

Cultural intolerance in Albert Camus the stranger

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Abstract

Albert Camus the Stranger represents a key work of cultural intolerance of the French society. Lacking any discernible reason for his actions, Meursault claims that nothing in life matters since his birth to an inevitable death. Detached and apathetic, Meursault represent the quintessential hero of cultural intolerance. Likewise, Meursault is outside of the bounds of social order and alienated even from those closest to him. In truly embracing the idea that human beings holds no greater meaning in attach with the culture and surroundings. Meursault never have a hope of the future, and he is not ready to attached with the society and culture as it is.

Keywords: Cultural Intolerance, Absurdity, Apathetic

Introduction

Albert Camus (1913-1960), novelist, essayist, journalist and recipient of the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature, is esteemed finest philosopher of the Modern France. His best works, including *The Stranger* (1942), *The Plague* (1947) and *The Fall* (1957). Camus' works both intensively and extensively explored the theme that was prevalent of the post- World War II Europe. The illusionment of hope and absurdity of the existence with the notion of alienation and speculated pessimism affects the faith of the human dignity.

In *The Stranger*, Albert Camus traces the man's feeling of alienation and anxiety of the cruel world. The two World Wars imprint the life of the people. Due to suffering many people tried to live their life as much as the protagonist of the novel. They lost the hope of living than exist. There was no trust, no aim; the only goal for many people was survival. But it also seemed no more.

In *The Stranger* the main character accepts the life as it is. He enjoys the benefits of the life, he drinks, smokes, entertains but not seriously. He has no true love affair, not greedy for money and power. He spends all his earnings with no purpose. Meursault claims that nothing in life matters from birth to inevitable death. Meursault is outside of the bounds of social order and alienated even from those closet to him. A baffling and fragmentary account of a segment of the life of the small-time clerk from Algiers. Sartre, in his essay "An Explication of *The Stranger*," summarized the life story of Meursault when he raised the question:

How to interpret this character who, the day after his mother's death, went swimming, started a liaison with a girl and went to see a comic movie, who killed an Arab because of sun, who claimed, on the eve of his execution, that he had been happy and still was, and hoped there would be a lot of spectators at the scaffold to welcome him with cries of hate. He is a poor fool and idiot some said, others, with the great insight said, he is innocent. The meaning of his innocence still remained to be understood. (3)

In *The Stranger*, Camus' draw his attention to the problem of happiness in life, to man's irrational and desperate need to find meaning in existence. Camus hits upon the first person

narration as the most effective and dramatic disburser protagonist, as an alien to his society and environment. Meursault rejects many feeling which people thrive on. He rejects the feeling of love and friendship and enjoys smoking, swimming and having physical pleasure. When Meursault is aware how Raymond abuses his girlfriend and how Salmano abuses his dog, he doesn't show any interest in it.

When he hears his mother's death through telegram, he is unattached and seems to be uncared. He wished she had not died, but her death made not real impact on his life other than temporarily disturbing his daily life style. Meursault shows lack of sentiment surrounding his mother's funeral but he is very practical. His mother's death has been immanent for a while. Her funeral was not a decisive moment and Meursault feels no need to manufacture grief that hasn't come naturally. But Meursault is worried about

With the two o'clock bus I should get there well before night fall. Then I can spend the night there, keeping the usual vigil beside the body, and be back here by tomorrow evening. I have fixed up with my employer for two days' leave; obviously, under circumstances, he couldn't refuse. Still, I had an idea he looked annoyed, and I said, without thinking: "sorry, sir, but it's not my fault, you know." (4)

The characteristic of Meursault is located exclusively within himself, in his own heart and mind. When the Arabs attacked, he begins to understand that not only does he care for what happens, but that the world does not care either. Reflecting on the moment when Raymond gave him the gun, Meursault says, "You take on the fellow on the right, and give me your revolver. If the other one starts making trouble or gets out his knife, I'll shoot" (37).

Inevitably, the reason for Meursault killing an Arab and it provokes, Meursault answers to the question "I found nothing to reply" (43). The absurdity emphasizes the futility of man's inevitable attempts to find order and meaning in life. The absurd refers to the feeling man's experiences when he tries to find in an irrational universe.

Meursault sees neither a future nor a past in his life; he is only concerned with the present moment. He is indifferent towards culture and social orders in society and does not follow the

rules which is set by other public. When Meursault says, "I learnt that even after a single day's experience of the outside world a man could easily live a hundred years in prison. He'd have laid up enough memories never to be bored" (50). By stating that man's life in the prison is no different than a man living outside the jail, Meursault shows his lack of understanding of the society.

Meursault rejects the God and the high power. He believes in him and opposes the existence of God. He says, "What differences could they make to me, the death of others, or a mother's love, or his God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he thinks he chooses" (75). Meursault reflects the nothingness of the God and reject the religion. According to him human existence as a pain, where sin, guilt, and anxiety all contribute to his belief.

Marie is the only reason Meursault has regret for his crimes. However, despite his clearly displayed affection towards Marie, Meursault claims that "She asked me if I loved her. I said the sort of question had no meaning, really" (24). Meursault likes the Marie's physical contact. Meursault's physical affection for Marie signals no deeper sentimental and emotional attachment. Though Marie is disappointed when Meursault expresses his indifference towards love and marriage, "She said, why marry me? I explained that it had no importance really, but, if it would give her pleasure, we could get married right away" (29)

Camus implies the idea that human life has no meaning or purpose. Camus argues that the only certain thing in life is the inevitability for humans, because humans will eventually face the death. All lives are equally meaningless. Meursault gradually moves towards this realization throughout the novel. Meursault realizes that, just he is indifferent to much of the universe, so the universe is different to him. Like all people Meursault has been born, will die and will have no further importance. Unlike other people in the society, Meursault is distant from ambitions, desires, love and emotions in general. He has a difficult time with emotions such as regret and compassion and detached with the society.

References

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