

Meursault as Christ and Anti-Christ: The Paradox of Redemption in *The Stranger*

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the paradoxical portrayal of Meursault in Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, as both a Christ-like figure and an Anti-Christ, to understand how this duality reflects secular redemption within absurdist philosophy. Although *The Stranger* has received extensive critical engagement, Meursault's symbolic positioning between spiritual rebellion and sacrifice remains a comparatively neglected dimension. This gap is particularly relevant in light of Camus's critique of religious morality and his effort to construct meaning through resistance rather than transcendence. To address this contradiction, the paper adopts a qualitative research approach centered on close textual analysis. It investigates key scenes—such as Meursault's trial, confrontation with the priest, and final reflections—supported by secondary sources, including academic journal articles and philosophical commentaries rooted in Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The findings show that Meursault's rejection of religion, emotional detachment, and lucid embrace of death position him as both an Anti-Christ figure—defying spiritual conventions—and a Christ-like one—accepting punishment with clarity and resolve. This dual identity reveals Camus's literary strategy for recasting redemption as a secular, existential stance. Finally, it is found through the character of Meursault in *The Stranger* that clarity without faith brings rebellion, and rebellion leads to isolation—but this isolation becomes a path to secular redemption in an absurd world.

Keywords: Absurdism; Redemption; Existentialism; Authenticity; Rebellion; Alienation

1. Introduction

With the provocative claim that “Meursault is the only Christ we deserve,” Albert Camus invites readers to reconsider the moral and spiritual dimensions of one of literature's most enigmatic protagonists. In a world stripped of divine meaning, *The Stranger* presents a character condemned not for his crime, but for refusing to conform to society's expectations of grief, faith, and remorse. This paradox—of a man who is both Christ-like in his suffering and Anti-Christ in his defiance—sits at the heart of Camus's absurdist vision and destabilizes conventional ideas of redemption (Callaghan; “What Does It Mean to Be Christ-like?”; “Wikipedia contributors”).

Albert Camus, a French-Algerian writer and philosopher, is best known for shaping absurdism—a worldview that confronts the clash between human beings' search for meaning and the indifference of the universe. Set in colonial Algeria, *The Stranger* follows Meursault, a man emotionally detached from the world around him, who is ultimately sentenced to death more for his indifference than for his actions. The novel is often read alongside *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), Camus's philosophical essay that outlines the absurd condition and introduces the idea of the ‘absurd hero’: someone who lives without appeal to higher meaning, yet without surrendering to despair (Salah 72).

Although *The Stranger* has been widely explored through existential and absurdist frameworks, the religious symbolism surrounding Meursault's character has received comparatively less attention. Critics have noted the novel's critique of traditional morality and institutional religion, but fewer have examined the paradox at the core of Meursault's identity—

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as both a figure of spiritual suffering and metaphysical rebellion (Kasih et al.; Hossain and Bahar 55). This tension is not merely symbolic; it reflects Camus's broader philosophical project of redefining human dignity and moral clarity in a secular, postwar world grappling with disillusionment and alienation (Hamsho 277).

This paper seeks to address that gap by examining how Camus constructs Meursault as a paradoxical figure who embodies both martyrdom and resistance. It asks: In what ways does Meursault mirror the qualities of a Christ-like figure, and how does he also subvert them? What does this duality reveal about Camus's evolving vision of redemption in an absurd universe?

The objective of this study is to analyze Meursault's character through close textual readings of key scenes—his trial, his confrontation with the priest, and his final reflections before execution—supported by secondary sources, including academic journal articles that offer critical and historical context. The analysis is grounded in Camus's absurdist philosophy, particularly as articulated in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and considers how Meursault's rejection of religious comfort and embrace of existential clarity position him as a secular redeemer (Shih and Chen 31).

This paper argues that Meursault's paradoxical identity as both Christ and Anti-Christ redefines redemption—not as salvation through faith, but as authenticity through revolt. The following sections will examine Meursault's symbolic role, the philosophical implications of his choices, and the narrative strategies Camus employs to build this morally charged paradox (Kasih et al.).

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach rooted in close textual analysis and enriched by secondary academic sources. Its central aim is to examine the paradoxical construction of Meursault as both a Christ-like and Anti-Christ figure in Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, and to explore how this duality redefines the concept of redemption within the framework of Camus's absurdist philosophy (Grossoehme 111). Close textual analysis is employed to interpret the symbolic, philosophical, and narrative dimensions of selected passages from *The Stranger*—particularly Meursault's trial, his confrontation with the priest, and his final reflections before execution. These moments are examined for their use of religious language, existential motifs, and emotional detachment. Special attention is paid to Camus's stylistic and structural choices that sculpt Meursault's paradoxical identity (McKinnon). To contextualize this analysis, the study engages intertextually with *The Myth of Sisyphus*, where Camus articulates the principles of absurdism and introduces the "absurd hero" who confronts meaninglessness without surrender. This philosophical framework deepens the reading of Meursault as a literary embodiment of revolt, clarity, and moral resistance in an indifferent world. In addition to primary texts, the study incorporates peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly essays that address themes such as absurdism, existential ethics, religious symbolism, and postwar morality in Camus's work. These secondary sources provide critical perspectives that situate the novel within broader literary, cultural, and philosophical discourses (Heaton 34; Evans e87908). This combination of close reading, intertextuality, and philosophical interpretation allows for a layered and rigorous inquiry into Meursault's role. The approach was chosen not only for its disciplinary fit, but also because it enables a nuanced understanding of literary character as a vessel for ethical and metaphysical exploration.

3. Literature Review

Albert Camus's *The Stranger* remains a cornerstone of existential and absurdist literature, yet Meursault's dual portrayal as both Christ-like and Anti-Christ is a relatively underexplored interpretive space. While a wide range of critical approaches engage with Meursault's emotional detachment, absurd heroism, and philosophical revolt, the symbolic tension between spiritual suffering and metaphysical rebellion has often been mentioned only tangentially—leaving a reading of secular redemption largely unexamined.

To establish the philosophical contours of Camus's narrative, Cropper and Browne offer a comparative account of twentieth-century existentialist thinkers. Their analysis illustrates how themes of nihilism, anxiety, and self-identity converge in French philosophy, identifying *The Stranger* as a vital literary embodiment of existential ambiguity (Cropper and Browne 2). This foundation reinforces Meursault's existential tension: the struggle to assert individuality in a universe devoid of objective meaning. Complementing this philosophical lens, Hameed et al. interpret *The Stranger* as a postcolonial critique. Their reading situates Meursault within the alienated psychology of the colonizer, emphasizing his disconnection from both the Algerian landscape and its inhabitants. Through this, Camus is shown to critique not only societal norms but also the broader moral vacuity of imperial structures (32). The theme of moral ambiguity within colonial contexts parallels Meursault's symbolic refusal to seek comfort in religious or social institutions.

Moreover, Khan et al. apply critical discourse analysis to explore the ideological mechanisms shaping Meursault's identity. Their study highlights how Camus's language constructs the protagonist's existential detachment and resistance to imposed moral frameworks (Khan et al. 287). This linguistic formation deepens the paradox at the heart of Meursault's character—his simultaneous vulnerability and defiance. Further philosophical depth is provided by Asadov, whose exploration of individualism and absurdity underscores Camus's construction of meaning through rejection. By linking *The Stranger* with *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Asadov presents Meursault as a man who embodies revolt rather than resignation—choosing clarity over illusion and dignity over despair (Asadov 119). This reading parallels the notion of Meursault as a secular redeemer whose peace arises from truth rather than transcendence.

The psychological and symbolic isolation central to Camus's narrative is also addressed by G'iyosov. According to his analysis, Meursault's moral honesty destabilizes societal expectations, confronting readers with uncomfortable truths about conformity and authenticity (G'iyosov 190). The mirror held up to society by Meursault reveals a broader ethical unease—one that resonates with spiritual martyrdom but devoid of doctrinal salvation. Building on Nietzschean philosophy, Nadeem et al. position Meursault as a modern *Übermensch*. Their study highlights how the protagonist transforms from emotional passivity to existential affirmation, embracing life on his own terms and achieving moral clarity without recourse to divine meaning (Nadeem et al. 697). Meursault's refusal to lie, repent, or fear death becomes a testament to secular resilience—a defiant path toward self-redemption.

Mohanty and Paramaguru focus on Meursault's unwavering honesty, framing it as a form of ethical purity that ultimately leads to social punishment. Their assertion that "truth kills" encapsulates the paradox of Meursault's fate: condemned not for immorality, but for refusing illusion (Mohanty and Paramaguru 10). Asadov foregrounds the existential dimension of loneliness in Meursault's character. His comparative analysis reveals that Meursault's emotional detachment and internal anguish emerge not only as signs of social estrangement but also as reflections of a deeper spiritual solitude (Asadov 3). This reading supports the interpretation of Meursault's isolation as more than behavioral—it functions as a symbolic condition that aligns with religious suffering while simultaneously rejecting religious solace.

In parallel, Moslehuddin explores the existentialist values within Camus's and Kafka's protagonists, arguing that existential freedom requires the individual to confront chaos and make authentic choices (87). Meursault's refusal to feign grief, remorse, or belief reflects this existential courage—placing him in direct opposition to theological expectations of redemption and aligning him with absurdist integrity. The philosophical foundation of absurdism receives further attention in Kumari Gunjan's study on its modern relevance. By connecting absurdist thought to contemporary social anxieties and existential uncertainties, Gunjan affirms that Camus's philosophy retains urgent significance (181). Meursault's clarity in the face of death—his peace born from revolt rather than faith—epitomizes the enduring voice of the absurd hero confronting 21st-century disillusionment.

Turning to theological interpretation, Agwu and Ashabua examine the Christian symbolism woven into Meursault's trajectory. Their hermeneutic analysis identifies moments of moral struggle and spiritual contemplation that resonate with traditional narratives of redemption, while highlighting how Meursault simultaneously challenges those narratives by refusing repentance (Agwu and Ashabua 35). Such dualities—between martyrdom and rebellion—reinforce Meursault's paradoxical resemblance to both Christ and Anti-Christ. Moreover, Jiamin addresses Meursault's outsider status through legal and existential frameworks, emphasizing his inability to assimilate within societal structures (37). This marginalization not only echoes religious persecution but also establishes Meursault as a provocateur of ethical discomfort—someone whose rejection of divine appeal transforms him into a secular redeemer.

Yi-xiao's analysis of postwar absurdity and zero-degree writing deepens this portrait, noting how Meursault's linguistic restraint and emotional neutrality reveal his unflinching sincerity (221). Meursault's commitment to truth, even when socially condemned, becomes a secular form of sacrifice—a crucifixion not of sin, but of sincerity. Chernysheva and Kostikova argue that both Meursault and Sisyphus embody the tragic rebellion inherent in absurdist existence. Their comparative study illustrates that Camus's absurd heroes do not transcend meaninglessness but embrace it passionately, affirming life through resistance rather than salvation (1200). In this rebellion lies a redefined redemption—one rooted not in divine grace but in existential lucidity.

Habibullah and Nahar examine *The Stranger* through a postcolonial Islamic lens, arguing that Camus's portrayal of Arabs reflects the orientalist tendencies and racial antagonism embedded in French colonial thought (13). Meursault's indifference toward the murdered Arab, combined with the court's dismissal of the Arab's identity, underscores how moral judgment in the novel operates within colonial hierarchies. This subtext complicates Meursault's symbolic alignment with Christian sacrifice, suggesting that his martyrdom excludes reconciliation with the colonized Other. Closely related, Sasa and BenLahcene compare Meursault's pursuit of honesty with Richard Wright's search for selfhood

in *Black Boy*. They argue that Meursault embraces alienation as a form of moral resistance, ultimately dying for his refusal to conform to societal illusions (Sasa and BenLahcene 28). His radical authenticity—devoid of comfort or salvation—echoes traits traditionally associated with spiritual transcendence, yet remains defiantly secular.

Camus's theme of rebellion is further explored by Rustam, who links Meursault's ethical autonomy to Camus's political writings and literary philosophy. Through *L'Homme Révolté*, Camus foregrounds the role of art and revolt as responses to historical horror, oppression, and moral disintegration (Rustam 10). Rustam sees Meursault's refusal to adhere to societal norms—his retreat into sensory truth and rejection of abstract values—as a revolt against spiritual and political conformity. This rebellion invokes a kind of secular martyrdom, aligning Meursault with anti-authoritarian resistance rather than divine redemption. From an existential perspective, Rana interprets Meursault as a stoic and nihilistic figure, whose acceptance of absurdity reveals a profound indifference to death and meaning (272). His embrace of existential emptiness does not negate agency; rather, it elevates his lucidity. This inner clarity affirms Camus's assertion in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that revolt, not resignation, is the absurd hero's ethical path—a key underpinning in the reinterpretation of Meursault's paradoxical identity.

Psychological depth and philosophical introspection are also emphasized by Saadan and Al-Hasani, who argue that Meursault's apathy is a deliberate existential posture. They contend that Camus constructs Meursault as a new kind of hero—one who embodies absurdist values by rejecting metaphysical consolation and embracing personal accountability (Saadan and Al-Hasani 12). This refusal to lie or seek forgiveness complicates his role as a moral figure, suggesting that redemption is found not in repentance but in truthfulness. Finally, Bora reaffirms Meursault's existential positioning through his relation to other characters and social expectations. His critical review presents Meursault's actions as reflections of existential crisis, alienation, and absurdism—concepts central to Camus's literary project (Bora 2). Such interpretations support a reading of Meursault as both a Christ-like truth-bearer and an Anti-Christ figure who resists religious paradigms.

Collectively, these studies illuminate Meursault's symbolic richness and philosophical complexity. While prior scholarship often emphasizes absurd heroism, alienation, and honesty, few directly explore his paradoxical embodiment of both Christ and Anti-Christ figures. This study addresses that critical gap by examining how Camus reimagines redemption—not through salvation, but through sincerity, revolt, and existential clarity in a godless world.

4. Analysis

Redemption and resistance converge in Meursault, a character who unsettles traditional ideas of faith, guilt, and sincerity. In Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, Meursault embodies a paradox—he reflects both a Christ-like figure and a symbolic Anti-Christ. This duality challenges religious and moral narratives by presenting a secular vision of martyrdom rooted in existential clarity. This paper explores Meursault's identity through three lenses. First, it examines his Christ-like traits: unjust condemnation, silent endurance, and calm acceptance of death. Second, it analyzes his Anti-Christ symbolism—seen in his rejection of God, lack of remorse, and refusal to conform to religious norms. Finally, it reconciles this paradox using Camus's concept of the absurd hero, showing how Meursault affirms life's meaninglessness not through despair, but through revolt and lucidity. Grounded in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and close reading of the novel, this study argues that Meursault offers a modern, secular form of redemption—one that privileges honesty over hope.

4.1. Meursault as a Christ-Like Figure

Albert Camus's Meursault, the emotionally detached protagonist of *The Stranger*, has often been interpreted as the embodiment of Camus's absurd hero. However, beneath his stoic demeanor and rejection of religious consolation lies a paradoxical resemblance to a Christ-like figure. Though Meursault denies the existence of God and refuses to seek redemption, his trial, suffering, and death mirror the narrative arc of Christ's passion. This resemblance is not coincidental. Camus himself famously remarked that Meursault is "the only Christ we deserve" (qtd. in Scherr 308), suggesting a secular reinterpretation of martyrdom in a world devoid of divine meaning. Through his unjust condemnation, passive endurance, and serene acceptance of death, Meursault emerges as a modern, absurdist Christ figure—one who offers no salvation but instead affirms the dignity of living and dying without illusion (Onwanua and Onwe 135).

The parallel begins with Meursault's condemnation, which, like Christ's, is rooted not in the gravity of his crime but in his perceived moral failure. Although Meursault is on trial for the murder of an unnamed Arab man, the court's focus quickly shifts to his behavior at his mother's funeral. The prosecutor emphasizes Meursault's emotional detachment, declaring, "I accuse this man of burying his mother with crime in his heart" (Camus 96). Meursault himself recognizes the absurdity of the proceedings, later reflecting, "I was condemned because I didn't cry at my mother's funeral" (Camus

121). This moment reveals that his punishment is not for the act of murder, but for his refusal to conform to societal expectations of grief and remorse. Similarly, Christ was not executed for a criminal offense but for challenging the religious and moral order of his time. In both cases, the individual is condemned for who he is rather than what he has done (Irfan 300).

This theme of innocent condemnation is further reinforced by Meursault's refusal to perform or feign emotion. He does not lie to gain sympathy, nor does he attempt to justify his actions. His silence and honesty in the courtroom echo Christ's own quiet dignity before Pontius Pilate. When offered the opportunity to appeal his sentence, Meursault declines, stating, "I would rather die standing than live on my knees" (Camus 114). This stoic defiance mirrors Christ's acceptance of crucifixion, not as an act of submission, but as a testament to truth. Meursault's refusal to seek clemency or express remorse is not born of arrogance but of a commitment to authenticity. As Camus writes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn" (121). Meursault's scorn for false hope and his embrace of the absurd elevate him to the status of a secular martyr (Yousaf et al. 200).

Moreover, Meursault's confrontation with the chaplain in the final chapter of the novel further solidifies his Christ-like role. When the priest urges him to turn to God, Meursault responds with calm defiance: "I had only a little time left and I didn't want to waste it on God" (Camus 120). This rejection of religious consolation is not a denial of death, but an affirmation of life as it is—finite, indifferent, and without appeal. In this moment, Meursault chooses clarity over comfort, echoing Camus's belief that "the struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 123). His refusal to repent is not nihilistic but courageous, a final act of revolt against illusion. This revolt, stripped of metaphysical hope, marks Meursault as a character engaged in philosophical rebellion (Onwanua and Onwe 135; Irfan 300).

The serenity Meursault achieves in his final moments is perhaps the most profound echo of Christ's death. As he awaits execution, he experiences a moment of transcendence: "I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again" (Camus 122). This peace is not rooted in faith or the promise of an afterlife, but in the acceptance of life's absurdity. He concludes, "I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe" (Camus 122). The use of the word "benign" is striking—it suggests that while the universe offers no meaning, it is not hostile. Meursault's peace comes from aligning himself with this indifference, much like Christ's peace came from fulfilling divine will. In both cases, death is not feared but embraced as a necessary conclusion to a life lived authentically (Agwu et al. 125).

Camus's portrayal of Meursault as a Christ-like figure is not meant to evoke religious reverence, but to challenge the very foundations of spiritual redemption. By stripping the Christ figure of divinity and placing him in a godless universe, Camus redefines martyrdom as a philosophical stance rather than a theological one. Meursault's death does not offer salvation to others, but it exposes the moral hypocrisy of the society that condemns him. His execution becomes a mirror held up to a world that punishes honesty and rewards conformity. As Scherr notes, "Meursault's death is a secular crucifixion, a sacrifice not for sin, but for sincerity" (311). Mathew's study on intertextuality similarly supports this interpretive layering, showing how Camus's Meursault functions dialogically between narrative and philosophical discourse (Mathew 177).

In this light, Meursault becomes a Christ for the modern age—not a savior, but a witness to the absurd. His life and death affirm Camus's belief that meaning must be created through revolt, not revelation. He is condemned for refusing to lie, for refusing to pretend, and in that refusal, he achieves a kind of secular grace. His final peace is not the peace of the saved, but the peace of the lucid. As Camus writes, "Living an experience, a particular fate, is accepting it fully" (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 55). Meursault accepts his fate not with despair, but with open eyes and an open heart.

Through Meursault, Camus offers a radical reinterpretation of the Christ figure—one stripped of divinity, yet radiant with existential courage. In a universe without God, Meursault's death becomes a new kind of passion narrative, one that speaks not of salvation, but of the dignity of living and dying without illusion. He is, indeed, the only Christ we deserve.

4.2. Meursault as an Anti-Christ Figure

Meursault in Albert Camus's *The Stranger* displays Christ-like qualities through his trial and death, yet he also subverts the very religious ideals that define the Christian narrative. His rejection of God, his emotional detachment, and his refusal to seek forgiveness position him not as a savior, but as a symbolic Anti-Christ—not in the traditional, satanic sense, but as a figure who radically denies the foundations of Christian redemption. In this way, Meursault becomes a literary embodiment of Camus's absurdist philosophy, challenging the necessity of divine meaning and offering instead a secular, existential alternative to salvation (Gnanasekaran 73; Hajinia 4).

Central to Meursault's Anti-Christ symbolism is his explicit rejection of God and the afterlife. Throughout the novel, Meursault remains indifferent to religious belief, but it is in the final chapter—when he is visited by a chaplain—that his defiance becomes most pronounced. The priest urges him to repent and accept God's mercy, but Meursault refuses, stating, "I didn't want to waste it on God" (Camus, *The Stranger* 120). This line is not merely dismissive; it is a deliberate renunciation of the religious framework that offers comfort in the face of death. Unlike the Christian narrative, in which death is a passage to eternal life, Meursault embraces death as the final, meaningless end. He tells the chaplain, "I was sure of myself, sure of everything, surer than he could ever be, sure of my life and sure of the death I had waiting for me" (Camus 120). His certainty is not rooted in faith, but in the acceptance of life's absurdity (Bashir 3; Patel 2).

This rejection of religious consolation is a direct affront to Christian ideals of repentance and salvation. In Christian theology, the path to redemption lies in confession, remorse, and the acceptance of divine grace. Meursault, however, refuses all three. He does not confess in the spiritual sense, nor does he express remorse for his actions. When asked if he regrets killing the Arab, he offers no apology, no plea for forgiveness. Instead, he reflects on the moment with clinical detachment, saying, "It was because of the sun" (Camus 103). This explanation, absurd on its surface, underscores his refusal to moralize his actions or seek absolution. His indifference to guilt and punishment challenges the Christian emphasis on conscience and repentance (Gnanasekaran 73).

Moreover, Meursault's emotional detachment throughout the novel further distances him from Christian values of compassion and empathy. From the opening line—"Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know" (Camus 3)—he displays a striking lack of sentiment. This emotional neutrality persists in his relationships, his trial, and even in the face of death. He does not cry at his mother's funeral, he does not express love for Marie, and he does not fear execution. In Christian tradition, emotional expression—particularly sorrow, love, and remorse—is central to spiritual transformation. Meursault's refusal to engage in these emotions renders him spiritually inert in the eyes of society and religion alike (Patel 1).

His refusal to lie is also significant. While honesty is a Christian virtue, Meursault's truthfulness becomes subversive because it exposes the hypocrisy of the moral order around him. He refuses to pretend to feel what he does not, even when it would benefit him. During his trial, he could have claimed remorse or fabricated a narrative of emotional suffering, but he does not. As he explains, "I said what was true, but I said it without thinking" (Camus 66). His honesty, stripped of emotional performance, becomes a form of rebellion against a society that demands conformity over truth. In this sense, Meursault's Anti-Christ role is not one of evil, but of radical authenticity (Hårşan 303; Hajinia 4).

The absence of spiritual redemption in Meursault's story further cements his role as an Anti-Christ figure. In the Christian narrative, death is not the end but a gateway to eternal life. Christ's crucifixion is followed by resurrection, symbolizing hope and renewal. Meursault, by contrast, faces death without hope, without appeal, and without illusion. Yet, paradoxically, he finds peace. In his final moments, he reflects, "I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again" (Camus 122). This serenity is not the result of divine grace, but of existential clarity. He accepts the absurd condition of life and embraces death as its natural conclusion. "I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe," he says, finding comfort not in God, but in the acceptance of meaninglessness (Camus 122; Bashir 3; Patel 1).

Camus's absurdist philosophy, as articulated in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, provides the theoretical foundation for this interpretation. Camus argues that the absurd arises from the conflict between the human desire for meaning and the silent, indifferent universe. The absurd hero, according to Camus, is one who lives without appeal to higher meaning, yet without despair. "There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn," Camus writes, emphasizing the power of revolt over resignation (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 121). Meursault's refusal to seek redemption, his embrace of death, and his final peace all exemplify this absurd heroism. He does not transcend death through resurrection, but through lucidity (Gnanasekaran 73; Hajinia 3).

In this way, Meursault becomes a counter-messianic figure—a man who dies not to save others, but to affirm the possibility of living authentically in a godless world. His Anti-Christ identity is not defined by malice or destruction, but by his refusal to participate in the religious narrative of guilt, repentance, and salvation. He is condemned not because he is evil, but because he refuses to pretend. As Arthur Scherr observes, "Meursault's rejection of God and refusal to repent make him a spiritual outlaw, a man who chooses truth over comfort" (Scherr 314).

Ultimately, Meursault's Anti-Christ symbolism serves to critique the moral and religious structures that demand conformity at the expense of authenticity. His death is not a tragedy, but a philosophical statement—a declaration that one can face the absurd without illusion and still find peace. In rejecting God, Meursault does not fall into despair; he rises into revolt. He becomes, in Camus's words, "the absurd man who says yes" (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 55). In doing so, he offers a new kind of redemption—one not of salvation, but of self-acceptance.

4.3. The Absurd Hero: Reconciling the Paradox

Meursault, the protagonist of *The Stranger*, is a literary paradox—at once a Christ-like figure and a defiant Anti-Christ. This duality is not a contradiction but a deliberate construction that reflects Camus's philosophy of the absurd. Through Meursault, Camus redefines the concept of redemption, not as a spiritual deliverance through divine grace, but as a secular triumph of clarity over illusion. Meursault becomes the absurd hero: a man who lives without appeal to higher meaning, yet without despair. His death is not a failure, but a philosophical victory—an affirmation of life's absurdity and the dignity of living authentically in a godless universe (Shobeiri 839; Dhal 27).

Camus's theory of absurdism, most clearly articulated in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, provides the foundation for understanding Meursault's transformation. According to Camus, the absurd arises from the confrontation between the human desire for meaning and the silent indifference of the universe. This tension creates a crisis: either one must seek refuge in illusion—through religion, hope, or false meaning—or one must confront the absurd and live in full awareness of it. Camus rejects suicide and religious faith as evasions. Instead, he proposes revolt: a conscious, defiant embrace of life as it is. "The absurd man," Camus writes, "lives without appeal... He is still on the way" (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 54). Meursault embodies this absurd man. He does not seek comfort in God, nor does he despair. He accepts the absurd condition of existence and chooses to live—and die—on his own terms (Bashir 4; Aslam et al. 636).

This acceptance is what elevates Meursault to the status of the absurd hero. Throughout the novel, he resists the temptation to fabricate meaning. He refuses to lie about his feelings, to pretend remorse, or to seek redemption through religion. His honesty, though socially condemned, is philosophically heroic. In the final chapter, as he awaits execution, Meursault experiences a moment of profound clarity. He reflects, "I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again" (Camus, *The Stranger* 122). This serenity is not born of faith, but of lucidity. He concludes, "I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe" (Camus 122). These lines encapsulate the essence of absurd heroism: peace not through transcendence, but through acceptance (Shobeiri 838; Mohamed 369).

Meursault's peace at the end of the novel represents a kind of secular redemption. Unlike the Christian model, which promises salvation through repentance and divine grace, Meursault's redemption lies in his refusal to seek salvation at all. He does not repent, he does not pray, and he does not hope. Yet he finds a deeper form of peace—one rooted in the recognition of life's absurdity and the courage to face it without illusion. Camus writes, "Living an experience, a particular fate, is accepting it fully" (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 55). Meursault accepts his fate not with resignation, but with defiant clarity. His death is not a tragedy, but a philosophical affirmation (Kumar et al. 260).

This redefinition of redemption is central to Camus's project. In a world without God, traditional notions of sin, guilt, and salvation lose their meaning. What remains is the individual's relationship to truth and authenticity. Meursault's refusal to conform, to lie, or to seek comfort in illusion becomes a form of moral integrity. He is condemned by society, but he remains true to himself. In this sense, he is both a martyr and a rebel—a man who dies for his refusal to pretend. As Arthur Scherr notes, "Meursault's death is a secular crucifixion, a sacrifice not for sin, but for sincerity" (Scherr 311). Dr. Shraddha Dhal also affirms that Meursault's honesty places him in symbolic alignment with the Christ figure—not for redemption, but for unwavering commitment to truth (Dhal 27).

The paradox of Meursault's character—his simultaneous resemblance to Christ and the Anti-Christ—finds resolution in the figure of the absurd hero. He dies like Christ: calm, condemned, and misunderstood. Yet he lacks the qualities traditionally associated with Christ: faith, love, and sacrifice. He does not die to save others, nor does he offer hope. Instead, he dies to affirm the absurd. His death is both a rejection of religious redemption and a reimagining of what it means to die with dignity. In this way, Meursault unites the roles of Christ and Anti-Christ, embodying the paradox of modern man in a godless universe (Mohamed 369; Aslam et al. 636).

This synthesis is not merely literary, but philosophical. Camus's absurdism does not deny the human longing for meaning; it acknowledges it and insists on living in spite of its absence. Meursault's journey—from emotional detachment to existential clarity—mirrors the journey of the absurd hero. He begins the novel indifferent to life, but by the end, he embraces it fully, even in the face of death. His final moments are not marked by fear or regret, but by joy and acceptance. "I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world," he says, finding peace not in salvation, but in revolt (Camus, *The Stranger* 122; Shobeiri 838).

Through Meursault, Camus offers a new model of heroism—one that does not rely on divine purpose or moral absolutes. The absurd hero is not a savior, but a witness: someone who sees the world as it is and chooses to live honestly within it. Meursault's life and death challenge the reader to reconsider the nature of redemption, the value of authenticity, and

the possibility of peace without belief. In a universe without God, Meursault becomes a Christ of the absurd—a man who dies not to redeem others, but to affirm the dignity of living without illusion.

Ultimately, Meursault's paradoxical identity is not a contradiction, but a resolution. He is both Christ and Anti-Christ, martyr and rebel, victim and victor. Through him, Camus redefines redemption as the courage to face the absurd and the integrity to live—and die—truthfully. In doing so, Meursault becomes not only the absurd hero, but the only Christ we deserve.

5. Conclusion

As the research has demonstrated, Albert Camus's portrayal of Meursault in *The Stranger* presents a profound paradox: a character who simultaneously suggests the image of Christ and the refusal associated with the Anti-Christ. Through this duality, Camus reimagines redemption—not as spiritual rescue through divine grace, but as a secular affirmation of authenticity and clear existential understanding. Meursault's transformation from emotional detachment to calm acceptance of death reflects the figure of the absurd hero: one who lives without relying on higher meaning, yet without giving in to despair.

This study has explored how Meursault resembles Christ in his unjust condemnation, quiet endurance, and peaceful approach to death, while also reflecting Anti-Christ qualities through his rejection of God, lack of remorse, and refusal to conform to religious or moral expectations. These contrasting traits are brought together through Camus's philosophy of the absurd, in which Meursault's refusal to seek redemption becomes a meaningful act of existential resistance. His final sense of peace arises not from spiritual belief, but from a clear understanding and acceptance of life's indifference.

The significance of this analysis lies in its challenge to traditional religious and moral structures. In Meursault, Camus proposes an alternative idea of redemptive suffering—one based on honesty, resistance, and existential awareness, rather than faith or repentance. This revised understanding contributes to broader literary and philosophical discussions about belief, personal integrity, and ethical defiance in modern existential thought.

By combining the symbolic roles of Christ and Anti-Christ in a single, unwavering character, Camus invites readers to rethink the meaning of sacrifice and moral strength in a secular world. Meursault's death, though devoid of religious meaning, becomes a powerful affirmation of philosophical commitment. As Camus writes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (123). In the end, Meursault's struggle affirms the possibility of peace—not through salvation, but through the steady acceptance of the absurd.

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