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**Symbolism of Redemption and Repentance in Meursault's
Trajectory: A Christian Interpretation of Albert Camus's
"L'Étranger" (*The Outsider*)**

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ABSTRACT

Albert Camus' book "*L'Étranger*" ("*The Outsider*") has received a lot of attention from literary critics for its inquiry of existential themes. However, there exists a notable gap in scholarship concerning the comprehensive examination of theological symbolism, particularly regarding themes of redemption and repentance in the trajectory of the protagonist, Meursault. This study addresses this gap by scrutinising the variations of Christian imagery braided into Meursault's character and actions. The aim of this research is to conduct a detailed analysis and interpretation of the symbolic elements of redemption and repentance in Meursault's journey, contextualised within the broader framework of Christian themes. Adopting a hermeneutic approach, the study employs principles of literary analysis and interpretation of Christian symbolism. Drawing upon relevant theological frameworks, the research seeks to decode the Christian undertones embedded in Meursault's path and investigate how his experiences either align with or challenge traditional Christian narratives. The findings of the study unveil the multifaceted tiers of Christian symbolism throughout Meursault's journey. Elements such as his moral struggles, moments of self-reflection, and interactions with other characters x-rayed to uncover the symbolic significance of these biblical concepts. Moreover, the analysis illuminates the potential dualities present in the novel concerning existential and Christian themes. This research contributes to existing knowledge by offering a fresh perspective on Albert Camus's literary works. While existentialism has traditionally dominated interpretations, this study broadens the discourse by revealing the theological underpinnings of Meursault's path.

Keywords: Theological significance; Christian Interpretation; Religious allegory; Albert Camus; Redemption; 20th Century French literature.

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 McDonald & Suleiman, (2010). 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 nation. Noteworthy authors who have significantly influenced French literature during their respective epochs and contributed to the intellectual and cultural landscape of France include Chrétien de Troyes, François Rabelais, Michel de Montaigne, Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

De Troyes (1984) is renowned for his Arthurian romances, such as "Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart" and "Perceval, the Story of the Grail," which emerged in the late 12th century. Rabelais is celebrated for his satirical works *Gargantua* (1534) and *Pantagruel* (1532), which delve into the complexities of human nature and society. De Montaigne is acclaimed for his essays, particularly "*Essays*," also known as "Les Essais" (1580), where he engages in personal and introspective reflections on various subjects. Voltaire gained fame for his satirical novella *Candide* (1759), which serves as a critique of optimism and exposes societal hypocrisy. Rousseau authored "*The Social Contract*" (Du Contrat Social - 1762) and "*Emile, or On Education*" (*Émile, ou De l'éducation* - 1762), both influential works in the realms of political philosophy and education.

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. Some notable figures include Jean-Paul Sartre, a philosopher and writer closely associated with existentialism who explored themes of freedom, choice, and the nature of existence. His famous works include *Being and Nothingness* (*L'Être et le Néant*) (1943), by Franz Kafka. Although Kafka's major works were written in the early 20th century, his influence continued into the mid-20th century. His surreal and existential themes had a great impact on contemporary literature. *The Trial* (*Der Process*), published posthumously in 1925, is one of his key literary works. Samuel Beckett, an Irish playwright and novelist, whose works such as *Waiting for Godot* (1953) often dealt with the absurdity of human existence and the search for meaning, Jean Genet, a French novelist, playwright, and political activist who explored themes of identity, criminality, and social outcasts, wrote *The Thief's Journal* (*Journal du voleur*) (1949). These authors, alongside Albert Camus, contributed significantly to the literary landscape of the mid-20th century, challenging conventional narratives and fostering a deeper exploration of existential and absurd themes.

Camus, a Nobel laureate in literature, not only pushed the boundaries of storytelling but also brought forth a unique blend of existentialism and absurdism Multani, (2023). His works, firmly rooted in the post-World War II era, resonate with profound existential questions, probing the human psyche in the face of an indifferent universe (Cropper & Browne, 2024). *L'Étranger*, which stands as a seminal work in mid-20th-century French literature, epitomises existential thought. Camus, known for his philosophical reflections on the absurdity of life, notably showcased his prowess in *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*), a seminal work that both adhered to and subverted prevailing literary conventions. He presented readers with Meursault, a protagonist navigating the absurdity of life. Understanding the backdrop of existentialism and the philosophical currents of the time provides a crucial foundation for perusing this unexplored facet of the novel.

The existing body of research on *L'Étranger* predominantly leans towards existential and absurd themes, often overlooking potential Christian undertones in the narrative. Meursault's journey, marked by moral ambiguity and existential struggles, begs the question of whether a Christian view can unveil hidden concepts of redemption and repentance Earnshaw, (2018). The problem lies in the gap in comprehensive analysis, leaving unexplored the complexities embedded in Meursault's actions and Christian symbolism. This study seeks to address this gap by probing the potential Christian themes in the sample text to achieve a more holistic understanding of the novel. However, the significance of interpreting *L'Étranger* from a Christian viewpoint lies in the potential revelation of the depth of meaning and symbolism. The Christian perspective introduces a unique dimension to Meursault's journey, exposing his moral struggles, moments of self-reflection, and interactions with others. Unveiling Christian symbolism in the novel broadens the discourse on the coexistence of existential and Christian themes in mid-20th-century literature. This study holds relevance for literary scholars interested in the intersection of philosophy and literature during a pivotal period in history.

The principal objective of this study is to elucidate the symbolism of redemption and repentance in Meursault's journey in the novel from a Christian perspective. Utilizing a hermeneutic methodology, our aim is to scrutinize the narrative components, character progression, and significant occurrences in the novel to uncover latent Christian motifs. This analysis endeavors not only to deepen comprehension of Camus's literary oeuvre but also to make a meaningful contribution to the wider dialogue on the convergence of existentialist and Christian ideologies in literature.

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

The body of literature that surrounds Albert Camus' works has witnessed extensive scholarly engagement that reflects the enduring relevance and complexity of his philosophical and literary contributions. Existing studies on Albert Camus include a diverse range of themes that probe his philosophical underpinnings, narrative techniques and socio-political commentary. However, this review embarks on a comprehensive survey of these previous studies to unravel the multifaceted conversation in Camus' scholarship.

Hossain and Akter's (2022) article undertakes an ecocritical analysis of Albert Camus's novel, "*The Outsider*." The concept is applied to investigate how nature influences Meursault, the protagonist, in both physical and emotional dimensions, while projecting nature as an active agent in the narrative. The authors argue that understanding absurdist traits gains depth from an eco-conscious perspective, asserting that Meursault's actions are a response to nature, both disjointed and connected. The article encourages ecocritical readings of canonical texts to harmonise literary criticism and ecological awareness. The paper also establishes connections between ecocriticism, existentialism, and absurdism to showcase the interconnected nature of themes in the novel. Despite the vast scholarly attention to Camus's "*The Outsider*," whereby the ecocritical analysis identifies existential and absurdist elements, the work does not extensively focus on the character's moral dilemmas and potential religious symbolism. While ecocriticism expands the horizons of nature's influence, the Christian interpretation of Meursault's trajectory offers a fresh avenue for investigation. In essence, the research gap identified in the ecocritical analysis sets the stage for exploring the Christian interpretation of the novel to deepen the understanding of existential, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Agwu and Abutu (2022) address an uncharted aspect of Albert Camus's literary ideas by examining his dual perception of women. While existing literature focuses on

themes like death, revolt, and life's absurdity in Camus's works, this study brings forth the often-overlooked dimension of his mindset towards women. It navigates through the evolution of Camus's notions about women, revealing an inherent ambiguity in his literary creation concerning his relationships with them. The study emphasises the significance of "loving at a distance" in Camus's narrative and suggests that this approach offers advantages to men pursuing idealistic goals. It draws attention to the blend of allegiance and detachment characterising Camus's relationship with his mother while showcasing how these dynamics manifest through characters like Meursault and Jan. While this study significantly contributes to understanding Camus's views on gender dynamics, it inadvertently reveals a research gap. The existing literature on Camus primarily focuses on themes such as death, revolt, and life's absurdity, leaving a void in the exploration of religious and redemptive aspects. The research gap becomes evident as Agwu and Abutu illuminate the complexities of Camus's relationship with women but do not explicitly address the religious undertones in his works.

Abdullah and Saksono's (2021) article treats the theme of alienation in Albert Camus' *The Stranger* and examines the impact of twentieth-century events on individuals' beliefs and societal systems. Focused on Meursault as the main character, the study uncovers that Meursault experiences profound alienation from both himself and society. This alienation is manifested through Meursault's habits, occupation, and the responses of other characters to his presence. Moreover, Meursault exhibits a tendency to reject societal values, and his radical freedoms create confusion regarding the limits of freedom. The article concludes that Meursault's various forms of alienation represent a manifestation of Camus' existentialism. In essence, Abdullah and Saksono successfully connect literature and philosophy, stressing the relationship between the concepts explored in the novel and existentialist philosophy. The research highlights the influence of societal upheavals on literary works and expands the philosophical underpinnings of Camus' masterpiece. While their study delves into the impact of societal shifts on literature, particularly existentialism, it doesn't address the potential layers of Christian interpretation within Camus's work. Investigating symbols of redemption and repentance in the protagonist's journey, especially considering Camus's intricate narrative, would advance understanding of how existential and Christian themes intersect in works.

Agwu (2018)'s article examines the prevalent themes of absurdity, revolt, and atheism in 20th-century literary and philosophical works. Focusing on the writings of philosophers and writers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The work emphasises the relevance of exploring these philosophical questions in the 21st century, where individuals grapple with the complexities of life, existence, morality, and the omnipotence of God. Agwu engages in a critical examination of life's purpose, the salvation of humanity, the meaning of birth, and the inherent worth of living. The article serves as an analytical evaluation of the peculiar nature of human existence, with a specific emphasis on the theme of absurdity as portrayed in Camus's "*L'Étranger*" and "*La Peste*." His insightful analysis of absurdity in Camus's works highlights the philosophical inquiries of the 20th century, buttressing their relevance to contemporary challenges. While Agwu treated questions of life's meaning, existence, and morality, a focused study on the symbolic elements of redemption and repentance within Meursault's trajectory, interpreted through a Christian lens, has yet to be fully explored. By bridging these thematic elements, the research aims to provide a richer understanding of the complexity inherent in Camus's narrative and its potential theological implications.

Hossain (2017) evaluates the application of Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction Theory to Albert Camus' novel "*The Outsider*." Derrida's theory, which focuses on the

inherent complexity and instability of meaning within a text, is employed to unveil the multifaceted layers of significance in Meursault's narrative. The protagonist's peculiar reaction to his mother's death, marked by observational detachment rather than emotional involvement, becomes a focal point for deconstructive analysis. The article contends that Derrida's approach provides an important framework to interpret the ambiguous and evolving meanings embedded in the novel. The article effectively incorporates Derrida's Deconstruction Theory to dissect the many facets of meaning in the novel. It demonstrates a thoughtful application of deconstructive criticism to understand Meursault's seemingly unconventional responses. While this analysis enriches scholarly discourse on existential and deconstructive elements and emphasises the need to look at alternative perspectives, the discussion focuses on Derrida's theory, leaving a research gap concerning Christian interpretations, redemption, and repentance in Meursault's trajectory. This study would address the absence of Christian perspectives in the existing review and create a comprehensive analysis that integrates theological and existential dimensions.

Bamane's (2014) article addresses Albert Camus's perspective on faith, particularly in the context of Meursault's character development. The study examines how Meursault, initially portrayed as self-absorbed, transforms into a man of truth by the novel's conclusion. The irrational act of killing an Arab prompts Meursault's confinement, leading to solitude and self-discovery. Despite the indifferent universe depicted in the aftermath of World War II, Meursault's journey affirms human dignity through faith in his own values. The paper scrutinises Meursault's progression from vanity to modesty and projects his unwavering commitment to his conscience and the rejection of societal norms. Bamane (2014) believes that Meursault's refusal to regret his crime or seek redemption from God stresses his quest for authenticity and honesty. The study explores how facing the reality of death makes Meursault appreciate the beauty of the universe and derive meaning from his remaining life. Bamane's paper navigates the theme of faith in man's dignity within the existential context presented by Camus. In spite of the fact that this work touches on existential themes within the novel, however, her focus primarily revolves around Meursault's journey without a direct emphasis on religious or Christian interpretations. The article highlights the protagonist's quest for authenticity and self-awareness, but it doesn't extensively analyse the potential symbolism of redemption and repentance, especially from a Christian perspective.

While the existing literature shares enlightening viewpoints about the existential and philosophical dimensions of *L'Étranger*, a noticeable research lacuna exists regarding a focused Christian interpretation. None of the reviewed works explicitly analysed the potential symbolism of redemption and repentance from a Christian perspective. This research vacuum calls for an in-depth investigation to unveil the Christian themes in the study's sample novel.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

This study is rooted in a hermeneutic approach, literary analysis Methods and Christian symbolism interpretation. The hermeneutic approach involves interpreting texts through an understanding of the meanings embedded in language and cultural contexts. One influential theorist associated with hermeneutics is Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer's work, particularly in *Truth and Method* (1960), emphasises the fusion of horizons between the reader and the text. In the context of *L'Étranger*, a hermeneutic approach would involve describing how cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts shape the interpretation of Christian symbolism in Meursault's trajectory. Various literary analysis methods can be employed, and theorists like Roland Barthes and Vladimir Propp have made significant contributions. Barthes, known for his work on semiotics and

structuralism, introduced the idea of textual analysis as the deciphering of coded messages. Propp, associated with narratology, identified recurring narrative structures or “functions” within folktales. Applying these methods to the study’s sample text involves scrutinising narrative structures, symbols, and semiotic elements to uncover hidden meanings and thematic patterns.

For Christian symbolism interpretation, theologians and literary critics contribute to the framework. Paul Ricoeur, a philosopher-theologian, has analysed the link between language, metaphor, and religious symbols. His hermeneutical philosophy emphasises the narrative aspects of understanding symbols. In the context of the study’s sample text, a Ricoeurian approach would involve investigating the narrative structure to unpack the layers of Christian symbolism present in Meursault’s journey and understanding how these symbols contribute to the overall interpretation of the novel.

METHODOLOGY

The study’s approach primarily involves textual analysis of *L’Étranger* by choosing relevant passages from the novel that depict Meursault’s trajectory to emphasise moments of introspection, key events, and interactions. Also, it will conduct a close reading to identify linguistic differences, symbolism, and narrative techniques employed by Albert Camus. Furthermore, the study will examine narrative elements such as character development, plot structure, and descriptive language to uncover underlying themes related to redemption and repentance. The study will equally employ thematic coding to categorise textual elements related to redemption and repentance. Look for Meursault’s moral reflections, actions, and responses to pivotal events. The analysis will also compare Meursault’s behaviour before and after significant events to trace potential redemption arcs and moments of repentance. The study will analyse Meursault’s interactions with other characters to probe how these relationships contribute to the development of redemption and repentance themes. The study will further consider the theological context in the novel to examine Meursault’s actions in light of Christian doctrines and beliefs.

This work will validate findings by cross-referencing results from textual analysis, thematic identification, and Christian symbolism interpretation. Finally, the research will synthesise results to provide a holistic understanding of how redemption and repentance themes, as well as Christian symbolism, manifest in Meursault’s course.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: SYMBOLISM OF THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION IN ALBERT CAMUS’ *L’ÉTRANGER*

L’Étranger is a story narrated by Meursault, an emotionally detached and indifferent Algerian who learns about his mother’s death at the beginning of the novel Ramanathan, (2023). According to Agwu & Abutu (2022), “French scholars are familiar with the famous “Aujourd’hui, Mama est mort” (Mother died today), but Meursault is not certain or does not really care if she died that day or the previous day” (p. 126). Meursault’s behaviour is unconventional; he displays a lack of emotional response to his mother’s passing and lives his life with a sense of detachment from societal expectations. The novel unfolds as the protagonist becomes involved in a conflict between his acquaintance Raymond and an Arab man. The climax occurs on a beach, where Meursault, affected by the scorching sun, shoots the Arab, claiming it was due to a blinding sensation. As he undergoes a trial, the focus shifts to the absurdity of human existence. The novel analyses themes of existentialism, the indifference of the universe, and the consequences of living authentically. Camus’ hero’s actions and trial serve as a canvas for Camus to discuss philosophical questions about life, meaning, and the inevitability of death. The work has always been considered a classic of existentialist literature that emphasises the absurdity

of human life and the challenge of finding meaning in a seemingly indifferent world (very little literature is recorded of the novel from a theological perspective and its significance is in line with Meursault's trajectory).

Camus, renowned for his masterpiece *L'Étranger*, cast Meursault as a Christ-like figure, a concept he articulated in the 1955 American University edition. In his introduction, Camus stated that Meursault is "the only Christ we deserve," to signify the protagonist's willingness to face death for truth without heroic pretences. This allegorical connection between Meursault and Jesus, while seemingly paradoxical, reinforces Camus's attempt to portray a character that embodies redemptive qualities. Camus, deeply versed in early Christian thought, steeped himself in Biblical exegesis during the writing of the novel, as he holds a doctoral dissertation on the influence of Neo-Platonist thinker Plotinus on St. Augustine Lottman (Wilson, 2023). While Camus approached the comparison between Jesus and Meursault with seriousness and irony, scholars have investigated the intersection of existentialism, humanism, and religious undertones in his works. Cruickshank (1967) pointed out that Camus, denounced as anti-Marxist more frequently than anti-Christian during his lifetime, sensed a universal "appetite for divinity" in human beings and rejected outright atheism. Cruickshank's observation aligns with the notion that Camus, although labelled an "agnostic" by Woelfel (1975), grappled with a serious religious need, unable to fully embrace religious belief.

Patrick Henry (1975) is among the few scholars who have emphasised the religious or Christian aspects of *L'Étranger*. In an early comparison of Voltaire and Camus, it was contended that both Christ and Meursault represent scapegoats, sacrificed not for content but for the preservation of societal form or structure. This interpretation, reiterated by many critics, echoes Camus's own avant-propos to *L'Étranger*. Maher (1998), in a less acknowledged analysis, notes Meursault's Christ-like characteristics but challenges Camus's analogy, suggesting that Meursault is a more fitting model for a society that perhaps doesn't deserve the real Jesus Christ. Maher (1998) argues that Camus, through Meursault, criticises a hypocritical society that values appearances over authenticity and rejects Christian ethics in its callous treatment of the protagonist. Camus's depiction of Meursault as a Christ-like figure in the novel invites a multifaceted analysis that draws on various theoretical lenses. Adopting a hermeneutic approach allows for an interpretative exploration of the novel's viewpoints, showcasing Meursault's character and actions in the context of existentialism and Christian symbolism. Engaging literary analysis methods provide a structured framework to dissect the narrative elements, character development, and key events in the novel.

During the courtroom proceedings, Meursault's decision to remain silent in response to accusations draws a parallel with Christ's composed demeanor during his final judgment, thus highlighting a thematic connection between the two figures (Maher, 1998). Maher argues that by likening Meursault to Jesus, Camus was not denigrating either character but rather emphasizing their shared experience of rejection by society. Both the messenger (Meursault) and the message (Jesus) encounter societal ostracism (Maher, 1998). The derogatory term "Mr. Antichrist" used by the examining magistrate upon Meursault's assertion of atheism aligns with Camus's view that judicial authorities represent Antichrists. While Maher (1998) acknowledges disagreement with Camus regarding Christianity's ability to explain evil and death, he defends Camus against accusations of atheism. Maher (1998) suggests that Camus's sympathetic portrayal of the Catholic priest Paneloux in "La Peste" implies a nuanced spiritual dimension in "L'Étranger," positioning Camus as more agnostic than atheist.

A psychoanalytic evaluation by Ohayon (1983) introduces a complex interpretation that sees *L'Étranger* as an allegory of Meursault's repressed guilt over patricidal wishes towards his absent father. Ohayon posits that Meursault, in killing the

Arab, enacts a self-mutilatory project that attracts punishment for repressed patricidal drives. Meursault's identification with sacrificial offerings and desire for a large crowd at his execution parallel Christ's utterance on the cross, which suggests a thematic connection between Meursault and Jesus. The symbolic significance of the murder occurring on a Sunday also draws parallels with Jesus's resurrection. However, the inconsistencies arise in attributing both patricidal rage and a Jesus-like submission to the Sun-Father to Meursault's actions. Furthermore, Ohayon (1983) contends that Camus, influenced by predestinarian religious philosophers, identified with Meursault as a Christ figure, evident in their shared experience of working as clerks in Algiers. He draws attention to Camus's cryptic statement about the composition of *The Stranger*, where Meursault represents two men, one of them being Camus himself, further reinforcing the notion of a personal connection between author and protagonist.

Drawing on a distinct jurisprudential perspective, Witt and Witt's (2004) analysis of the Algerian-French judicial system during Camus's writing of *L'Étranger* sheds light on implicit parallels between Meursault's trial and that of Jesus. Unlike Maher and Ohayon's literary analyses, their work emphasises how the nature of the French judicial process influenced Meursault's responses. Meursault's involvement with and the killing of the Arabs posed a threat to French colonialism and revealed the strained relationship between French imperialism and the Algerian underclass, much like Jesus challenging the Roman Empire's dominion. Both Meursault and Jesus responded to their trials with essentially silent or uncommunicative stances, which the Witts (2004) interpret as a formal and substantive threat to the body political. More so, the Witts highlight the inquisitorial nature of the French trial procedure, which exposes the defendant's personal life more extensively than the Anglo-Saxon adversarial system. In French law, almost any aspect of the defendant's personal history may be brought into the courtroom, relying on the judge's intuition of the defendant's character. This emotional and subjective approach contrasts with English law's reliance on evidence about the crime itself. Witt and Witt (2004) note that Meursault, at the novel's conclusion, is not informed precisely about the type or degree of murder he has been convicted of, a cavalier treatment more commonly relegated to Muslims than *piets-noirs* in the legal system. In colonial Algeria, the French Supreme Court served as the court of last resort, and Algerians were under French legal jurisdiction. Meursault's fate, unusually sealed without the typical commutation or overturning of death sentences in France, challenges the norm and adds a layer of complexity to the portrayal of justice in *L'Étranger*.

DISCUSSION: SYMBOLISM OF REDEMPTION, REPENTANCE AND MOMENTS OF SELF-REFLECTION IN MEURSAULT'S PATH

Meursault candidly shares his enjoyment of conversations with Raymond, despite the latter's unpopular status in the neighbourhood, which indicates a willingness to assist someone who extends friendship during Meursault's heightened awareness of his general friendlessness. Raymond's invitation to share a dinner of "black pudding and some wine" satirically echoes the Christian symbolism of wine and bread as Christ's body and blood in the Mass and Last Supper. This dinner becomes a backdrop to Meursault's tragic act, his *hamartia* stemming from unacknowledged post-mortem depression after his mother's death (McCarthy, 1988). The dinner scene transforms into a parody of the Last Supper or Black Mass, with Raymond playing the role of a counterfeit "Satanic" Christ. By writing the deceitful letter for Raymond, Meursault unknowingly sets in motion events leading to the shooting and killing of the nameless Arab woman's brother, eventually resulting in his trial and conviction for murder. This crucial event links Meursault to the suggested Jesus Christ figure, as proposed by Camus post-publication.

A parallel is also drawn between Meursault's dinner with Raymond and the Temptation of Jesus by Satan in the New Testament. Both narratives involve a pivotal role for food and Satan's attempts to entice Jesus with worldly power. In Meursault's case, succumbing to Raymond's or Satan's request to write a letter parallels Jesus' refusal to succumb to Satan's temptations in the wilderness. However, unlike Jesus, Meursault yields to the manipulation, which portrays his human frailty and sets the stage for his tragic downfall. Similarly, the dinner at Raymond's apartment unfolds as a significant event, which indicates Meursault's only malevolent act before the subsequent murder. This seemingly harmless dinner takes on a sinister quality as Meursault becomes intoxicated and is manipulated into carrying out Raymond's will, akin to a mocking satire of Satan's failed seduction of Jesus in the Temptation episode. In contrast to Jesus, who refuses wine at the Last Supper, Meursault ardently consumes wine during this dinner, contributing to his ultimate fall.

Meursault's role as a Jesus is further emphasised when he composes the deceitful letter for Raymond's girlfriend, distancing himself from the flawless Christ and aligning more closely with the French colons. Despite his human frailty, Meursault embodies a Christ figure with the faults of human beings, ready to sacrifice himself for the exposure of the evils of French colonialism. This aligns with Camus's assertion that Meursault dies for the truth, unveiling the discord between Muslims and colons through his crime and its anomalous capital punishment, akin to Jesus' fate in challenging prevailing norms (McCarthy, 1988). Also, the arrival of Raymond, akin to a disruptive force like Satan in the Garden of Eden, marks a turning point in Meursault's life. The ensuing dinner and conversation unfold in Stuart Gilbert's translation, revealing Meursault's strange empathy towards Raymond and his nonchalant acceptance of Raymond's offer to share a meal. Meursault's decision to accept the invitation reflects his indifference and desire to avoid cooking for himself, ultimately setting the stage for the pivotal moment when, inebriated, he writes the ruse letter for Raymond. While feminist critics often interpret Meursault's agreement to write a deceitful letter for Raymond as indicative of cynicism or misogyny, a closer examination of the circumstances suggests that Camus aimed to mitigate Meursault's guilt by implying his intoxication during the event. Regardless of Raymond's motives, offering Meursault a hasty dinner spares him from cooking, highlighting one of the few individuals who assist Meursault.

Another acquaintance, Meursault's coworker Emmanuel, provides a black tie and mourning band for Meursault's mother's funeral. Emmanuel's impish nature is evident when he joins Meursault in jumping on the back of a truck to quickly reach Celeste's restaurant for lunch. Emmanuel's simplicity is revealed in Meursault's comment about explaining things to him during movies. Unlike Meursault, whose apparent naivety conceals a passion for truth, Emmanuel serves as a genuinely simple-minded character and a potential alter ego for Meursault. Camus may have intended Emmanuel as a satirical representation of the Messiah or an ironic version of God or Jesus, drawing parallels with biblical prophecies (McCarthy, 1988). Emmanuel's name also evokes biblical associations, particularly with the Book of Isaiah's prediction of a son named Immanuel. In Isaiah 7:14, a virgin is prophesied to conceive a son named Immanuel, interpreted in various ways, including as God or the Messiah. The New English Bible describes Immanuel as a bearer of dominion, resembling the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). This subtle biblical allusion adds depth to Emmanuel's character, potentially serving as a satirical or ironic representation within the narrative. Without doubt, Meursault's trajectory in the novel includes sporadic but crucial moments of self-reflection, revealing a subtle undercurrent of repentance. An instance of this is when Meursault acknowledges his uncharacteristic emotional outburst during his mother's funeral. Despite his usual indifference, he reflects on his own surprising actions: "I felt a bit sad. It occurred to me

that someday I'd probably have to start getting used to these farewells". Camus (1942: p. 33)

Also, Meursault's character undergoes subtle redemption arcs, particularly in the latter part of the novel. During his incarceration, he reflects on the morality of his actions, suggesting a yearning for redemption. He contemplates the significance of his impending execution and the desire for a crowd's hatred to consummate his existence, echoing a redemptive theme. This indicates a shift from his earlier indifference to a contemplative state where he seeks meaning and redemption through his impending demise. More so, the narrative is punctuated with symbolic transformations that mirror Meursault's internal shifts. The climactic scene on the beach, where he shoots the Arab, serves as a symbolic transformation reflecting a repentant realization. The intense sunlight, which once represented Meursault's existential apathy, transforms into a harsh, judgmental force, which symbolises his awakening conscience. This transformation becomes a pivotal moment in his trajectory, intertwining symbolism with a subtle sense of repentance.

STUDY FINDINGS

The analysis of *L'Étranger* reveals elaborate Christian symbolism involved in Meursault's trajectory. The court scene, resembling the last judgment of Christ, reflects the connection between Meursault's trial and Christian themes. Meursault's identification with Christ during the trial and his silence, akin to Jesus before Pontius Pilate, underscore the deliberate integration of Christian symbolism. Furthermore, the study identified that the dinner scene with Raymond, paralleling the Last Supper, becomes an interesting moment that infuses the narrative with religious undertones. The study posited that Meursault's path takes on theological significance through the notion of Christian interpretation. The parallels between Meursault and Christ extend to their sacrificial offerings, which emphasise themes of redemption and repentance. Meursault's identification with the sacrificial offering becomes poignant during his reflections on the day of his execution. The narrative, while rooted in existential themes, gains depth through theological undertones and presents Meursault as a complex figure that embodies both existential and Christian elements.

More so, the study established that the incorporation of Christian symbolism in *L'Étranger* challenges traditional literary interpretations. Meursault's course becomes a canvas where existential and Christian themes coalesce to present readers with a precise evaluation of the human condition. The implications for literary interpretation extend beyond existentialism and invite a multidimensional analysis that considers the theological layer, through which readers can examine Meursault's character and view him not solely as an existential antihero but as a symbolically complex figure with tiers of meaning. The study findings unveil the deliberate infusion of Christian symbolism in Meursault's trajectory to project the theological significance that adds depth to the narrative. These implications for literary interpretation enrich the understanding of *L'Étranger* while presenting it as a work that transcends singular philosophical interpretations and invites readers to assimilate the convergence of existential and Christian themes embedded therein.

The Christian interpretation of Meursault's journey enhances the depth of the narrative. Viewing Meursault as a Christ-like figure provides an alternative lens through which to understand his actions and fate. The trial scene, where Meursault's silence is likened to Christ's, gains significance. The impact is evident in Meursault's acceptance of societal judgement, resembling Christ's acceptance of crucifixion. However, the existential themes persist, challenging a singular interpretation. The interplay of Christian elements enriches the narrative without overshadowing its existential core.

CONCLUSION

In this study, an in-depth analysis of Albert Camus's "L'Étranger" uncovered significant findings regarding the integration of Christian symbolism in Meursault's trajectory. The court scene mirroring the last judgement, the symbolic Last Supper during the dinner with Raymond, and Meursault's identification with Christ revealed levels of Christian concepts intertwined with existential elements. The examination of moments of self-reflection, redemption arcs, and symbolic transformations unveiled a nuanced exploration of Meursault's character, blending existential and theological dimensions. This study contributes to existing knowledge by unravelling the deliberate inclusion of Christian symbolism in *L'Étranger*.

While existentialism has traditionally dominated interpretations, this research expands the literary discourse by revealing the theological undertones in Meursault's path. The understanding of Meursault's character as a complex figure embodying both existential and Christian elements adds depth to literary scholarship. Meursault's journey is marked by dualities that reflect existential and Christian tensions. The dual nature of sunlight, initially representing indifference, transforms into a symbol of revelation. Similarly, Meursault's apathy contrasts with his moments of introspection in prison. The dualities extend to his relationships, such as his friendship with Raymond and the contrasting empathy he shows towards others. These dualities create a multidimensional character, embodying the philosophical complexities inherent in the narrative. To further enhance the discussion on Christian symbolism in literature, future research endeavours could focus on comparative analyses across Camus's works or extend the investigation to other existentialist writings. Investigating how diverse philosophical and theological frameworks interact in the narratives could yield relevant results for the evolving landscape of literary expression.

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