a close reading of both *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger*. By engaging in a thorough examination of each text, this analysis identifies recurring themes, narrative structures and stylistic elements that embody Camus's philosophy of the absurd. Close reading involves examining key passages and dialogue to illuminate how characters' actions, thoughts and interactions reflect core existential and absurdist ideas. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, particular emphasis is placed on Camus's theoretical formulations of absurdity, freedom and rebellion as these concepts serve as foundational principles for the broader philosophical framework.

In *The Stranger*, attention is given to Meursault's character arc, particularly his emotional detachment, apathy and confrontation with mortality. These qualities showcase the absurd hero. Through a detailed analysis of language, symbolism and narrative perspective, this study will explore how Camus uses literary techniques to express complex philosophical ideas. By applying a qualitative textual approach, the analysis aims to reveal the evolving ways in which Camus's fiction and philosophical discourse interrelate, emphasizing thematic and structural parallels that link *The Myth of Sisyphus* with *The Stranger*.

Furthermore, the study will also employ a comparative approach, examining the philosophical principles outlined in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and their embodiment in *The Stranger*. By situating both texts within Camus's philosophical landscape, this comparative analysis will evaluate how the abstract ideas presented in

the drama are reimagined and dramatized in the narrative structure of the novel. The comparison will focus on several key aspects: the definition and experience of absurdity, the role of personal freedom in an indifferent universe, and the notion of rebellion as a means to live meaningfully despite life's inherent lack of purpose. This comparative approach will not only highlight philosophical consistencies between the texts but will also analyze points of divergence, where Camus's theoretical ideas are modified or reinterpreted in a fictional context.

Qualitative Textual Analysis of *The Stranger*

The story of the study's sample text follows the life of Meursault, an emotionally detached French Algerian man whose lack of conventional moral responses and indifference to societal norms gradually lead him to conflict with the world around him. The novel opens with Meursault's reaction to his mother's death. When he learns of his mother's passing, he reacts without the expected sorrow, noting matter-of-factly, "*Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know*" (Camus 3). As noted by Agwu & Abutu (2022), "*French scholars are familiar with the famous line 'Aujourd'hui, Maman est morte,' yet Meursault is uncertain or seemingly indifferent about whether she died that day or the day before*" (126). His focus on logistical details—like travel arrangements rather than grief signals his emotional detachment, which others later interpret as callousness, one that is marked by detachment and apathy, as he doesn't exhibit grief or any typical emotional response, simply attending the funeral with minimal engagement. Set in Algiers, the story unfolds as Meursault returns to his everyday routine, striking up a relationship with a woman named Marie Cardona and befriending Raymond Sintes, a neighbor involved in questionable activities. Meursault's apathy is further highlighted in his relationships, as he accepts events and people in his life without much emotional investment or personal ambition. The pivotal moment occurs when Meursault, almost reflexively and without apparent motive, shoots an Arab man (referred to simply as "the Arab"), leading to his arrest. The second half of the novel examines his trial, where his lack of remorse and his apparent detachment from moral norms confound the court. Instead of focusing on the murder itself, the trial becomes an examination of Meursault's character and worldview, ultimately sentencing him to death. Through Meursault's perspective, Camus investigates themes of absurdity, the inevitability of death and the search for meaning in a world that seems indifferent to human life.

No doubt, Meursault, the protagonist of the novel epitomizes Albert Camus's notion of the "absurd hero", a character who lives in a universe devoid of intrinsic meaning and purpose, yet embraces life without succumbing to false illusions. Camus's absurd hero recognizes the world's indifference and confronts it with honesty, even at great personal cost. In the novel, Meursault's detachment from social norms, his rejection of traditional values and his final acceptance of the absurd condition make him a clear embodiment of Camus's existential philosophy. From the outset, Meursault's response to his mother's death reveals his indifferent outlook on life and his disinterest in adhering to societal expectations. His lack of ritualized grief, shown during his mother's funeral, exemplifies his divergence from societal expectations. He observes, "*It occurred to me that anyway one more Sunday was over, that Maman was buried now, that I was going back to work, and that, really, nothing had changed*" (Camus 24). This indifference not only isolates him but foreshadows his later philosophical reflections on life's meaninglessness. Throughout the novel, Meursault is portrayed as a man who lives solely for the sensory and immediate experience, a man who refuses to find meaning or purpose in his actions. When his girlfriend, Marie, asks him if he loves her, he replies bluntly, "*It didn't mean anything but that I didn't think so*" (Camus 35). His relationships are functional rather than driven by sentiment and he views marriage as equally inconsequential, telling Marie that he "*wouldn't mind*" marrying her if she wanted, although "*it was all the same to him*" (Camus 41). This neutrality reflects Camus's idea of the absurd hero, who neither clings to social norms nor seeks a transcendental purpose and instead accepts the world as it is, indifferent and without inherent meaning. Meursault's transformation into a fully realized absurd hero occurs after he is sentenced to death. Confronted with his impending execution, he experiences an epiphany regarding life's absurdity and rejects the prison chaplain's offer of religious solace, saying, "*He wasn't even sure he was alive, because he was living like a dead man*" (Camus 117). In his final moments, Meursault achieves a radical acceptance of his fate and the absurd condition, realizing that the world's indifference mirrors his own: "*As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world*" (Camus 122). In the end, Meursault frees himself from

illusions and false hope to embody Camus's absurd hero who finds peace in the acceptance of life's inherent lack of meaning.

Throughout the novel, the sun is more than a natural element; it becomes a powerful symbol of the external forces that affect Meursault's emotions and actions, often pushing him to make choices that defy rationality. On the day of the murder, the sun's relentless heat intensifies Meursault's physical discomfort, mirroring his inner sense of disorientation and alienation. When he encounters the Arab by the sea, Meursault describes how *"the sun was crashing down on the sand, and [...] it was pressing down on me like a hand"* (Camus 57). The oppressive sunlight heightens his tension, pushing him toward a fateful, irrational act of violence that he barely comprehends himself. This sequence reflects Meursault's helplessness under the sway of external circumstances, which demonstrate Camus's belief in the absurdity of life where seemingly insignificant events can shape a person's fate.

Another crucial element that marks Meursault as an absurd hero is his apathy toward both his own death and the religious consolation society offers him. As his execution approaches, he refuses to embrace religion or repent, rebuffing the prison chaplain who tries to persuade him to find solace in God: *"He wasn't even sure he was alive, because he was living like a dead man"* (Camus 117). Meursault's defiance of religious conventions and refusal to "convert" echo Camus's philosophy that life has no higher purpose or meaning. He later finds peace in accepting the inevitable and even mocks the concept of eternal life, stating that *"it didn't matter whether you died at thirty or seventy, since in either case other men and women would go on living"* (Camus 114). Meursault's trial is another key element underscoring his role as an absurd hero. The trial is less a judgment of his crime than an indictment of his character and failure to conform to social expectations. The prosecutor and the defense lawyer focus not on the actual murder, but on Meursault's response to his mother's death which society views as inappropriate and inhuman. During the trial, the prosecutor condemns him by asserting, *"He didn't cry at his mother's funeral. He doesn't believe in God"* (Camus 94). The absurdity of the trial lies in the way society interprets Meursault's failure to grieve conventionally as evidence of his guilt, to showcase Camus's view of a world in which people seek order and meaning in events that are inherently chaotic and indifferent. Meursault's ultimate conviction is based on society's desire to impose moral judgment on his existential indifference rather than on his actual crime which reemphasizes the absurd hero's isolation in a world that demands conformity to arbitrary values.

More so, Meursault's rejection of societal values in the text is another defining aspect of his character, embodying Camus's philosophy of existential authenticity in an absurd, indifferent world. Meursault's choices often reflect his desire to live honestly, free from the expectations of social conformity which ultimately results in his alienation from society and his status as an outsider. From the beginning of the novel, Meursault exhibits indifference to traditional social expectations, notably in his reaction to his mother's death. Society expects grief and mourning, yet Meursault feels only physical discomfort during her funeral. He describes the ceremony with detachment, noting, *"I felt like having a smoke. But I hesitated because I didn't know if I could do it with Maman right there"* (Camus 8). This reaction, characterized by physical sensations rather than emotional depth, signals his refusal to adopt society's expectations of grief. His actions are governed by his own sense of comfort rather than the ritualized performance of grief society expects. This refusal to conform to the norms of mourning alienates him, setting up society's perception of him as morally dubious. Meursault's resistance to religious belief further solidifies his pursuit of personal authenticity. In prison, he is approached by a chaplain who urges him to repent and seek comfort in God, but Meursault dismisses the notion, declaring, *"I didn't want anybody's help, and I just didn't have the time to interest myself in what didn't interest me"* (Camus 118). His rejection of religion symbolizes a rejection of societal constructs that impose meaning onto existence. Instead, he insists on facing life and death without appeal to higher powers or afterlife promises and prefers an honest confrontation with his mortality.

In the final scenes of the novel, Meursault's acceptance of the absurdity of life and death encapsulates his rejection of social conventions and his commitment to personal authenticity. Facing his execution, he realizes the indifference of the world, thinking, *"As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world"* (Camus

122). This acceptance of the world's "gentle indifference" reflects the essence of Camus's absurd hero: one who finds liberation and peace in acknowledging the inherent meaninglessness of life. Meursault embraces life's absurdity without succumbing to despair or seeking false hope. Through these elements, Meursault's response to the sun, his indifference toward death and religion, the irrational nature of his trial, and his final acceptance of the absurd, Camus portrays a hero who defies conventional definitions of heroism. Meursault's journey ultimately symbolizes the existential path toward embracing life without illusion.

Thematic Textual Analysis of *The Myth of Sisyphus*

Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* is a philosophical essay that evaluates the concept of absurdity and the human search for meaning in a world devoid of inherent purpose. The text opens with Camus's famous assertion: "*There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide*" (Camus 3). Camus questions whether life is worth living when the universe appears meaningless, proposing that human existence is absurd because of the perpetual search for meaning in a world that provides none. The mythological figure of Sisyphus becomes the central character and symbol in this work. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was condemned by the gods to roll a boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down each time he neared the top, a cycle he must repeat for eternity. Camus sees Sisyphus as the quintessential "absurd hero," someone who faces a relentless, meaningless task but does not surrender to despair. Instead, Sisyphus accepts his fate and in doing so, redefines his punishment as a form of freedom. As Camus famously concludes, "*One must imagine Sisyphus happy*" (Camus 123), suggesting that Sisyphus's conscious acceptance of his condition allows him to transcend it, finding personal meaning and dignity even in his eternal struggle. Camus extends Sisyphus's experience to human life, where individuals also face repetitive, seemingly purposeless tasks, struggles to understand the universe, find love, create art or pursue careers. Camus examines figures such as Don Juan, the conqueror, and the artist as examples of individuals who confront life's absurdity but choose to live fully in it, embracing personal freedom, pleasure and creativity without the need for ultimate meaning.

In the work, Camus presents Sisyphus, a figure from Greek mythology, as a powerful metaphor for the absurd hero. Sisyphus is condemned by the gods to an eternal, futile task: rolling a boulder up a mountain, only for it to roll back down each time he nears the top. Camus interprets this endless labor as the perfect symbol of the human condition, one characterized by the relentless search for meaning in a world that resists coherence. Camus describes Sisyphus as an "absurd hero" because he embodies the refusal to give in to despair despite the meaninglessness of his task. Instead of seeking solace in illusions, Sisyphus embraces his situation fully, accepting the limitations imposed by his fate. Camus writes, "*The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy*" (Camus, 123). This statement captures Camus's belief that meaning can be found not in external accomplishments but in the act of defiance itself—the conscious choice to keep going even when faced with the absurdity of existence. Camus expands on this concept by suggesting that Sisyphus's realization of his absurd fate grants him a unique kind of freedom. Because he understands that his toil is ultimately pointless, Sisyphus is free from the illusion of purpose imposed by societal or divine expectations. Camus emphasizes that the "absurd man" lives without appeal to higher meaning: "*He is forever aware of a burning, inextinguishable irony... that compels him to live without appeal*" (Camus, 99). This awareness gives Sisyphus the strength to continue, transforming his punishment into an act of rebellion. Camus argues that recognizing and accepting the futility of life is central to the philosophy of the absurd. Sisyphus embodies the realization that life offers no ultimate meaning or resolution, only endless struggle. Camus writes, "*If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him?*" (Camus, 121). This consciousness of his predicament is essential to Sisyphus's role as an absurd hero, for he does not rely on false hope or external meaning but instead accepts his fate fully. The rebellion in Sisyphus's story lies not in any attempt to change his fate—an impossible task given the gods' curse—but in his determination to continue pushing the boulder despite the knowledge of its futility. Camus explains that this persistence is what fills Sisyphus's heart with meaning: "*The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart*" (Camus, 123). Sisyphus's rebellion, then, is an act of defiance against the very absurdity he recognizes; he chooses to find significance not in the outcome of his actions but in the struggle itself.

Through Sisyphus's unyielding efforts, Camus illustrates that humans can assert their own meaning in an indifferent universe. While the task may be pointless, the will to continue represents a triumph over despair and a declaration of autonomy. Camus suggests that in embracing the absurd and persisting nonetheless, humans find a "*strange kind of freedom*" (Camus, 122) that allows them to live authentically, free from illusions of ultimate purpose or hope for redemption. In this way, Sisyphus's acceptance of futility and his rebellion through continuous struggle encapsulate Camus's vision of the absurd hero, a figure who resists despair by finding resilience in the act of living itself.

Camus argues in the text that rebellion and freedom are essential responses to the absurdity of life. Since life is fundamentally devoid of inherent meaning or purpose, he believes that individuals must create their own purpose through acts of rebellion against this emptiness. Camus asserts, "*The absurd man says yes and his efforts will henceforth be unceasing*" (Camus, 54), highlighting how the absurd hero must continuously confront the reality of a meaningless existence and, rather than succumb to despair or suicide, choose to live fully and freely. Camus's notion of rebellion is rooted in an acceptance of life's lack of meaning, coupled with a commitment to finding value within the confines of this absurdity. Rebellion, in this context, does not aim to change the world or impose meaning where there is none; instead, it is a personal stance of defiance against the absurd. Camus writes, "*The first and only evidence that is provided me, within the terms of the absurd, is rebellion. It is the perpetual confrontation between man and his own obscurity*" (Camus, 54). For Camus, rebellion is a process of "perpetual confrontation," in which the individual recognizes life's meaninglessness yet consciously chooses to live fully, embracing the irrationality of existence without needing to solve it. Freedom, too, plays a critical role in Camus's response to the absurd. By rejecting the hope for meaning beyond the self, Camus believes individuals can achieve a form of freedom that does not depend on external validation or traditional concepts of purpose. Camus describes this freedom as the state in which "*life will be lived all the better if it has no meaning*" (Camus, 55), suggesting that by releasing oneself from the pursuit of ultimate answers, one gains the liberty to focus on the experience of living itself. This freedom is a byproduct of rebellion, as the individual who acknowledges and accepts the absurd is no longer constrained by societal norms or existential anxieties about meaning.

Through the combined acts of rebellion and embracing freedom, Camus's philosophy ultimately affirms life in the face of its meaninglessness. The absurd hero, as exemplified by Sisyphus, embodies this defiant acceptance, finding contentment in the struggle and satisfaction in the freedom to define personal values without illusions. Camus concludes, "*Thus, I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness, I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death—and I refuse suicide*" (Camus, 56). Here, Camus asserts that rebellion and freedom not only allow individuals to live meaningfully in an indifferent universe but also provide the foundation for a life of passion and deliberate engagement with the world.

Discussion Analysis on the Theme of Alienation in the Sample Works

Examining the theme of alienation in *The Myth of Sisyphus* alongside Meursault's experience in *The Stranger* reveals how both texts explore the existential detachment of individuals in an absurd world. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus articulates a philosophy of absurdity that emphasizes the isolation of the individual when confronted with the lack of inherent meaning in life. This idea of alienation manifests in the mythological figure of Sisyphus, whose eternal struggle against an unyielding boulder serves as a metaphor for the human condition. Sisyphus's alienation stems from his separation from societal values and meaning. He exists in isolation, physically removed from any community or meaningful relationships. His eternal punishment leaves him disconnected from others and the world around him. Camus illustrates this alienation as a defining aspect of the absurd experience, where individuals confront the indifference of the universe and realize that their aspirations and desires are ultimately futile. In *The Stranger*, Meursault exemplifies a profound form of alienation that mirrors Sisyphus's existential plight. From the outset, Meursault displays an emotional detachment from the world and those around him. His reaction to his mother's death immediately establishes his indifference to societal norms regarding grief and mourning. This detachment highlights his alienation from traditional human experiences and values, setting the stage for his existential journey. Throughout the novel, Meursault's interactions further illustrate his disconnection. He approaches relationships

with a sense of emotional apathy, as seen in his relationship with Marie, where he is unable to express love or commitment. Meursault's behavior exemplifies a rejection of social expectations, aligning with Camus's notion of the absurd. Like Sisyphus, he struggles with the meaninglessness of life, leading him to reject conventional values and embrace a solitary existence.

Both Sisyphus and Meursault embody the concept of the absurd hero, representing the struggle against the alienation that arises from a recognition of life's futility. While Sisyphus finds a sense of acceptance in his endless task, Meursault's journey culminates in a similar recognition of his alienation. When confronted with the inevitability of death, Meursault experiences a moment of clarity: "*I had lived my life one way and I could have lived it another. I had done this and I hadn't done that... it was all the same*" (The Stranger, 121). This realization parallels Sisyphus's acceptance of his fate, underscoring the theme of rebellion against absurdity. Meursault's trial further emphasizes his alienation, as society condemns him not merely for the act of murder but for his emotional detachment and failure to conform to social expectations. The prosecutor's argument that Meursault's indifference makes him a moral aberration highlights how entrenched societal values are in the judgment of individuals. This alienation from society echoes Sisyphus's isolation in his battle to demonstrate how both characters confront an indifferent universe.

In both texts, alienation emerges as a fundamental aspect of the human experience in an absurd world. Sisyphus's eternal struggle symbolizes the isolation inherent in recognizing life's futility, while Meursault's emotional detachment reflects a similar existential plight. Both characters embody the absurd hero's journey to reveal that the confrontation with alienation, rather than leading to despair can result in a profound understanding of one's existence. Through their respective experiences, Camus articulates a vision of human resilience and defiance in the face of an indifferent universe, ultimately advocating for a conscious embrace of life's absurdity.

Conclusion

This study has conducted a comparative analysis of *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* to uncover how both works articulate the philosophy of the absurd and its implications for human existence. The analysis highlights several key parallels, particularly in the philosophical themes of alienation and meaninglessness which are central to both texts. Sisyphus's eternal struggle with his boulder serves as a powerful metaphor for the human condition, embodying the acceptance of life's futility and the rebellion against an indifferent universe. In contrast, Meursault's character embodies a more defiant rejection of societal norms and expectations, asserting his authenticity in a world that seeks to impose meaning on him. While Sisyphus finds a form of contentment in embracing his absurd condition, Meursault navigates his alienation and emotional detachment in a manner that challenges conventional understandings of purpose and value. Both protagonists, in their respective narratives, ultimately illustrate different pathways to confronting the absurd, demonstrating that the quest for meaning is not only a personal struggle but a universal human experience. The significance of Camus' philosophy extends beyond the confines of his literary works, offering viewpoints into contemporary thought regarding human existence. His analysis of the absurd resonates with modern audiences grappling with existential dilemmas in an increasingly chaotic and uncertain world. The themes of alienation, the search for authenticity and the confrontation with meaninglessness are particularly relevant in today's society where individuals often experience disconnection and struggle to find purpose amidst a barrage of information and societal pressures. Camus' ideas encourage a serious reflection on the nature of existence that urges individuals to embrace the absurd rather than escape from it. This perspective fosters resilience and creativity, empowering individuals to forge their own meanings and values in a world devoid of inherent significance. As such, the continued relevance of Camus' philosophy enriches our understanding of literature and presents useful frameworks for surmounting the complexities of modern life while inspiring generations to confront the absurd with courage and authenticity.

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