

ЛІТЕРАТУРА ЗАРУБІЖНИХ КРАЇН

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DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2710-4656/2024.6/32>**Abbasova V.**

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THE PROBLEM OF EXISTENCE IN “THE STRANGER” BY ALBERT CAMUS

One of the most important works of 20th century literary history is “The Stranger” by the French writer Albert Camus. This work, which has been in the attention of literature lovers and literary scholars since its publication, is a wonderful source for understanding the century in which it was written and the people who lived and died in that century. In the article, A. Camus’s philosophical thoughts, outlook on life, and the value he reaped for people are examined in the light of the work “The Stranger”. A. Camus, as a representative of the philosophy of existentialism, considers man’s attempt to make sense of the world absurd. We don’t matter to the world either. In this situation of mutual insignificance, the question of what position a person should choose in life forms the basis of Camus’s philosophy. Meursault, the hero of the novel “The Stranger” is one of the people who is aware of this absurdity. That is why he is indifferent and stranger to all the events happening around him. The “unwritten laws” existing in society are not valid for him. Meursault, who lives a life focused on the reactions of his body and not his mind, has the potential to accept what happens to him. At the end of the novel, the hero, who doesn’t change according to situations, refuses to play different roles, and behaves as he feels, is judged by society and faces the truth of “how dangerous it is to leave the herd”. In the article, the author first talks about the realities of the 20th century, giving information about the main directions of A. Camus’s philosophy and the basic principles of the existential philosophical movement in general. He examines the reasons for the emergence of this philosophical trend and the thoughts of the philosophers who gave it direction. Later, the novel “The Stranger” is analysed from different aspects. The relations between society and individual, judge and convict, man and nature, parent and child are filtered by the question of who is right. Considering that the work of A. Camus is not widely examined in Azerbaijani literary studies, this article is useful research to fill that gap.

Key words: philosophy, existence, freedom, man, 20th century, world, truth, execution.

Introduction. One of the main conditions for a detailed analysis of any literary example, understanding what the author is talking about in this work, and understanding what messages he is delivering to society, is a close acquaintance with the writer. It is very important to know in which family the author of the work was born, in what conditions he lived, what losses he experienced, what people surrounded him, and so on. Otherwise, it is impossible to understand the work correctly. Of course, everyone is free to explain what they read, interpret it according to their feelings and thoughts. But this will be your approach, and your position may be completely different, just as it coincides with the point of view of the writer. Especially if this writer is a representative of a certain philosophical trend, in this case you will

have to get to know the author closely and also study this philosophy.

We will not be mistaken if we say that the story of A. Camus “The Stranger” is the most famous and the most difficult among the works written in the XX century. The novel “The Stranger” has always been the subject of various discussions and disputes and has never left the agenda of literature lovers. It is impossible to understand the work from one reading. Familiarity with the work of A. Camus and his philosophical worldview is not enough to interpret and understand the behavior of Merson, the hero of the work. In our opinion, the novel should be read several times.

The main purpose of the article is to show the philosophical problems of the novel by A. Camus and to comprehend it from a worldview point of view.

The main problem. The end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX century were remembered for the deep crisis of philosophy. One of the important signs of this crisis is the emergence of new philosophical currents directed against the materialistic mechanism and subjectivism, which are the two most important lines of thought of the modern era. This situation can only be compared with the pre-Renaissance crisis, which is the starting point of our modern culture. Because the question goes far beyond philosophy. During this period, there were profound changes in public thinking in Europe, serious economic upheavals, radical innovations in the field of art and significant changes in the religious sphere. The beginning of the 20th century should be considered as a red line drawn under the great epoch that ended. It is no coincidence that the crisis and decline of European culture was predicted by F. Nietzsche.

A. Camus is one of the most important representatives of the philosophy of existentialism (Latin *Exsistentia* – existence), which arose in the XX century. The main ideas of this philosophical trend are rooted in the work of the Danish philosopher of the XIX century Kierkegaard and F. Nietzsche. For the first time, it was Kierkegaard who emphasized the importance of treating a person as a person and analyzing him as an independent being, rather than taking into account general moral, cognitive and ethical laws. Existence, according to Kierkegaard, is not just “being there”, but the existence of an individual abstractly choosing a form of being and dedicating himself to this chosen form of “being” [5, p. 87]. It is these ideas of Kierkegaard that can be taken as the main position of the philosophy of Being. As for F. Nietzsche, he represents a unique event not only in the history of philosophy, but also in the history of European culture in general. Nietzsche completed the 19th century with his philosophy and defined the boundaries of the thinking of the 20th century, even the 21st century, and with the thesis ideas put forward by him in his works, he saw 2 centuries ahead and reported what would happen to humanity. For existentialism, Nietzsche’s statement “God is dead! We killed him” is very important. Yes, at the end of the XIX century, this expression pointed to the moral and intellectual crisis experienced in European society, and at the same time revealed the problem of “revaluation of values”. Because at the end of the XIX century, for European society, religion, religious worldview, or rather, the explanation of the world by religious teachings, the answers given by theology to the fundamental questions asked by people about existence, creation and what happens

after death, lost their relevance and ceased to be satisfactory. A person left alone in a world “where God died” goes in search of new values. Such a spiritual atmosphere is the starting point of the philosophy of Existence. This philosophy believes that a person is looking for meaning in an empty and meaningless world. Because the desire to seek meaning in the world, to understand the causes and purposes of creation, is precisely human behavior.

Existentialism is a new form of freedom. Its main starting point is the re-creation of values by a person whose expectations have not been fulfilled in life, he gains strength and re-realizes himself, relying on his non-existence. One of the greatest representatives of existentialism is Jean-Paul Sartre. In his text “Being and Nothing” Sartre laid the foundations of his approach, starting with a kind of assessment and criticism of Heidegger’s book “Being and Time”. In his opinion, existentialism is concerned with “establishing the essence of a pre-existing being after it”, that is, creating new meanings for itself. According to Sartre, people do not have a predetermined essence (fate). There is no such power (God) that could give this essence. In this case, the person is “completely free”. A free person will create his own essence and values. Whoever he wants to be, he will be. A person whose moral behavior is not determined by any authority will create his own moral values. The establishment of these moral values is not a moral concept that can encompass everyone. That is, there is no universal morality [1, p. 7]. The period of the emergence of existential philosophy coincides with the collapse of many values. The values that people have believed in and relied on for centuries are being destroyed one by one. What should Europeans believe in? As we know, God is the most important figure in the pre-modern world. The creation of the world and man is described in the sacred books, even the end of the world is known. More precisely, monotheistic religions provide us with a complete scenario of the beginning and the end of the world. Those who claim the opposite (and there have been such people in all eras) will face the most severe punishment.

Starting from the 16th century, gradually moving to the modern period, the main role is assumed by man. As the scientific worldview developed, so did the trust in man. Even without God’s help, man could master the sciences, make discoveries, make inventions, and interfere with nature. At the first stage of Modern Times, the idea of a bright future world with a man who mastered science worried the whole of Europe. But like the “project of God”, the “project of man” eventually failed. As science

progressed, people discovered chemical weapons, the atomic bomb, and man-made diseases. The First World War of the early 20th century showed that a “humanistically and rationally” thinking person can produce chemical weapons, create “death camps” and shed millions of human blood. The Second World War threatened not only humanity, but also the planet Earth. Existentialism offers prospects for existence in such a period. This philosophy asserts that our birth has neither a rational nor a metaphysical meaning. Because the world itself is meaningless. The lack of intelligence and meaning in the world we live in is not a disaster for a person, but rather a chance. A chance to add meaning to this world. If you want to exist, you will give meaning to your life.

A. Camus, as an existentialist, supported the idea that “man is completely free”. This means complete freedom, but also full responsibility. A person who is free in all his choices bears full responsibility for the consequences of this choice. According to this philosophy, you can’t blame fate for anything. No fate, destiny, divine coincidence can save him from this responsibility. In short, a person’s whole life is his personal choice. It is no coincidence that Camus wrote in one of his most important philosophical works: “There is one philosophical problem that is really important: Suicide. Is it worth living a life or not? to have a solution to this question is to answer the most fundamental question of philosophy” [4, p. 21]. In other words, a person is so free that he can choose whether to continue his life or not. A. Camus calls absurd human efforts to find meaning in this world. Understanding the absurdity of life is not the end for Camus, but the beginning. Faced with an absurd life, the philosopher offers three ways out. The first way is suicide. Rather, “is life worth living?” this is the answer to the question. According to the philosopher, a person has unlimited freedom and can decide whether to live or not. Camus stands for living a life, no matter how absurd it may be. Suicide is not an option, an existence challenging the absurd world is important. “A person who is unable to change an absurd world may at least not be a part of this absurdity” [4, p. 19]. The second way is “philosophical suicide”. When a person devotes his life to any ideology (it can be religion, any social movement, political party, etc.), he commits philosophical suicide. The third way is rebellion. Rebellion in the philosophical sense. An honest fight against the absurdities of an absurd world. Responsibility and accountability for every step of a person with infinite freedom. Analyzing the philosophy of A. Camus, M. Rzayev writes: “According to Camus, understanding the absurdity of

existence should not lead to despair. The absurdity of life causes boredom and activates this consciousness, and the result of its activity is either a “return to the unconscious in the usual way” or a “decisive awakening”. The result of awakening is either suicide or the resumption of life” [2, p. 254]. Of course, it is impossible to talk in detail about the philosophy of A. Camus in a short article. On the other hand, the analysis of any artistic work of a philosopher becomes understandable in the light of his philosophical ideas.

Let’s return to “The Stranger”. The work makes the reader wonder whether he likes it or not. The lifestyle of the main character Merson, his attitude to what is happening around him, and communication with people are unique. From the first lines of the work, we encounter a strange attitude: “My mom died today. Maybe she died yesterday, I do not know. I received a telegram from the nursing home. Tomorrow is the funeral...” The work begins with three cold sentences. Later, Mr. Merson's night at his mother’s coffin, the warmth of the words they could not utter in the silent gazes of the residents of the nursing home, and even the warmth of the Algerian sun, which burned everywhere during the funeral, did their job. do not reduce this coldness. This atmosphere, which begins with the first lines of the work, eventually turns into the executioner Merson, stunned by the hot sun and turned into a murderer. Because he is being judged not for ending a person’s life, but for not shedding tears at his mother’s funeral.

Mersault, with all his manners, is alien to the world we are used to. The title of the work was not chosen by chance. We humans are merciless to those who violate the order we have established, to those who ignore the values created over the centuries. There are standard measures for us, what to do, where to say what, who to be with, and who to stay away from. We call this “moral standards”. Anyone who doesn’t behave like that is an outsider in our world. We are not shy about behaving immorally towards individuals who violate the moral norms created by the majority. Yes, Mersault does not “play” either in his personal life or in society. He doesn’t want to move from role to role. Although there are many people who don’t cry at their mother's funeral, few don’t shed tears like Meursault. You’ll have to cry even if you don’t want to. At Merson’s funeral, everyone forgets about his dead friend and starts watching Merson. Naturally, observations are replaced by judgments. The trial of Merson is based on his behavior in relation to these “moral standards”. Even the lawyer said: “I want to know if my client is being tried for murder or for burying his mother?” The prosecutor’s answer to the question is as follows:

“Yes, I accuse this man because he buried his mother with the heart of a criminal”. Mersault, who goes to sea on the morning of his mother’s funeral, is in love with a woman, watches a comic film, terrifies the prosecutor and “asks for the head” of the accused from people who will decide. And, as he himself admits, he is very comfortable, without hesitation and regrets in his soul. Because this time the death penalty, which he demanded, is also the fulfillment of a sacred duty. It does not occur to anyone that there may be private reasons behind Merson’s attitude towards his mother. There are a lot of children who at a young age do not receive love and compassion from their mothers, they are constantly ignored, humiliated, insulted and beaten. Perhaps Meursault is one of them. No one is interested in this issue in the trial. Because there is a value created by mankind over the centuries: “the mother is holy”. The truths showing the opposite of this are not visible against the background of “great value”.

The first part of “The Stranger” is devoted to a consistent description of what happened in Merson’s life. We are witnessing life in the language of Merson. According to traditional thinking, what is happening is fate, fate, and for the author it is just a coincidence. There is always a chance that this might not have happened.

The glass partition in the novel is Merson’s consciousness. Everything that happens in his head is available to us, the readers. But if we pay attention, we will see that what seems transparent to us are just events and objects. The meanings attached to these events and things remain completely unclear. It is this aspect that makes it difficult for the reader to interpret the work. The hero, indifferent to many issues, is sensitive only in contact with nature. The only thing he felt at his mother’s funeral was the heat of the air, the scorching heat of the sun. He doesn’t even care about the offer to work in Paris. What is the difference between Paris and Algeria? Everywhere the days alternate in the same rhythm. Even his girlfriend’s question, “do you love me?” he easily answers “no” to this question. But her lover can marry her if he wants to. Because none of this matters to Mersault. But what is important? We will get a partial answer to this question in the second part of the work. At the end of the first part, he turns into a murderer at the end of a series of events that Merson does not care about. He kills an Arab with a bullet.

The second part of “The Stranger” is devoted to what the hero lives and feels in the dungeon. At the first meeting, the lawyer promises that the case is delicate, but if she believes him, everything will be

resolved. But there is a problem. It all starts with this single situation and leads to the murder of Merson. It turns out that when the lawyer talks about the disaster, he does not mean that Merson killed a man, but rather the indifferent, indifferent attitude that he showed at the funeral of his recently deceased mother. “The inspectors said that on the day of my mother’s funeral, I behaved like a cruel and careless person. “You understand”, my lawyer said, “it’s hard for me to ask you about this”. But it’s important anyway. “If I don’t find any hard evidence, the prosecutor’s office will use these facts against you”. Did my heart hurt that day, that is, when I was burying my mother? Revenge got rid of me? This question surprised me very much, if it was me, I would not have had the heart to ask someone such a question. I’ve come to terms with myself for a long time, and it’s hard for me to tell him about it. I loved my mom, of course, but that doesn’t mean anything. All the servants of God wished death to their loved ones. At this point, the lawyer interrupted me, for some reason he was very excited. He wanted me to promise not to say those words in court, especially in the presence of the investigator. However, I explained to him that by nature my physical needs are inversely proportional to my feelings. When I was burying my mother, I was very tired and dozed off on my feet. It never occurred to me that this moment had happened. One thing is for sure, most of all I wanted my mother not to die. However, my lawyer does not seem satisfied: “this is not enough” [3, p. 62]. To the end, both the lawyer, the investigator, and the priest condemned Merson not for killing an Arab, but for being a “strange” person. In their opinion, Mersault did not think like normal people, he did not react like normal people and, finally, did not act like normal people. But who is a normal person? Or who are the rulemakers? Is it necessary to comply with all these standards? It is at this moment that Camus’s concept of rebellion and change comes to the fore. Mersault is a completely free person in front of all social norms and taboos. Because he understood the absurdity, which is the basic law of life, in all its nakedness. Therefore, he lives by the principle of “no matter”, remaining indifferent to what is happening around him. Because it is impossible to radically change life, life is the same everywhere. However, Mersault is not a pessimist, he appreciates bodily pleasures, although he does not attach much importance to life from a spiritual point of view; He loves the sea, is happy to meet his girlfriend, loves delicious food, drinks, etc. All this makes him happy. But this trivial chain of everyday random events leads to the murder of a person. Is everything happening

by accident? If Camus considers it absurd to search for meaning in the world, then what is happening must be just a coincidence. One day, Mersault meets Raymond, helps him take revenge on his lover, and on the beach several people close to the girl fight with an Arab and, finally, after a few minutes, he kills one of the Arabs on the beach. with a bullet.

At the time, it should be noted that A. Camus not only does not explain the actions and behavior of Mersault, like other characters in the work, he seems to intentionally create gaps. And each reader fills in these gaps according to their level of understanding, comprehension and thinking. Just like in real life. Because, according to Camus's philosophy, the birth of us humans is a simple coincidence. Another person with different genetic combinations could have been born from the same father and mother. And it is our choice to sort out the gaps in this life that we accidentally fall into.

Mersault, Camus's hero, understood the absurdity of life, unlike those around him. The only thing Mersault expects from life is to "live in the moment". For Meursault, who wants to live in the "eternal present" without dwelling on yesterday and not thinking about tomorrow, ideas, belief systems and moral norms that unite other people are meaningless and useless. It was as if he had silenced his mind, stopped thinking and decided to exist mechanically. As we mentioned above, there are nuances associated with this day that Camus's hero enjoys: today's weather, the heat of the sun, the excitement of the sea, etc. Despite all this, Mersault is more honest than many religious people, guardians of morality, he never lies, tells the truth even when he is against it.

The scene of the murder of an Arab is a turning point in the composition of "The Stranger". As we mentioned above, it is after this event that the second part of the work begins. According to the author, the meaning of the work arises from the parallelism of these two parts. Part II is like a mirror. But contrary to what we are used to, the mirror, instead of reflecting the truth, distorts Mersault's emotions beyond recognition.

The disparity between Mersault's attitude to life and the truths of the people judging him becomes the leading asymmetry in the artistic structure of "The Stranger".

The most interesting and culminating part of the work are the scenes of Meursault's meeting with the priest. While awaiting execution, Mersault, like a man without a tomorrow, is both infinitely lonely and infinitely free. Hopes and consolations about life after death are incomprehensible and unacceptable to Mersault. A complicated dialogue with the priest ends with Mersault, who has always remained calm, suddenly getting angry and, as a final attack, turning everything he kept inside on the priest. He tells her that he has very little time left and that he does not want to devote himself to God, in whom he does not believe now. The priest's condescending remarks infuriate Mersault. This priest, hiding behind his safe islands, is not even sure that he lives according to Mersault's conclusion, because he lives as if he were dead. And Mersault is confident in everything, in himself, in the death that awaits him. He accepted death as death took him away. In Mersault's opinion, he was right yesterday and right today. Everyone's going to die anyway. In this world, people are divided into the privileged and the rest. For Mersault, who was imprisoned for murder and executed for not crying for his mother, everything in this life is empty and meaningless. Because those who have privileges, such as a priest, will condemn others to death tomorrow anyway.

Conclusion. Thus, when judging people, A. Camus's work "The Stranger" recommends taking into account the individual nuances and experiences of this person, evaluating specific situations, and not general moral values. We would like to note that no matter how much this work is analyzed, it is impossible to fully answer the questions raised by the topic. As the philosophy of being says, the final opinion about a person can be said only after his death, whereas he continues to exist while he is alive. As long as it exists, it inevitably changes and transforms. Just like Camus Meursault's hero.

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Аббасова В. ПРОБЛЕМА ЕКЗИСТЕНЦІАЛІЗМУ В РОМАНІ А. КАМЮ «ПОСТОРОННІЙ»

Однією з найважливіших творів історія літератури ХХ століття є «Сторонній» французького письменника Альбера Камю. Цей твір, що знаходиться в центрі уваги любителів літератури

та літературознавців з моменту його публікації, є чудовим джерелом для розуміння століття, в якому воно було написано, людей, які жили і померли в цьому столітті. У статті філософські думки А. Камю, його погляди на життя розглядаються у світлі твору «Сторонній». А. Камю, як представник філософії екзистенціалізму вважає абсурдною спробу людини осмислити світ. Ми також не маємо значення для світу. У цій ситуації взаємної незначності питання, яку позицію має вибрати людина у житті, становить основу філософії Камю. Мерсо, герой роману «Сторонній», – один із тих, хто усвідомлює цю безглуздість. Саме тому він байдужий і далекий від усіх подій, що відбуваються навколо нього. Існуючі у суспільстві «неписані закони» йому недійсні. Мерсо, який живе життям, зосередженим на реакціях свого тіла, а не розуму, має потенціал прийняти те, що з ним відбувається. Наприкінці роману герой, який змінюється залежно від ситуації, відмовляється відігравати різні ролі й веде себе відповідно до своїх почуттів, засуджується з боку суспільства і стикається з правдою у тому, «як небезпечно залишати стадо». У статті автор спочатку розповідає про реалії ХХ століття, даючи інформацію про основні напрямки філософії А. Камю, основні засади екзистенційного філософського руху в цілому. У ній розглядаються причини виникнення цього філософського спрямування, думки філософів, які дали йому напрямок. Далі роман «Сторонній» аналізується з різних сторін. Відносини між суспільством та особистістю, суддею та засудженим, людиною та природою, батьком та дитиною фільтруються питанням про те, хто має рацію. Враховуючи, що творчість А. Камю не набула широкого вивчення в азербайджанському літературознавстві, ця стаття є корисним дослідженням, яке заповнює цю прогалину.

Ключові слова: філософія, існування, свобода, людина, ХХ століття, мир, праця, істина, смерть, виконання.