



DISPOSABLE HUMAN IN THE POST-WAR WORLD: ANALYZING THE WAR-TORN IDENTITY OF HUMANS IN CAMUS'S *THE STRANGER*

Laiba Rehman

laibarehman421@gmail.com

Government Graduate College, Gojra Road, Jhang
(Pakistan).

Maryam Munir

maryammunir730@gamil.com

Government Graduate College, Gojra Road, Jhang
(Pakistan).

Hijab Fatima

hijab9495@gmail.com

Government Graduate College, Gojra Road, Jhang
(Pakistan).

Abstract

In today's world, social power and structural inequality profoundly shape human value and existence. Albert Camus's *The Stranger* is a compelling and unnerving depiction of how a person gets alienated and ostracized in a society that expects emotional and moral compliance. The novel depicts how people who fail to conform to social norms are deemed insignificant or discarded. The goal of this study is to examine *The Stranger* using Henry Giroux's Theory of Disposability. The primary goals are to investigate how social institutions produce disposable beings, how emotional indifference leads to exclusion, and how dominant social norms assess and manage human worth. This study takes a qualitative approach, with attentive textual reading and topic analysis. Camus's *The Stranger* serves as the primary source, while scholarly publications, journals, and critical theoretical writings on disposability, power, and modern social control provide support for the interpretation. The data show that Meursault is considered disposable not just because of his crime, but also because of his emotional nonconformity. Society evaluates him based on his lack of grief and emotional detachment rather than the act of murder. The legal and social systems deprive him of his identity, reducing him to a meaningless object to be eliminated rather than understood. His alienation demonstrates how modern society bases human value on conformity. This study indicates that *The Stranger* effectively exemplifies Giroux's concept of disposability by depicting how people who defy emotional, moral, and societal standards are driven to the sidelines and eventually wiped from meaningful life.

Keywords: *Alienation, Disposability, Emotional detachment, Modern society, Power structures, Social exclusion, The Stranger*

Corresponding Author: Laiba Rehman (Government Graduate College, Gojra Road, Jhang (Pakistan).)

Email: laibarehman421@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Albert Camus' *The Stranger* is a seminal work in French literature. It tells the story of Meursault, a peculiar guy who refuses to escape the emptiness and absurdity of ordinary existence. He was completely unaffected. He does not care about anything and shows little emotion. He does not seek to discover the meaning or purpose of life. He accepts that life is worthless and bizarre. This is intended to make you feel, like Meursault does, that life is unexpected and doesn't always make sense. Albert Camus' philosophy of the absurd holds that life has no predetermined meaning or goal. This idea became especially powerful for him after witnessing the tragedies of World War II, which rendered the world meaningless. The character Meursault in this literature fully embodies this idea. He does not seek a greater purpose, but rather accepts the two unavoidable facts of life: that he exists and that he will die. This work offers an accurate depiction of the power of art, the impact of judgment and pity, and the relationship between innocence and guilt. Meursault, who kills a man, exemplifies how ludicrous life can be because he does not feel guilty in the typical sense. He merely accepts life's randomness and meaninglessness. This employs the persona of Meursault to explore his beliefs about absurdism and existentialism.

1.1. Research Objectives

The aims and objectives of this research are

- To examine how the novel explores meaninglessness, freedom, and the human response to an indifferent universe.
- To examine how his emotional detachment and rejection of social norms highlight Camus's idea of the "absurd."
- To examine how the trial and judgment of Meursault question society's definitions of guilt and morality.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How does the novel explore meaninglessness, freedom, and the human response to an indifferent universe?
2. How do his emotional detachment and rejection of social norms highlight Camus's idea of the absurd?
3. How does the trial and judgment of Meursault question society's definitions of guilt and morality?

1.3. Problem Statement

Albert Camus' *The Stranger* (1942) is set in French-ruled Algeria. The plot revolves around Meursault, a man who expresses little emotion and leads a quiet life. He is brought to trial after shooting an Arab man during a sudden altercation. The story raises concerns regarding the meaning of life, what is right and wrong, and how society judges those who do not follow the standard. The Problem examines how certain people are treated as if their

lives do not matter. In this novel, both Meursault and the Arab man are treated similarly. Because Meursault is peaceful and unique, society regards him as someone who may be punished and eliminated. The Arab man is not given a name or a voice, demonstrating how colonial society neglected and obliterated the local population. The problem this study investigates is how the novel depicts a world in which certain people might be disregarded, excluded, or removed simply because they do not conform to society's rules or power structures.

1.4. Research Significance

The Stranger was released during World War II, when France was under German occupation, and people were scared and confused. Set in colonial Algeria, the novel investigates injustice, alienation, and the notion that life has no apparent meaning. It follows Meursault, a man who displays little emotion and disregards societal norms, as he questions justice, morality, and the very existence of the world. Most previous studies saw Meursault as a representation of Albert Camus' concept of absurdism and existentialism, someone who accepts life's lack of purpose. Scholars frequently emphasize his emotional remoteness, such as his apathy toward his mother's death and his composed response to his trial. Psychoanalytic and language-based studies investigate how culture and potential trauma affect his identity, with some connecting Meursault to Camus' personal experiences. The theory of disposability can open new avenues for study by demonstrating how certain persons or groups are viewed as irrelevant. This is an idea pertinent to global challenges such as digital exclusion, climate change, and socioeconomic injustice.

2. Literature Review

This study examines existing scholarly work related to Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, a novel that has remained central to critical debates in modern literature. Researchers have widely analyzed the text through themes such as existentialism, absurdism, alienation, emotional detachment, and moral indifference (Watanabe, 2021). Many critics focus on Meursault's rejection of conventional emotional responses and society's reaction to his nonconformity. In addition, scholars have explored the role of legal and social institutions in reinforcing moral expectations and regulating individual behavior within the novel. However, despite extensive philosophical interpretations, relatively little attention has been paid to *The Stranger* through the lens of social power and disposability (Temiloluwa, 2022). Drawing on Henry Giroux's theory of disposability, this literature review highlights how existing studies address human value, exclusion, and marginalization, while also identifying critical gaps that the present research seeks to explore.

In this study, Demba (2024) examines how Camus utilizes Meursault's story to critique society's concepts of justice, morality, and meaning. The study argues that

Meursault embodies the existential notion that existence has no fixed goal and that people often follow social conventions with no true meaning. His indifferent reaction to his mother's death, as well as his emotional detachment, make him appear weird and immoral to society. Demba connects this to colonial morality, showing how Meursault's "otherness" and defiance of social norms render him a victim of an unfair system. The study also includes thinkers such as Sartre and Fanon, who demonstrate how existentialism and post colonialism both condemn systems that undermine human freedom. According to Bloom (2008), Meursault's life may seem silly, but killing him for refusing to conform to societal emotions is even more absurd.

During his trial, both the prosecutor and his counsel struggle to understand him, focusing on his behavior rather than the murder case itself. In the end, Meursault discovers society's hypocrisy; he sees that those judging him are just as silly as he is, and that genuine freedom consists in recognizing life's meaninglessness.

In this study Demba (2024) examines Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* to illustrate how they depict the absurd and its impact on human life. The authors demonstrate that Sisyphus and Meursault reflect opposing sides of the same philosophical debate about how to find meaning in a meaningless world. Sisyphus's never-ending task of pushing a boulder uphill symbolizes the futility of human life, yet he accepts his fate and finds serenity in the struggle. Meursault, on the other hand, defies societal standards and lives truly, even in the face of death. Both figures question traditional notions of purpose and morality, demonstrating how accepting the ludicrous can lead to liberation and self-awareness. The study argues that Camus's thought remains highly relevant today, as individuals continue to feel alienated and insecure in a rapidly changing, chaotic world. Accepting life's absurdity rather than escaping it allows people to create their own meanings and face existence with courage, creativity, and honesty (Demba, 2024; Bloom, 2008).

Rodriguez (2023) in his article *The Revolting Monster: A Consideration of Existentialist Themes in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Through a Comparison to Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, uses Dorothy Van Ghent's theories from *The English Novel: Form and Function* (1953) to demonstrate how novels disclose truths that go beyond material reality. Van Ghent contends that, while history generalizes human activities, the novel personalizes them in order to find universal meanings. Rodriguez uses this to demonstrate how both *Frankenstein* and *The Stranger* depict people who are rejected by society for questioning its standards. Van Ghent argues that novels express important ideas through events and characters rather than abstract theory, allowing readers to infer meaning. This makes novels akin to scientific investigation, which observes, analyzes, and draws conclusions about human experience (Yi-xiao, 2021). Finally, Rodriguez agrees with Van Ghent that a novel's significance resides in its ability to expand readers' understanding of

life and meaning, demonstrating how works from different times, such as Shelley's and Camus's, can represent similar existential difficulties and societal realities (Rodriguez, 2023).

Abdullah & Saksono (2021) investigate how Albert Camus portrays alienation and existentialism through the character Meursault in *The Stranger*. The work conveys Camus's absurdist beliefs by depicting a man who feels divorced from society and life itself. Meursault, a French-Algerian, lives without aim or feeling, exemplifying modern humanity's bewilderment and loneliness. Camus's meticulous characterization emphasizes Meursault's societal and personal estrangement (Sagi, 2002). Meursault experiences social alienation when he feels cut off from people and society's moral standards. Self-alienation is manifested in his rejection of traditional ideas and spiritual ideals. Meursault's indifference, selfishness, and lack of enthusiasm for life reinforce his image as an absurd, detached man. His "radical freedom," or desire to live without constraints, leads to disorientation and solitude. Finally, Abdullah and Saksono claim that Meursault's behavior and views fully illustrate Camus's notion of existentialism and the absurdity of human existence (Abdullah & Saksono, 2021).

3. Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Disposability discusses how individuals in today's environment have evolved to use things for a short time before discarding them when they are no longer useful. This concept applies not simply to physical objects such as bottles, clothing, or phones, but also to people, relationships, and even emotions. In a nutshell, it illustrates how modern society has become accustomed to replacing things rather than repairing or respecting them. This thesis explains how consumer society, modern technology, and fast-paced lifestyles have made everything appear fleeting. It also investigates how this behavior impacts the environment, the economy, and moral ideals.

The concept of disposability first became obvious with the rise of industrialization and capitalism. When enterprises began mass-producing goods, individuals began purchasing more items. People began to value long-lasting quality less as products got cheaper and easier to replace. Over time, this manner of thinking expanded beyond items. People began to apply the same "use and throw" mentality to many aspects of life. Workers in workplaces became interchangeable, relationships were transient, and even the environment was seen as something to use and discard. That is how the theory of disposability evolved into a social concept rather than an economic one.

The Theory of Disposability is strongly related to how modern living functions; therefore, it intersects with various other social and environmental theories. It is similar to consumerism in that it focuses on how individuals continue to buy and discard things in order to feel satisfied. It also has parallels with Capitalist Labor Theory, which views workers as interchangeable resources, akin to throwaway products. The overlap with

Environmental Sustainability is that disposability leads to waste and pollution, whereas sustainability aims to prevent it. The theory also has similarities with Postmodernism, which portrays a rapidly changing society in which everything is ephemeral (Sinha, 2022). These views demonstrate that disposability is more than just tossing things away; it is a deeper social, economic, and emotional habit that determines the modern world.

Many theorists have presented ideas regarding the Theory of Disposability in various ways. Zygmunt Bauman termed modern life as "liquid," with everything changing quickly and nothing lasting long (Wood, 2016). Karl Marx demonstrated how capitalism makes workers feel replaceable, akin to treating individuals as disposable. Guy Debord emphasized how society prioritizes appearance over truth, causing things to lose meaning quickly. According to Erich Fromm, individuals today worry more about owning than about being, leading to emotional estrangement. Environmentalists warn that this disposable worldview harms the environment, and Anthony Giddens links it to how individuals constantly alter their identities to conform to modern trends. These thinkers demonstrate that disposability affects not only goods but also our values, relationships, and environment. This theoretical perspective can be understood by studying *The Stranger*.

The Theory of Disposability complements Albert Camus's novel *The Stranger* since both deal with the concept of emotional emptiness, detachment, and how individuals regard life and others as fleeting or worthless. In this story, the main character, Meursault, exhibits numerous indicators of disposability in his actions, ideas, and interactions. He lives in a world where feelings, societal ideals, and even human existence appear to have no long-term significance. Meursault had shown indifference to his mother's death from the beginning of the tale. He does not cry or express strong emotions, which surprises those around him. This chilly reply represents his disposable mindset, which is not unkind, but rather that he considers emotions to be useless or transient. In a world dominated by disposability, people, like Meursault, grow emotionally numb and alienated. The similar idea pervades his interactions (Tava, 2020).

Meursault's relationship with Marie is casual. He enjoys spending time with her, but he does not demonstrate genuine emotional attachment or commitment. When Marie asks if he loves her or wants to marry her, he responds that it "doesn't matter" to him, demonstrating that he views relationships as interchangeable or lacking genuine value. This is consistent with the Theory of Disposability, which states that people in modern society frequently perceive others as transient and easily replaceable. Meursault demonstrates this mentality in his career and daily life. He works without passion and has no desire to change his condition. He appears to accept things as they are, without struggle or emotional engagement. In a disposable age, people frequently live automatically, following routines without finding meaning, and Meursault exemplifies that detached lifestyle. Later in the story, Meursault murders the Arab man practically without

explanation. His actions are not motivated by hatred or passion; they occur abruptly and without much deliberation. This section of the novel depicts the tremendous emotional isolation that can result from a throwaway attitude. Even life and death lose their meaning. The killing is depicted almost as an unintentional act that "just happens," demonstrating how moral and emotional values can disappear when individuals live without purpose or attachment.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Albert Camus depicts the concepts of absurdism and existentialism in his novel *The Stranger*. It emphasizes Meursault's behavior and alienation as reflections of human solitude, and how the novel challenges society's moral and social standards. This study describes the methods used to examine the novel. It describes how the researcher investigated the themes of absurdism, existentialism, and alienation in the work. To achieve this goal, the research investigates questions such as how the novel explores meaninglessness, freedom, and the human response to a detached universe; how his emotional detachment and rejection of social norms highlight Camus's concept of the absurd; and how Meursault's trial and judgment question society's definitions of guilt and morality. This study is shaped by Henry Giroux's theoretical framework, The Theory of Disposability. This study addresses a research gap by combining notions of life's absurdity with contemporary societal challenges, such as the way people are deemed worthless when they fail to meet society's norms. Within this theoretical framework, the textual analysis looks at Meursault's apathetic attitude toward life and death. His dissociation is an act of liberation against modern society. However, the courtroom scene demonstrates that Meursault is judged not for his crime but for his indifference. The first research issue for this study is how the novel investigates meaninglessness, freedom, and the human response to a detached universe. In this novel, Camus depicts Meursault's reaction to his mother's death, revealing his empty emotions. He analyzes.

"The sky was already ablaze with light, and the air was heating up quickly. I felt the first waves of heartbeats lapping on my back, and my dark suit made matters worse. I couldn't understand why we had to wait so long before getting started." (Camus, 1942, p.16). Rather than expressing grief, Meursault focuses on the physical anguish of the heart, which depicts the indifferent universe around him. His separation from emotional and moral demands exemplifies the absurdist concept that existence has no significance. Camus uses this phrase to argue that Meursault's freedom stems from accepting reality as it is. "Everywhere I looked, I saw the same sun-drenched countryside, and the sky was so bright that I feared raising my gaze" (Camus, 1942, p.53).

According to this quote, the sun and sky are so large and bright that they are unconcerned with humanity. Nature is mighty but completely unconcerned about human

lives. He was obliged to gaze either down or away. It reveals that the world is powerful. Nature is not harsh, but indifferent; its magnificence does not recognize or care about the cosmos. This emphasizes the notion that the cosmos does not provide human beings with meaning, justice, or an emotional reaction. "But I quickly lost interest in his movements; my temples were pounding, and I couldn't drag myself along" (Camus, 1942, p.58). This quotation explores the issue of meaninglessness and the human response to emotional breakdown. He lost interest in what was going on. This indicates a lack of concern for the happenings. He gives up attempting to discover a reason or purpose. Physical pain is the body's protest. This depicts the main character facing a vast, indifferent environment while feeling alienated. This alienation is a reflection of the ridiculous reality in which the person finds no solace or purpose in the world. Consequently, the character simply accepts the situation rather than highlighting or arguing about it. His detachment from society and feelings demonstrates how a person can feel lost and unimportant in a big, uncaring universe.

"With these and the hangover after a bad night's sleep, my vision and cognition became hazy" (Camus, 1942, p.57). This quotation emphasizes his detached attitude toward the environment. It depicts the character's literal decline into reality, marked by discomfort and perplexity. While the universe stays indifferent, the character cannot. This breakdown represents the character's unique and painful method of accepting reality, which is too hard to handle. At the same time, the universe doesn't change and doesn't care about his suffering. In contrast to the outside world, the character's body and mind succumb to stress. His personal and agonizing method of confronting reality was this collapse, which demonstrates that accepting an uncaring world is not serene or simple but rather profoundly distressing and draining.

The second research question for this study is how his emotional detachment and rejection of societal standards highlight Camus' concept of 'absurd'. "She started with my black tie and inquired whether I was in mourning. I explained that my mother had died.' When? She inquired, and I replied, 'yesterday.' She made no remark, though I believe she shrank away a little" (Camus, 1942, p.24). This quote depicts Meursault's cold reaction to his mother's death. This certainly relates to Camus' concept of the ridiculous, which is the gap between human hopes for meaning and passion and the indifferent reality of existence. In this part, Meursault talks about his mother's death in a very plain and unemotional way. He doesn't show the sadness or grief that people usually expect when someone loses a loved one. The woman he talks to notices this and seems a little uncomfortable. This behavior shows Camus' idea of the absurd. Camus says that people naturally look for meaning, purpose, or deep feelings in life. "I was about to explain to her that it wasn't my fault, but I stopped myself since I remembered saying the same thing to my boss and thinking it sounded silly" (Camus , 1942, p.23).

This quotation demonstrates Meursault's emotional distance from his mother's death and his rejection of social expectations. It emphasizes Camus's subject of absurdity and Meursault's aloof attitude toward the universe. It also illustrates Camus's concept of absurdity, which holds that although humans seek purpose in life, the universe is indifferent. Meursault maintains his composure and objectivity, demonstrating that he accepts life as it is without acting as though it ought to be different. "Anyway, by the evening, Marie had forgotten about it" (Camus, 1942, p.27). This quotation describes how Meursault and Marie move on from his mother's death. It demonstrates his lack of feeling and acceptance that life is pointless. It discusses how life has no value and how individuals frequently go on without emotion.

The third research question discusses how does Meursault's trial and judgment call into question society's concepts of guilt and morality. "When I awoke, I smoked a cigarette before getting off my bed" (Camus, 1942, p.26). This remark demonstrates Meursault's indifferent attitude and emphasis on physical comfort over emotional response. He just observes life through physical sensations and routines. This indicates that Meursault does not respond to situations in the manner that is expected by society. He observes bodily sensations like heat as well as his pulse rather than expressing sadness or mental anguish. This demonstrates how the world around him is uncaring and unconcerned with suffering of others or feelings of sadness. Meursault's disengagement from emotions and moral principles emphasizes absurdism, which holds that there is no ultimate purpose to life. According to him, he gains freedom once he confronts the truth directly and doesn't pretend to have feelings or meanings that don't really exist.

"The sky was already blaze of light, and the air stoking u rapidly. I felt the first waves of heat lapping my back, and my dark suit made things wrose" (Camus, 1942, p.17). This means that Meursault shows his face through sensory perception, such as the color of the sky, rather than through emotional meaning. He finds joy in the physical world rather than in societal concerns. It demonstrates how his trial reveals the foolishness of basing a man's morals on his feelings. This shows that Meursault experiences life through his senses what he sees, feels, and hears rather than through emotions or social rules. Later, during his trial, people judge him for not showing proper emotions. This highlights the absurdity of judging someone's morality based on feelings. For Meursault, life is about what is real and tangible, not what society considers right or normal. "I ate fast and finished with some coffee. Then I went home and had a little nap because I'd had too many glasses of wine" (Camus, 1942, p.26).

This reflects Meursault's regularity, detachment, and way of life. He eats, drinks, and takes naps without attaching emotional significance to any of them. There is no contemplation on what is good or wrong, no shame, or any deep feelings. This shows his detachment and indifference. He lives life through simple actions and physical needs,

without thinking about what is right or wrong and worrying about feelings. Life for him is practical and immediate not emotional or moral. Meursault lives entirely in the here and now, rarely bothering with emotional depth or social etiquette. He navigates the world through his senses, responding to physical reality rather than abstract ideas. This makes him an outsider, perceived by society as unfeeling and disconnected. He is a disarming character because he won't lie about his emotions. When he doesn't follow the "emotional script" society has written for him, he becomes a threat to their moral order. He'd rather be seen as a monster than being a hypocrite. This lifestyle highlights the theme of the absurd the belief that life is inherently meaningless. For Meursault, there is no higher purpose to find. He finds all he needs in the simple, physical acts of living, seeing no reason to search for anything more.

Albert Camus' *The Stranger* depicts the world as empty and purposeless, and Meursault captures the tension between human need and the universe's quiet. Rather than reacting with normal emotion, Meursault approaches life's occurrences with detachedness. Instead of mourning, Camus recalls the heat and brightness of his mother's funeral, demonstrating how daily sensations supersede any search for meaning. Meursault's inability to conform to social norms exemplifies Camus' concept of the "absurd man," who acknowledges life's irrational character rather than hiding behind soothing illusions. His subsequent trial reveals society's hypocrisy: he is sentenced not for murder, but for honesty and emotional apathy. Camus challenges the concept of morality by demonstrating that social judgment is based on appearance rather than fact. These findings are consistent with previous research associating Camus's fiction with the sensation of ridiculous freedom. However, this work contributes to that discussion by emphasizing how Meursault's quiet and isolation undermines society's false values.

5. Conclusion

Reading the novel through the lens of absurdist and disposability theory reveals how Meursault's honesty and challenge to death reflect Camus's worldview. The novel shows existence as meaningless, yet it also offers human freedom within that emptiness. Future studies may develop these ideas by comparing Meursault's awareness with that of other existential or modernist figures who face life's uncertainty and seek meaning. Meursault isn't just an isolated guy; his honesty acts as a mirror, showing the hypocrisy in everyone else. He won't play the social game he won't fake tears or pretend to believe in things he doesn't. This refusal is what really gets him killed, not the murder itself. Society feels threatened by someone who won't follow the rules. In the end, the novel tells us that life has no grand purpose, but we find strength when we stop looking for fake answers and start living for the simple truth of the here and now. By facing his own death without any illusions, Meursault finds a liberating peace, which forces us to question our own moral beliefs.

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