

**THE EXISTENTIAL TRACES and ABSURDITY IN THE
NOVELS OF SAMUEL BECKETT AND ALBERT CAMUS
MURPHY and *THE STRANGER*, RESPECTIVELY**

Thesis submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences

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in

English Language and Literature

by

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June 2009

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“Man can survive anywhere, life is not in the world surrounding us, but it walks in us.”

Dostoyevski

For those who never lose their hope despite the life

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AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.
2. The program of advanced study of which this thesis is part has consisted of:
 - i) A general introduction to absurdity and existentialism
 - ii) Analysis of absurdity and existentialism in *Murphy* by Samuel Beckett and *The Stranger* by Albert Camus
 - iii) A compare and contrast discussion on those novels

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ABSTRACT

THE EXISTENTIAL TRACES and ABSURDITY IN THE NOVELS OF SAMUEL BECKETT AND ALBERT CAMUS *MURPHY* and *THE STRANGER* RESPECTIVELY

Ali Aydın

June, 2009

This study's purpose is to show the parallelism and contradiction between the novel of an Algerian-French author, Albert Camus (1921-1989) and the novel of an Irish author Samuel Beckett (1882-1941) with respect to the characters they had created and the relational interaction between the characters, the society and the repetition of everyday life within the perspective of absurdity and existentialism, in their literary texts. The characters' circumstances in and against life and society are closely similar to a certain extent when they are taken into consideration from the frame of absurdity and existentialism. However, their characterization towards the end of their novels changes and the similar attitudes shared by them undergo a serious alternation which consists of the core of that thesis.

All the efforts in this thesis are to depict these similarities and how these similarities experience a drastic change in relation to awareness of absurdity and the nature absurdity which can be entitled 'instinct.'

Key words: Absurdity, Existentialism, Alienation, Contradiction, Loneliness, French Literature, Liberty, Search

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KISA ÖZET

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Bu çalışmanın amacı Cezayir asıllı Fransız yazar Albert Camus'un *Yabancı* adlı eseri ile İrlandalı yazar Samuel Beckett'in *Murphy* isimli romanında gözlenen benzerliklerin ve çelişkilerin, karakterler, toplum ve günlük yaşantı ilişkileri göz önünde bulundurularak, absürd ve varoluşçuluk temelinde incelenmesidir.

Karakterlerin içinde buldukları durumlar oldukça yakın benzerlikler gösterse de, her iki eserde gözlenen bu benzerlikler romanların sonuna doğru ciddi farklılıklar içermeye başlamaktadır. Bu farklılığın ortaya çıkması da bu çalışmanın merkezini oluşturmaktadır. Her iki yazar da, absürd karakterlerin, toplum ve o toplum içerisinde maruz kalınan sıradanlığa ve aynılığa karşı takındıkları tavrı, bu iki eserde gözler önüne sermektedir.

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, bütün bu benzerlikleri ve bu benzerliklerde görülen keskin dönüşleri absürdün farkında olmakla ve içgüdü olarak nitelendirilebilecek absürdün doğası ile ilişkilendirerek göstermektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Absürd, Varoluşçuluk, Yabancılaşma, Çelişki, Yalnızlık, Fransız Edebiyatı, Özgürlük, Arayış

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INTRODUCTION

A General Introduction to the Absurdity, Existentialism, and Alienation

The picture of the world drawn from Existentialist literature is not a rosy one. Some themes recur with a revealing insistence in their novels: nausea (physical and metaphysical), inordinate absorption of hard drinks, “a l’americaine”, homosexuality, abortion, even occasional scatology. (Peyre¹ 23).

There are many other themes to be included within the list of those themes. Loneliness, meaninglessness of life, and vanity of the survival for and against this meaningless life, suicidal thoughts, with inevitable conflict and closeness between death and life are a few of those themes. They were all the reflections of the conditions in the period in which existentialism, *absurdism*, and alienation arose as a mirror for the situations experienced by and imposed to individual.

Philosophy and literature, in general, have always dealt with historical, social, and political issues taking place from the very beginning of the humanity till the current time, till the period of humanity of the 21st century. All these milestones which had notched to the history such as wars, revolutions, rebellions, inventions and discoveries have been analyzed and reflected both in a social base and from an individual perspective in literature and within the frame of philosophy. They, philosophy and literature, interpret life and open perspectives or points of view according to the developments or changes taking place in the years of certain eras.

The archaic wo/man, for example, had considered herself/himself as a part of the universe, so s/he interpreted herself/himself with the movements of the universe

¹ **Henri Peyre** (1901-1988), a figure in French studies, did more to introduce Americans to the modern literature and culture of French than any other person. Sterling Professor and chair of the French Department of Yale University for more than four decades.

and whatever happens within and around the universe. The Medieval wo/man, on the other hand, had searched the answer about her/his own being and nothingness in the God and s/he had dedicated herself/himself to the servitude of God by accepting being a vassal to him. The scientific developments realized in the 15th century, on the other hand, had created an aura of optimism and the wo/man of this new age had lent herself/himself to this gust of optimism. However, the wo/man of the 19th and 20th centuries who could not attain any of those handgrips, had found himself/herself imprisoned inside pessimism, loneliness and despair. While s/he was exposed to that much pessimistic ambience, the World Wars had doubled up his lack of faith and disbelief. Life began to seem absurd as s/he witnesses the death of millions. The man of these centuries who could not find anything for which he could sacrifice his/her mind, thoughts and understanding of the universe, began to ask questions about his/her own existence and s/he began to question the meaning and the purpose of his/her own existence in this world. Albert Camus, in his masterpiece *The Myth of Sisyphus*², raises the question or rather the problem by using the fact of suicide as it follows below:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest – whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories – comes afterwards. (495)

² The pages that follow deal with an absurd sensitivity that can be found widespread in the age—and not with an absurd philosophy which our time, properly speaking, has not known. It is therefore simply fair to point out, at the outset, what these pages owe to certain contemporary thinkers. It is so far from my intention to hide this that they will be found cited and commented upon throughout this work. But it is useful to note at the same time that the absurd, hitherto taken as a conclusion, is considered in this essay as a starting-point. In this sense it may be said that there is something provisional in my commentary: one cannot prejudge the position it entails. There will be found here merely the description, in the pure state, of an intellectual malady. No metaphysic, no belief is involved in it for the moment. These are the limits and the only bias of this book. Certain personal experiences urge me to make this clear. (*The Plague The Fall Exile and The Kingdom*, 493) (This is the excerpt from the very beginning of the essay “The Myth of Sisyphus”)

The period or the phase which initiated such an interrogation between life and death was not a sudden fact. It has its roots within and throughout the history. As it has been mentioned before, the different ages of history had shaped the humanity in accordance with the social, religious, political, and scientific developments of those ages. In addition, it should be noted that wo/man cannot be separated from this historical context which is also constructed by the same wo/man. All those efflorescences, inevitably, affected their world of mind, in other words, their thoughts, perceptions of the universe, and approaches to life. The reverberation of this interaction has been observed in almost everything created by humanity, especially in literary creations.

All of the events taking place in minutes, hours, months and years are the product of human mind and outcomes of the necessities of humanity coming or sourcing from their mundane life. Moreover, it is a necessity to reflect or narrate in literature and in philosophy what they experience and what they cannot experience. It is not only the experiences that they talk about or they do not talk about, but also, they may find it necessary to write or at least to tell something that they cannot answer.

Humanity sometimes gives answers and sometimes asks questions. It is all about life and life does not always give the answer, but, sometimes, maybe, generally, it gives questions of which answers are very difficult to be found and easily changeable. As it is seen in the case of Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* in which he questions unanswerable meaninglessness of life. It should be, therefore, clearly stated that it is not a convenient attitude to develop general statements about the questions and answers which are made up by humanity or more specifically by the philosophers and authors as conditions and perceptions may change very quickly and drastically. This drastic and quick change may confuse the minds of individuals and it may

become more and more difficult to find a shelter under which they will be able to practice their own individuality.

19th and 20th centuries are the centuries which were especially to faced with all those problematic questions due to the events taking place during those years. Especially, the 20th century was the period throughout which the despair of individual was felt very deeply and was reflected openly both in literature and philosophy. If those years are particularly taken into consideration, it is inevitably easy to see that those years were the years of wars and everything, almost everything, had experienced a loss of meaning. The authority had lost its meaning and its power, religion and naturally the God were the other fundamental entities which lost their height in the minds of people. It should be remembered that those focal points such as the norms of the society and religion constitute an order and their disappearance creates a new order which might challenge the older one so did it.

The individual began to question his/her own existence and his/her own role in his/her life. S/he began to confront certain contradictions with the community and a cloud of meaninglessness covered his/her mind. Life, too, was seemingly floating on the surface of sea that is full of meaningless elements. Life, itself, was one of the most problematic issues which was waiting for an answer. Apart from all these particularities, there was something which was crucially significant and which became the central point to be discussed and to be philosophized by existentialism: Existence and its meaning in the universe. As the title of the philosophy itself manifests too. It is characteristic of existentialism to posit the importance of existence into the very centre of its concerns. Probability, abstract phases, and essence are not the concepts which existentialism deals with. As it has just been clearly uttered that it is the existence of the existing that should be taken into consideration and meanwhile that had been

ignored so far. Existentialism, or rather, the initiation of questioning of the existence and inability to find meaning in life and everything that the same life dictates such as communal and traditional way of life and all its obligations or rather its unwritten laws had introduced something, sometimes, something more interesting than existentialism: *Absurd* which will be deeply analyzed through the characterizations within the novels chosen for this project. Even though it is the theater which makes use of *absurd* most and effectively such as Eugène Ionesco³, Arthur Adamov⁴, Fernando Arrabal⁵ and Edward Albee⁶, novels by Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett are preferred in order to reflect the circumstance of *absurd* in narration. As it has been discussed by Martin Esslin in his introduction to *Absurd Drama*⁷, it is difficult to call “theatre or absurd” an organized movement. He, Esslin, quotes that:

“The theatre of the Absurd” has become a catch-phrase, much used and much abused. What does it stand for? And how can such a label be justified? Perhaps it will be best to attempt to answer the second question first. There is no organized movement, no school of artists, who claim the label for themselves. A good many playwrights who have been classed under this label, when asked if they *belong* to the Theatre of the Absurd, will indignantly reply that they belong to no such movement- and quite rightly so. For each of the playwrights

³ He was born in Slatina, Rumania, in 1912. Most of his childhood was spent in Paris although he did return to Rumania in early adulthood for a short period. He began to write plays more or less by accident, while learning English, but his first play *La Cantatrice Chauve* (1948) was not a success. This was followed by a series of one act plays (including *La Leçon* and *Les Chaises*, considered to be some of the most brilliant works in the Theatre of the Absurd), and in 1953 by a full length play *Amédée, ou comment s'en débarasser*. Ionesco has written several major plays since then and is an acknowledged leader of contemporary *avant-garde* drama in France. (From *Absurd Drama 1*)

⁴ He was born in Russia in 1908. He began his career in Paris in the 1920s as a surrealist poet, and then withdrew from literature in the 1930s while undergoing a mental crisis described in his autobiographical volume *L'aveu* (1938-43). He wrote his first play in the style of the Theatre of Absurd, *La Parodie* (1945), and followed it up with *L'Invasion* (both staged in 1950). (From *Absurd Drama 1*)

⁵ He was born in Spain, in 1932 but writes in French. Most of his plays are derivative, especially from Beckett; the most well known are *Pique-nique en campagne* (1952) and *Fando and Lis*. (From *Absurd Drama 1*)

⁶ Albee was born in the United States in 1928. He has experimented with the Theatre of the Absurd in *The Zoo Story* (1958) and *The American Dream* (1961), and with social criticism in *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1959). (From *Absurd Drama 1*)

⁷ A collection of plays from the Theatre of the Absurd.

concerned seeks to express no more and no less than his own personal vision of the world. (*Absurd Drama* 7)

How can absurd then be initiated by existentialism? Actually, the key point can be regarded as *contradiction*. It was the years of World Wars and the most common thing witnessed in those years was death and the thing always questioned was life and its meaning. However, life began to be perceived as meaningless due to the fact that a massacre or with an implacable phrase a chain of massacres was taking place.

The World Wars, as it has just been uttered had left permanent and deep marks on the sociology and psychology of humanity both in communal and individual sense. On the one hand, it obliterated the value of life, on the other hand, it posited violence into the centre of daily life. Individual had lost his/her belief in the meaning of life, religion, community and communal life. Conclusively, alienation and ignorance against life conquered most of the minds which destroyed the expectations of the person from the world surrounding him/her and which diminished the order. Even though there was a waiting, resolution had not come and instead of a social based survival, people began to give importance into their own individual freedom more and more and day by day. Despite the fact that it might seem as a simple reaction in itself, it was a revolutionary step as well and it was narrated in literary works of Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus whose novels will be closely read. The unity had lost its meaning and function which is to give confidence to the components of the unity itself. Death conquered almost all of the values and beliefs. It annihilated absolute truths. Meaning began to fail, in other words, it began to be identified as something meaningless. The absolute convictions towards particular conceptions and perceptions such as unquestionable strength of communal life, traditional way of understanding dictated by that “unquestionable strength of communal life”, undistinguished

individuals who had been suppressed by the desire of unity, began to slip from their throne and the revolution which have just been uttered, gradually, altered the understanding of all those facts occupying both physical and intellectual world of the mind. However, it was not a sharp and immediate revolution as it has been always difficult to change established values and beliefs. The process began with questioning. Firstly, the established values and beliefs were questioned, and then the individual began to question his/her position within or against all those purviews. For instance, Camus in his essay-book *L'Homme Révolté*⁸ questions this position by putting the concept of justice to the center. He analyzes the spark of revolt against the established rules and values. The step before the revolt is to ask the question: Isn't it the limit yet? The limit of imposition on individual by society is meant by the *limit*. He argues that there is a particular and inevitable moment when the person feels that it is high time for rebel and he tells "no" according to Camus beginning from that moment on.

The nihilistic reaction was another attitude which must have been accepted as a shelter or rather as a shield with the help of surrealism against the ferocity of the period. Anything that is real, that has real breath, mind and emotions, was slain, the intellect of a responsible individual, conclusively, began to lose his/her sympathy, respect and confidence for the reality and s/he gravitated towards nothingness or absurdity.

It (the nihilistic reaction of surrealism) was fed by an acceleration in scientific and social change which inevitably brought intellectual convulsion and confusion. At the same time the political situation rapidly worsened and second world conflict became certain. Political realities actually contributed to the decline of surrealism itself, but absolute revolt became increasingly common with the disappearance of more traditional humanist norms. (Cruickshank 6)

⁸ *The Rebel*(1951)

It is the new literature which was fed by “scientific and social change” that Cruickshank is pointing out. He, also, argues that the revolutionary aspect of that new literature began to be more apparent as, with his own saying, “the disappearance of more traditional humanist norms” became more visual to the intellectual perception. He, John Cruickshank, exemplifies this disappearance as it is shown below:

The war which followed, from the bombing of Warsaw⁹ through the systematic degradation of Auschwitz¹⁰ to the scientifically controlled destruction of Hiroshima, dealt further blows against humanist assumptions.(6)

Absurdity, Existentialism, and Alienation in Literature

Literature, in other words, one branch of the intellectual world, even though it may sometimes deals with non-life issues is not abstracted very often from what is happening in the world. It is the natural duty of literature to reflect the conditions of the era and take a position for or against these conditions. An author, for instance, cannot sometimes close his/her eyes and ears to what John Cruickshank talks about. S/he is not obliged to posit herself/himself in a contrasting attitude. Both attitudes (for and against) are acceptable since literature is fed by the social and political atmosphere of the period in which it is written.

The political atmosphere sometimes can be favored by the intellectual world which makes the atmosphere longevous. However, it can be reprobated as well which may develop alternative discourses. The authors and philosophers, therefore, develop such expressions that tell something about the situation of the time. Their language, themes and characters are inevitably the product of the conditions. They let or rather

⁹ The Bombing of Warsaw in World War II refers both to the terror bombing campaign on Warsaw by Luftwaffe during the September Campaign (siege of Warsaw and to the German bombing raids during the Warsaw Uprising. Germans did not hesitate to bomb civilian targets and hospitals marked with Red Cross symbol. In the course of the war approximately 84% of the city was destroyed, largely due to German mass bombings.

¹⁰ The largest of Nazi Germany's concentration camps.

oblige their characters to speak for them. It is their responsibility, in other words, their mission to be the voice of their creators. The character is the voice of the author and s/he can be regarded as the land on which the author founds her/his own perception and understanding. Conclusively, they developed an attitude and John Cruickshank summarizes that attitude as it goes on:

To the generation which came to maturity during this period -the post-1900 generation of Sartre, Camus, Malraux, Anouilh- absolute revolt often seemed an inevitable attitude. These writers had witnessed, at a crucial stage in their emotional and intellectual development, the failure of progress, of science, of democracy, of reason, and finally the failure of man.(6)

This generation, for sure, was not limited only to these intellectuals, there were authors and philosophers who experienced or rather who were exposed to “*the failure of progress, of science, of democracy, of reason, and finally the failure of man*” (Cruickshank 6) in each culture which was influenced by the war and the chaos it caused during the 20th century. Fyodor Mikhaylovich Dostoyevsky, Samuel Beckett, Yusuf Atılgan¹¹, Oğuz Atay¹² and James Joyce are some of the examples who tell *the failure and absurdity of man* in their fictions. Dostoyevsky, for instance, tells the story of a character that rejects the society and the norms imposed to individual by it in his novel *Notes from Underground*, Yusuf Atılgan and Oğuz Atay, on the other hand, approach to the case by using the absurdity more tensely when it is compared to Dostoyevsky. Their characters, as opposed to Dostoyevsky, are not in a conflict with the community, but, they are perceived as absurd by the communal traditional

¹¹ Yusuf Atılgan (1921-1989) can be regarded in a different and new line from communal doctrines that are expected to be reflected in literature such as glorifying institutional structures and regarding them perfect and unchangeable. In *The Idle Man* and *Hotel Anayurt*, he uses a realistic approach while picturing the characters and their inter-relational interaction with the society. Atılgan, on the one hand, is describing his characters and their desires; on the other hand he is picturing how they are trying to exist and survive in and against society.

¹² A post-modernist Turkish author (1934-1977) who is very famous for and influential by his novels *Tutunamayanlar*, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* and *Bir Bilim Adamının Romanı*

understanding as the protagonists in Atılgan's novels have a clear indifference to the values which makes them out of laws and rules. James Joyce, on the other hand, utters the failure in a clearer language directly, especially in his story collection, *Dubliners*.

The power of equilibrium began to change drastically and people were in a conspicuous search for a power to acknowledge their devotion. First, they tended to diverge from the absolute power that they created themselves: The God. Later, they began to realize themselves and their potential existences. Samuel Beckett in his most famous work, *Waiting for Godot*, murders "the God" by not letting him come. It is also the point which makes absurdity inevitable. The characters in the play are left against an eternal waiting. The only thing that they have the potential to do is "the action" of waiting. However, everything that they encounter is the absurdity of the mundane life and they let the reader see their absurd attitudes and behaviors. In his novels, on the other hand, he unfolds the search of the individual within the social environment without society and his or her indifference to the outer world. The protagonist in *Murphy*, whose name is Murphy too, has an indifferent attitude towards community which he reflects by escaping from any predicament that may socialize him. He is, on the other hand, in an endeavor to follow his own way. He ignores the tradition and he is, clearly, in an effort to be far from its norms. He, in other words, worships himself. He, in short, does not follow the way with the outer world surrounding him and it is clearly felt between the lines that he does not attribute any meaning to his own being and experiences. He imprisons himself with the limits of meaningless aura surrounding him. All those attitudes of him make him closer to the absurdity. He is far beyond any rule and order.

By definition, absurd is "having no rational or orderly relationship to human life" and "lacking order, meaning or value" as it is the truth with Murphy and his daily

life. His indifference towards the unity individualizes him and he is labeled as absurd. Absurd is not a philosophy or a kind of movement as it has been stated through Esslin's statements, too. It is better to *label* it as a label. It arises not as a necessity or obligation. It does not have any fundamental background, either. It has cropped out through a clear contrast between the whole and the part. It is not something out of them or independent of them. It is therefore a label used by both the unity and the pieces of it interchangeably.

As the examples show clearly, literature, especially, fiction had experienced a disposition towards the rejection of unconditioned power in terms of theme and characterization. This development can be related to the chaos of the period. As man's belief in great powers was wounded by the massacres which had occurred in the 20th century, s/he began to disorient from a traditional understanding and s/he began to find the exit within herself or himself. In his work *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, Cruickshank summarizes this disorientation (sashay) experienced and reflected within the literary pieces belonging to the authors such as Camus, Beckett and Dostoyevsky in the excerpt below:

One may say, I think, that Europe began to lose its transcendentalism with the general decline in Christian belief. This decline left behind it an uneasy nostalgia which the literature of revolt helped to turn from the worship of God to the worship of man. (6-7)

Samuel Beckett with Albert Camus reflects this substitution in a very clear and vigorous manner. It is almost impossible to encounter conspicuous references to the circumstances of the century. However, they make use of the conditions of the 20th century as a background for their literary works. On the one hand, the reader observes how the characters are trying to realize or rather to actualize their own existence by ignoring the social aura subjugating the protagonists both in *The Stranger* and in

Murphy on the other hand, the same reader encounters the absurdity of those characters against the communal traditions or the traditional expectations of a community from the individual. While it is seen that Camus's Meursault¹³ rejects any kind of submission except for the submission to himself, *Murphy* is ignorant of everything beginning with himself. David Sherman in his article "Camus's Meursault and Sartrean Irresponsibility" identifies the stranger in *The Stranger* as a character who "doesn't play the game" by quoting Camus' own statements.

Years after *The Stranger* was published, Camus characterized Meursault as an honest man who "doesn't play the game":

"Lying is not only saying what is not true. It is also and especially saying more than is true and as far as the human heart is concerned, saying more than one feels. This is what we all do everyday to simplify life. Meursault..... does not wish to simplify life. He says what is true. He refuses to disguise his feelings and immediately society feels threatened."(62)

The individual, by doing so, tries to actualize his/her own existence against and in the society by rejecting it to some extent; therefore, it is very natural that the society, in other words, all its norms "feel threatened". And they label all those derogative individuals as absurd. However, it is not only the society which feels threatened, the individual, as well, feels threatened by the whole circumstances brought by the authority and society that is dictated by it which swallows *the subjectivity* of the person. Jean Paul Sartre argues in his collection of statements titled *Existentialism and Human Emotions* that existentialism makes it possible for the individual to actualize himself/herself not from the social base but from a more internal perspective.

In any case, what can be said from the very beginning is that by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares

¹³ The protagonist in *The Stranger*

that every truth and every action implies a human setting and human subjectivity. (10)

Absurdity, partly, rises from this ideology as the person does not have anything to tell to the society or something which means anything on a social platform. S/he returns to her/his own subjectivity from the communal concerns and it is not happily and easily welcomed by the dogmatic or dictatorial tendencies. S/he tears into pieces the shackle of all this daily routine and all those sanctions passing through a crucial edge. S/he questions to what he is exposed or what is imposed on him/her. Albert Camus exemplifies footprints of this rebellion in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as it follows:

It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm- this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. “Begins”- this is important. (503)

It is this infertile circulation that is questioned here. Camus tries to discuss the daily life of an individual by focusing on the repetition which takes place continuously every following day and he is in an effort to question the meaning in that repetition if there is one. However, if there is no meaning within that repetition, the next and probably the most crucial question arise: What is the purpose of life? Both Camus and Beckett are striving to get and give an answer or at least a clue in their novels. Even though there is a clear reference to absurdity in each author, there is something different in them which can be felt by characterization and their presence in and against the world both in and out of them.

It can be clearly felt that both characters, Meursault and Murphy in Camus and Beckett respectively, are perceived as absurd by the people who stands for the

tradition as they, the protagonists, do not follow the ordered way and as they have a disobedient tendency against the rules, it is almost impossible to sense a meaning in their life. The daily concerns of life, in general, are meaningless for them. However, how? They perceive this meaninglessness from partly different and partly similar angles, but they reach to the same meaninglessness.

In this study, to sum up, the aim is to discuss the journey of the main characters, Meursault and Murphy in the novels *The Stranger* and *Murphy*, respectively and to analyze how they are forced to be perceived as absurd, inescapably, by the society or rather by the social norms which have transformed into a tradition as they have been repeated again and again.

The aim is not limited only to absurdity. There will be clear references to existentialism in a rougher sense as the concern for actualizing their existence makes the characters seem more and more absurd as they contradict the values which are obeyed by the entity with an almost full respect. In the first chapter of this study, the character in *The Murphy* and his problematic interaction will be depicted, in other words, the major concern of the first chapter will be to argue how Murphy *goes mad* while he is in an endless effort to *conquer* himself. In the second chapter, *The Stranger* will be deeply and closely discussed. The protagonist, Meursault and his contradictory attitude will be studied with references to absurdity, alienation and existentialism. The third section, additionally, will discuss the main thesis point: similarities and differences between the characterization, structure and the understanding of absurdity through absurdist statements between *The Stranger* and *Murphy*. And finally, the tension between the characters in both novels with their desires and the world, (it is meant the environment surrounding the individual with its rules, traditions and the approach it imposes on him) will be explored.

CHAPTER ONE

ABSURD, ALIENATION AND EXISTENTIAL TRACES IN *MURPHY* by SAMUEL BECKETT

A: General Remarks on Existential Traces and Absurdity in *Murphy*

Murphy, Beckett's first novel, is the story of an anti-protagonist character whose name is Murphy. *Murphy* is one of those novels which deals with the story of a character who tries to embody his existence through rejecting almost the whole community around as he has a clear contradiction to it. John Fletcher in his study on Samuel Beckett's novels of which title is *The Novels of Samuel Beckett* points out that:

Murphy's mind, as analyzed in this parody of classifications dear to hermetic philosophers, is, therefore, a blissful place of retreat, a closed system subject to no laws but its own. His apparent indolence is in fact a carefully reasoned indifference to the events of the realm in which he is completely impotent, according to the ethics of Arnold Geulincx (1624-69), the Belgian philosopher and follower of Descartes whose work Beckett discovered, and was deeply affected by, while at Dublin. (51)

It was literature from which philosophy took what opportunity was presented. This new literature hauled into the street those abstract ideas which had been argued on a more theoretical platform so far. In other words, this philosophy had been converted into stories telling the absurdist experiences of all kinds of people. It should not be rejected that philosophy has been dealing with human life since the ancient times till the 21st century and it will go on doing the same. However, it is absurdity through which the very daily attitudes of people are reflected most. It can be argued

that the individual must not be analyzed only with what happens in his/her mind and intellectual world in which s/he settles a point of view, how s/he reflects and experiences it in the street and in a conversation with his/her environment also has a crucial importance.

Literature is one of the most influential and practical tools to be able to realize this reflection. Philosophical texts may not be efficient in this context as they discuss thoughts and approaches on a more theoretical basis. However, a novel, a play or a story may help the intellectual to convey what has been thought philosophically to the reader via characterization and fiction. The character, in this point, acts as a prophet for the author or for the philosopher with a more general title. Existentialism and absurdity, therefore, are thought to be in a closer relationship with literature as they use philosophy and literature together. For instance, the reader does not feel a clear cut shifts in style while s/he is reading a novel such as *The Fall* by Camus or *Mercier and Camier* by Samuel Beckett, they, like some other authors, make use of their characters as the embodiment of their philosophical discourses. It is for sure is not a characteristic which is unique to them. As an outcome of this close relationship between literature and philosophy, it is inevitable to have philosophers who wrote literary texts and authors who are philosophers as well.

Samuel Beckett, with his literary masterpieces, has a special place among those names who had not gone beyond literature very often even though he has many philosophical arguments between the lines. He was born in 1906 in Dublin and he had reached a great fame until his death, 1989. However, his fame still goes on through his literary and philosophical masterpieces. Even though he is very well-known by his plays such as *Endgame*, *Happy Days* and his most known play *Waiting for Godot*, his novels and stories are worth to be praised such as *Watt*, *Malone Dies*, *Unnamable*,

Molloy, Mercier and Camier, and Murphy. In those novels, he doesn't go far beyond his plays in terms of philosophy and style of characterization. Actually, he sacrifices one of the advantages of plays for the sake of writing novels as well. In a novel, he has to be very careful in characterization and the style of narration as he does not have the chance of supporting his sentences with the acting of those sentences. Furthermore, he does not have the *luxury* of controlled visualization in a novel which he has in a play. However, it should not be underestimated that he has the chance of telling everything about his characters and he may let the reader to analyze them according to their own understanding through a detailed narration which is not that much possible in a play. He deals with individuals and their efforts to actualize their own existence within and against the community surrounding them. They do not feel obliged to follow the necessities which society judged them necessary to do. Conversely, their main concern is to open up new phases through which they can actualize their own existence and experiences what it introduces. It is inevitably accepted that this endeavor may end up with absurdity as absurdity is breaking the rule or order through protesting communally accepted and accustomed attitudes and behaviors.

With the absurd, the value which had been attributed to the philosophy, had experienced a drastic change. This new socio-philosophical perspective had reinforced the bridge between philosophy and humanity. It is meant human mind and all it thinks, feels and escapes by humanity. If classical philosophy is taken into consideration, it is seen that there is a slight and curtain-like block between the individual and the idea that philosophy conveys as it discusses the whole issue on a more theoretical basis. However, absurdist expansions in thought brought this understanding into a different phase as it is not only limited with philosophy. As it has been argued before, there is and needs to be an inevitable connection between disciplines such as literature,

psychology, philosophy and etc etc. This new phase began to drill the daily life of individual with its all kinds of details without ignoring even the most absurd points.

It is generally accepted that our behaviors and attitudes are shaped by the environment surrounding us. In addition, this determination is not only limited to our abstract existence through rules and traditions. Even the concrete beings of us can sometimes be shaped by the community via our professions, social interactions and people with whom we socialize. The community is instinctively in a tendency to attribute a meaning or a purpose into the very core of our lives. However, Murphy is seemingly in an endeavor to destroy that tradition by being in an effort to be master of his own being both physically and spiritually which is not encountered very often and which allows him to be in the very centre of vanity in terms of meaning and purpose in life. Actually, what he is seemingly trying to do is that instead of a socially controlled life including everything from the sunrise till the sunset in simple and stereotype day, he prefers a life which he will be free to do anything. It may seem as a conflict, but he desires the chance and opportunity of control to have the chance and opportunity to be able to lose it. Community, with all its traditions, norms and rules, does not let you go beyond its control. He might be in an effort to get a kind of satisfaction out of that kind of self-authorization and life-evacuation. By doing that his existence in the community is being decomposed. He becomes not one of those who is controlled, but the one who controls his own being. In the novel, Samuel Beckett conveys this point through a clear statement as it follows below:

Murphy's mind pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without. This was not an impoverishment, for it excluded nothing that it did not itself contain. Nothing ever had been, was or would be in the universe outside it but was already present virtual, or actual, or virtual rising into actual, or actual falling into virtual, in the universe inside it." (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 67)

As it has been stated above, Murphy is in search of including himself. The external world does not have that much significance if Murphy is excluded. It doesn't matter, physically or mentally. His main concern is to exist and he doesn't settle a bridge between himself and the world. His physical or mental presence is satisfactory enough for him. Thus, he does not fall into the pure idealism. He is not striving to attribute a particular philosophy on the back of his concern for existing. He opens up that issue by saying that:

This did not involve Murphy in the idealist tar. There was a mental fact and there was the physical fact, equally real if not equally pleasant. He distinguished between the actual and the virtual of his mind, not as between form and the formless yearning for form, but as between that of which he had both mental and physical experience and that of which he had mental experience only. Thus the form of kick was actual, that of caress virtual. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 67*)

Even though there is not a clear discourse telling it, in the guidance of what Beckett narrates, Murphy seems to be a kind of character who does not wish to deal with the abstract phase (He never rejects it clearly, though.), he regards the form of being as more actual and the idea or the sense of it as more virtual. In addition, his attitude to decide his understanding or approach can be interpreted as another concern for being the agent of his own being. He has the ability to ignore the existence of community which carries him to the threshold of absurdity. He does not feel any kind of obligation for attributing a meaning or responsibility for the social elements including society itself. He regards all those "necessities" as absurd and aimless. John Fletcher discusses this particular and dominant aspect of Murphy as it continues below:

For Murphy, like Belacqua¹⁴ but with more determination and therefore more success, is for ever striving to cut himself off from the opportunities of the world of sense and to retire into the calm of his mind. An essential mechanical aid is his rocking chair, into which he ties himself, naked, with scarves, and then sets himself rocking at speed. (49)

As it has just been described within the excerpt from Fletcher's study *The Novels of Samuel Beckett*, Murphy forms a different setting for himself which can also be labeled as absurd because he does not act in accordance with the community. He carries his own behaviors and habits into an absurd setting by breaking the order imposed and followed by the majority and this setting is totally independent of communal norms and expectations even acceptances. In the novel, Beckett narrates this absurd scene as it is shown below:

He sat naked in his rocking-chair of undressed teak, guaranteed not to crack, warp, shrink, corrode, or creak at night. It was his own, it never left him. The corner in which he sat was curtained off from the sun, the poor old sun in the Virgin again for the billionth time. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 1)

Even the smallest thing in which he can put himself can constitute a world for Murphy. It is not solely because of his asocial peculiarity, but since he has a perception which renders the outer world as meaningless and aimless, absurd in short. He carries himself out of the simplicity or rather normality of the external world and he is striving to hide himself. As it is manifested within the narration above, where he posits himself is a kind of place where the sun, "*the old sun*" can not illumine.

The second thing that is conveyed via the following part of the quoted passage above is that he is not interested in the whole universe. He simply draws his borders and he "ties himself" into these borders which clearly reflects how he is far from the

¹⁴ The full name is Belacqua Shuah. The protagonist of Samuel Beckett's novel, *More Pricks Than Kicks*

environment both physically and mentally and how he can actualize himself literally within his own limits, physically and mentally.

Seven scarves held him in position. Two fastened his shins to the rockers, one his thighs to the seat, two his breast and belly to the back, one his wrists to the strut behind. Only the most local movements were possible. Sweat poured off him, tightened the thongs. The breath was not perceptible. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 1*)

Samuel Beckett, from the very beginning, draws his Murphy, as someone doing meaningless things if he is considered from a social base. He is *apparently* in the society, but the way he has chosen to exist in this same society deports him. Even though he has the chance and the potential of staying away from the society without ropes keeping him “imprisoned”, Beckett ties his protagonist into a rocking chair which doubles his concern for absurdity. However, this circumstance is created by a necessity as Murphy is obliged to intrude the communal life. By tying himself, he suppresses or rather overcomes that kind of obligation. Ethel F. Cornwell points out that necessity and obligation in his article “Samuel Beckett: The Flight from Self” as a dilemma between the desire to live in his world and the inevitable interaction with the outer world as it is quoted below:

Murphy has long wished to escape from the “big world” into the “little world” and live entirely in the mind, which he conceives “not as an instrument but as a place”; but like his predecessor Belacqua, Murphy is continually drawn back into “the big world” by the demands of his body, “his deplorable susceptibility to Celia, ginger, and so on.” (pp 178-79) (Cornwell 42-43)

Murphy has very humanly desires and demands in general which can also be met reasonable by the community. However, it is his method and preference which open the gate of absurdity to the reader. He, as an individual, not only keeps his mind

away from the external world, but also obliges his body to be alienated from that externality. He chooses a meaningless way to actualize that purpose: being tied into a chair. On the one hand, he seems to give the bigger importance to the mind, on the other hand he perverts his mind to hide his physical world (his body) from the environment surrounding him. Even though it can be interpreted as if he is in an effort to keep his physical existence alienated from the outer world as life has no purpose or no direction to be gone, it is his mind which has the crucially significant role in determination. How can this be explained? Cornwell is in an endeavor to ask the same question and to produce an answer to that fundamental question. He utters that:

The inevitable question of course is: if life is so meaningless, and self-creation such an effort, why go on living? A question the Beckett hero repeatedly asks himself, but never answers. He simply retreats from the physical world into the inner recesses of the mind, from which there is no way out, as Beckett's later heroes discover. The various stages of the retreat, and the results of it are best seen in *Murphy*, *Three Novels*, *Stories and Texts for Nothing* and *How It is*. In them, one finds a progressive flight from self-identity- from Murphy, Molloy, Moran, Malone to a series of "Unnamables"... and a progressive shift in tone from humor to desperation. (Cornwell 41)

It is clearly true that on the one hand the characters are looking and striving for a self-authority against the communal one, on the other hand they fall into a despair as the communal institutions are much stronger and effective than the individual enactment. The despair in *Murphy* is carried to the reader via his ignorance towards the community and the necessity that he feels for the same community. Murphy, on the one hand, in a manifesting mood and behavior, tries to put emphasize on his desire to be alienated from the norms and traditions, on the other hand, he falls into the garden of absurdity due to his unaccustomed and deviating style. He ignores not only socially accepted values and ways of communication but also everything coming from the

outside world. The description of the character that has been quoted before as being naked and tied in a rocking chair goes on with the same absurdity, with the same breaking attitude as it starts. He is not pleased by light and sound as they are coming from outside him. Beckett narrates that peculiarity by describing his rendezvous with Celia who has a strange relationship with Murphy.

It was after ten when Celia reached the mew. There was no light in his window, but that did not trouble her, who knew how addicted he was to the dark. She had raised her hand to knock the knock that he knew, when the door flew open and a man smelling strongly of drink rattled past her down the steps. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 19)

He, in an interestingly absurd attitude, is keeping himself away from the light. This attitude has reached into such a level that the narrator labels this alienation as a kind of *addiction*. It can be renamed as *an addiction to alienation*. This addiction is not only limited to darkness. The more Celia steps into the house, the more the reader is introduced to Murphy. “No sound came from Murphy’s room, but that did not trouble her, who knew how addicted he was remaining still for long periods (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 20)”. This excerpt shows one more detail about Murphy and it is his addiction to silence. The reader is now given two details about Murphy and both of them show that the protagonist has a reactive (opposing) behavior against the circumstances from the simplest to the most complicated which may encourage him to socialize with communal environment but not the community. In addition, he forces himself into a kind of meaninglessness. He has transformed himself into such a character who is addicted to darkness and silence and who imprisons himself into his room and onto his chair. A total alienation conquers his existence as he did not favor light and communication which bring him *voice* that he did not like. That much alienation reminds the reader absurdity as the novel, itself, develops in a rebellious

mood from the very beginning to the end. He goes beyond almost everything. Anything which keeps him away from the rules and traditions can be acceptable for our protagonist.

The character, Murphy, is portrayed with an attribution of a meaningless voice into his actions and he limits himself as much as he can since he has got the idea that there is no meaning outside. The most concrete evidence for such an attitude is that he makes only the local movements possible for his survival in a “restricted life” which he, himself, want it to be as it is currently. However, Beckett has another concern for Murphy’s existence and absurdity to be discussed. He reveals that particular concern via a conversation between his protagonist and Celia who is a prostitute having a hope to found a life with Murphy.

“Why the black envelope,” she said, and the different-colored letters?”
“Because Mercury” said Murphy, “god of thieves, planet *par excellence*¹⁵ and mine has no fixed color.” He spread out the sheet folded in sixteen. “And because this is blackmail.”(*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 22)

It is possible for the reader to catch clues for his effort to be different and an outsider from the conversation above. He prefers to choose the one which symbolizes the planet that does not have a fixed color. Murphy, via his attitudes, is perceived as someone who is not fixed and who is not a ring within the whole chain. He is always the one who breaks and who goes beyond and he has a concern to perform that attitude with almost every opportunity he catches. The letters and the colors exemplify his concern to actualize this. As he regards that kind of individuality as a necessity, he praises freedom mentally or physically. He sometimes conjuncts his body and mind. In addition, he sometimes falls into a confliction occurring between them. However, he

¹⁵ Being an example of excellence; superior; preeminent

still tries to protect his freedom and he does not wish to be a stereotype. Ethel F. Cornwell discusses this issue of freedom as it is stated below:

Murphy, Beckett's first novel and his second work of fiction, not only demonstrates the fears and attitudes typical of the Beckett hero, but offers an actual map of the mental region to which that hero eventually retires. (Cornwell 42)

It is clear that the mind, "the mental region" with Cornwell's words is the ultimate point where Murphy carries his existence. While doing this movement, he does not follow the way with everybody. As it is shown in the very beginning, Murphy rejects the external world. He does not have the tendency to attribute any meaning to it. As a result of that attitude, he also breaks the rules of that external world. Cornwell continues to discuss Murphy's attitude.

Echoing Geulinx, a seventeenth century Cartesian, Murphy decides that one's only freedom is in the mind, which is also the only area one can control; therefore one should concentrate on the mental sphere and ignore the outside world where freedom and control are impossible. (Cornwell 42)

It is now inevitable for Murphy to locate the outer world just opposite him both mentally and physically. As Cornwell discusses that Murphy can practice his freedom and can have the control of it, only if he can isolate himself from the outer sphere which may constrain his control of himself and the freedom of self. This approach procreates an unavoidable embroilment between the community and Murphy, the protagonist. Murphy practices his mind and what it tells him to do. In addition it is the same mind encouraging him to ignore the traditions or accepted values for social interactions. However, Murphy can not experience his ignorance towards the outside as he wishes it to be. The reader is given an atmosphere of challenge between Murphy and "elements" from that external world. It should be noted that even though Murphy

is characterized as someone who isolates himself from communal interactions, that does not mean that he has no relationship. He has relationships, of course, but his way of approaching towards those interactions is a little bit different from the *accustomed* understanding and practices of interactions. He has no concern to shape the people he communicates. Actually, he has no concern for commuting. In the novel, the person with whom he has the closest affair is Celia and he does not care for her. However, Celia attributes a lot meaning to Murphy. Beckett clearly reflects the power of that attribution in the novel as it is quoted below.

Celia was conscious of two equally important reasons for insisting as she did. The first was her desire to make a man of Murphy! Yes, June to October; counting in the blockade she had almost five months' experience of Murphy, yet the image of him as a man of the world continued to beckon her on. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 42)

As the excerpt from the novel indicates, Celia has an apparent endeavor to actualize Murphy. She has a kind of desire to *give* a character to him as her impression of him during "five months' experience of Murphy" is that Murphy is not someone who is suitable for the world, the little world that Celia can observe around. Therefore, she falls into an inevitable necessity to change him and to shape him to make someone suitable. However, Murphy's attitude does not experience a change or traces of change. He continues what he continues to do and Samuel Beckett conveys it to the reader with the same clarity as he has been doing.

She looked at him helplessly. He seemed serious (upon a speech on his body, his mind and Celia¹⁶). But he had seemed serious when he spoke of putting on his gems and lemon, etc. She felt as she felt so often with Murphy, spattered

¹⁶ "What have I know?" he said. "I distinguish. You, my body and my mind." He paused for his monstrous proposition to be granted. Celia did not hesitate, she might never have occasion to grant him anything again. "In the mercantile gehenna," he said, "to which your words invite me, one of these will go, or two, or all. If you, then you only; if my body, then you also; if my mind, then all. Now?" (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 27)

with words that went dead as soon as they sounded; each word obliterated, before it had time to make sense, by the word that came next: so that in the end she did not know what had been said. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 27)

Beckett continues to give particular clues showing Murphy's interesting and equally absurd way of approaching to the circumstances surrounding him. The passage from the novel quoted above discusses how Murphy is a simple and a complicated character. Even this sentence¹⁷ shows his attitude or way of understanding things around him. He does not perceive and convey very important and very simple issues in a different way. As he may give equal importance to lemon and philosophical ideas, it is not possible for Celia to be able to get a clear understanding of Murphy. The only thing happening between Celia and Murphy is a lack of communication which is full of "murdered" words because his words mean nothing, almost nothing for Celia since every next word deletes the previous one.

It may seem that Murphy is aware of almost everything that he can perceive and experience. However, he takes a certain attitude as a shelter against the meaninglessness of all those "everything" and he uses the language as a tool or as a weapon in order to deal with it. Apart from language, he is making use of Celia against his loneliness, absurdity and even Celia herself. He does not pay attention to her needs and desires and even to what he has been feeling for himself. It is, again, himself that he cares most and only as well. He is seemingly in an effort to create a circumstance which may not give the people around him the chance of permanent or long-term interaction with him. Moreover, he is too self confident as well. He thinks that he can shape time, people, and conditions around him. As a result, sudden and permanent

¹⁷ The passage from the novel quoted above discusses how Murphy is a simple and a complicated character.

changes are not offbeat for him. He doesn't take the world seriously as he has his own world turning around him. In a conversation between him and Celia, the reader may feel how he is addicted to his own concerns and how he is endeavoring to shape the circumstances as he wishes which may be interpreted with his efforts to *exhibit* his own existence:

“I believe you're leaving me,” said Celia. “Perhaps for just a little while you compel me to” said Murphy. “For good and all.” “Oh no” he said, “only for just a little while at the maximum. If for good and all I would take the chair”.
(*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 86*)

This short dialogue between him and Celia shows that the only real escape that he can actualize is within him. He does not let the external world to take part in his freedom. Namely, an escape for Murphy can be achieved only with him as he is almost an alienated individual bounded onto his own chair. However, it is not that much easy for him to achieve what he has been trying to realize. Even though, he is not a type of person who can work at job, he manages to get a job at The Magdalen Mental Mercyseat¹⁸ as a ward orderly.

¹⁸ A kind of hospital which is founded for patients suffering from psychological disorders such as paranoid and melancholy.

**B: THE SYSTEM AND HOW IT BUILDS A PRISON-LIKE HOSPITAL FOR AND
AGAINST THE ABSURDITY IN THE SOCIETY AND FOUCAULDIAN
INTERPRETATIONS**

The job that Murphy has found represents a striking irony for the novel. Throughout the novel, Murphy is striving for being out of the outcomes of mundane life which is automatically written by the system as he finds that repetition meaningless and purposeless. As a conclusion of those, he, himself, is seen as absurd by the system that Murphy rejects. Ironically enough, Murphy is in the center of the absurdity in the MMM that he has been rejecting with his own absurdity that is rejected by the *orderly life*. As it has been mentioned, Murphy is not a character for daily routines and repetitions which are experienced every day, every hour, every minute, and even every second.

He would be expected to make beds, carry trays, clean up regular messes, clean up casual messes, read thermometers, write charts, wash the bedridden, give medicine, hound down its effects, warm bedpans, cool fevers, boil gags, sterilize when in doubt, honor and obey the male sister, wait hand, foot and mouth on the doctor when he came, look pleasant. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 96*)

Murphy's duties are totally determined by the system, the meaningless monotonous system that he ignores. In addition, it is very tragic and *meaningful* that he is currently at the core of this system doing all the meaningless things he has been neglecting and rejecting so far. He is under control and he has *significant* responsibilities from now on. The excerpt above shows the list of his certain *missions* he needs to complete. They are all which Murphy has found meaningless and weird so far, but now he is obliged to spend almost all of his time by doing them. What's more,

he has no authority or initiative. Beckett continues to draw the limits of his accountabilities in order to let the reader see the difference between Murphy, the employed and Murphy, the unemployed. The unemployed one was rejecting almost any kind of responsibility which may subjugate him into oppression, but he chooses to be employed which does the same thing. He is responsible for or rather employed in the MMM, but he has no choice in his actions. He has to obey what is told.

He would never lose sight of the fact that he was dealing with patients not responsible for what they did or said. He would never on any account allow himself to be affected by the abuse, no matter how foul and unmerited, that would be poured out upon him. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 96*)

He is totally neutralized by the rules of his job and he, strangely enough does not have any tendency to escape from all those obligations. He seems to have the curiosity and wish to experience what has been imposed on him from the moment he began his brand new job since the conditions under and against which the patients are trying to survive has turned out to be sympathetic for him.

The patients seeing so much of the nurses and so little of the doctor, it was natural that they should regard the former as their persecutors and the latter as their savior. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 96*)

Murphy, even though he was not aware in the first place, has moved into a new phase. He is now in a kind of concrete micro-world having walls and windows that is full of socially disturbed people. In addition, it is his duty to take care of all those socially disturbed people. If Murphy is regarded on his own as a character, the reader can not claim that he was a proper individual. He is also a socially disturbed person. He has been experiencing very serious problems with the society as he is regarded or rather perceived as an out-law character by the norms of it. As the community and everything that is dictated by it create a kind of suppression, Murphy finds it difficult

to obey almost all of them and he strongly desires to *fly* beyond this controlling psychological and sociological pressure. However, he is now, ironically enough, the one who is given the duty of controlling the ones who are out-laws. On the other hand, he doesn't have any kind of authority, though.

He would never on any account be rough with a patient. Restraint and coercion were sometimes unavoidable, but must always be exerted with the utmost tenderness. After all it was a mercy seat. If single handed he could not handle a patient without hurting him, let him call the other nurses to his assistance. He would never lose sight of the fact that he was a creature without initiative. He had no competence to register facts on his own account. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 96*)

The passage quoted above creates a kind of ambience which lets Murphy perceived as an observer. Moreover, he has permission for only doing the basic necessities for the patients such as making beds, carrying tray, and writing charts. He was not allowed to take part in the actual purpose of the center that is to deal with the psychology of the patients. The Magdalen Mental Mercyseat, on the other hand, has its own way of implementation and it performs its own realities and even they may have "the courage" and "obligations" to write their own realities on the occasions that they find appropriate.

There were no facts in the MMM except those sanctioned by the doctor. Thus, to take a simple example, when a patient died suddenly and flagrantly, as was sometimes bound to happen even in the MMM, let him assume nothing of the kind when sending for the doctor. No patient was dead till the doctor had seen him. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 97*)

It can be argued that Samuel Beckett chooses The Magdalen Mental Mercyseat as a microcosm on purpose as he may have the desire to reflect how the world, the macro-world has a great effect on the character of an individual and how appears a tension

between her/him and the unity. The reader can visualize the repression applied by the society more and more apparent in the MMM via the case of Murphy. The condition in the macro-world is not very different from the condition in the MMM from the perspective of Murphy. Samuel Beckett questions not only the strength of traditions and rules determining the daily life of ourselves, but also the destructive and suppressive influences of it. He assumes that authority and system have such a powerful and influential image that they can change and postpone even the most concrete facts. As a result, the individual finds it necessary to look for an exit for himself/herself which may let him/her experience his/her way of understanding the circumstances from and in this territory which seemingly has *no exit*. Apart from all these, as it has been uttered before, Murphy has a feeling of sympathy for the patients in the MMM. He has also a feeling of jealousy for them due to the fact that they can be free to get an attitude of indifference towards the life in the MMM and in “the world” as well which is more difficult and inappropriate for Murphy. Ethel F. Cornwell, in his previously mentioned article “Samuel Beckett: The Flight from the Self” discusses the issue of jealousy by making references to the circumstances of world as it follows:

Murphy envies the inmates of the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat (and is willing to care for them) because of their “self-immersed indifference to the contingencies of the contingent world”: this is the condition “which he had chosen for himself as the only felicity and achieved so seldom (p-168)” The attempt to cure the patients by bridging the gulf between the inner and the outer world is revolting to Murphy” whose experience as a physical and rational being obliged him to call sanctuary what the psychiatrists called exile and to think of the patients not as banished from a system of benefits but as escaped from a colossal fiasco” (pp. 177-178). (Cornwell 42)

Murphy has a clear tendency to form an emotional link between himself and the patients as they can freely do the practice of indifference. What’s more, he is

making references to the situation of the outer world for which he uses the phrases of “contingencies of the contingent world”. This is another reason for him to deal with those patients. He is not satisfied as well with those “contingencies of the contingent world”. However, as it has been quoted before, it is not possible to escape from this “big world” into “the little world” as the little world, as in the case of the MMM, may harvest the system which operates “properly” in “the big world”.

Even though Murphy has a kind of sympathy for the patients in the MMM, he is not able to grasp the conditions of the MMM during their first interaction or the first time he beholds them. The picture of their first encounter is a cold and equally dead picture as Murphy is trying to imagine what he can experience with all those people in the following days.

There were not many patients about as Murphy followed Bom¹⁹ through the wards. Some were at matins, some in the gardens, some could not get up, some would not, some simply had not. But those that he did see were not at all the terrifying monsters that might have been imagined from Ticklepenny’s²⁰ account. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 101-102)

The very initial impression is not that much moving. He is not surprised, but he does not conceive the scene with an imperturbable state of mind, either. It seems as if he is gazing at a painting in an art gallery. Murphy, as he walks, continues to look that “painting” and Beckett narrates his observations in the excerpt below:

Melancholics, motionless and brooding, holding their heads or bellies according to type. Paranoids, feverishly covering sheets of paper with complaints against their treatment or verbatim reports of their inner voices. A hebephrenic playing the piano intently. A hypomaniac teaching slosh to a Korsakow’s syndrome. An emaciated schizoid, petrified in an tooping attitude

¹⁹ “They mounted directly to the first floor and Murphy was submitted to the male sister, Mr Timothy (“Bom”) Clinch, younger twin and dead spit of Bim (The head male nurse, Mr Thomas (“Bim”) Clinch).” (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 97)

²⁰ He is the one on behalf of whom Murphy works in the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat.

as though condemned to an eternal *tableau vivant*, his left hand rhetorically extended holding a cigarette half smoked and out, his right, quivering and rigid, pointing upward. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 101-102)

The quoted excerpt above is describing or rather giving the picture of the first encounter between Murphy and some of the patients in the MMM. The first and the most striking point during this first encounter is the lack of interaction not only between Murphy and them but also between themselves. Murphy, even in this very short time, is able to separate the patients into different groups. Actually, it is not that much clear whether Murphy knows as much as Beckett narrates. However, there is a detail which is clear enough for the reader. Melancholics, paranoids, and all the other categories listed within the excerpt do not have any kind of interaction or traces of communication. They are pictured as if they are in trance with their “own” illnesses.

In addition, Bom who has been working in the MMM and has become one of Murphy’s colleagues and Murphy are depicted as if they are watching a kind of performance such as a play or a concert. It is clearly described that they, the patients, are all socially disturbed people and Beckett portrays them within their own nature of the problems against which they are struggling. It is interesting that if the peculiarities of those patients are carefully analyzed, it may sense that Murphy has just been divided into pieces and each of his piece has turned out to be a separate person in the MMM. It is better to remind that Murphy has always desired to escape into the little world as he does not have the ability to constitute a healthy and proper social communications with the outer big world. He possesses almost all of the problems that are mentioned one by one through the patients. In order to put emphasis on the absurdity of the patients in the MMM, he keeps them far from each other both physically and mentally.

The MMM, from the very beginning, is pictured as a place which operates through a happily accepted system and everything are forced to be regular and this regularity is actualized via a puissant authority. However, the reader is introduced to the absurdity within that “well organized” system, after the first encounter between Murphy and the patients and as he walks through them the absurdity is felt more and more apparently by the reader. On the one hand, it is possible to visualize the order and the laws of “the environment” within the walls of the MMM, on the other hand it is apparent that patients are out-laws, they are the ones who have broken the management of the system both in the big world, the world which is out of the MMM and in the little world, the world of the MMM. Actually, the MMM is also a chain of the wheel of the big world.

Thanks to the MMM, the big world may have the chance of hiding the absurdity of those patients from the system. In addition, Murphy himself chooses to be within the borders of this “little world”. The MMM is not like a rehabilitation center, but it seems like a cemetery as it keeps the patients away from the surface of the big world and digs them into the very depth of itself. It would make them hidden or rather unseen and society’s image would not be *jolted*. In addition, there is no concern for their future. If they die, they die. The MMM is very similar to the ship that Michel Foucault²¹ is talking about in *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*²²:

The madman on his crazy boat sets sail for the other world, and it’s from the other world that he comes when he disembarks. The enforced navigation is

²¹ Michel Foucault was born on October 15, 1926 in Poitiers, France. Foucault held teaching positions from 1954 to 1958, teaching French at the universities of Uppsala, Warsaw, and Hamburg. He received his doctorat d’état in 1959 under the supervision of Georges Canguilhem who is one of the most important twentieth century French philosophers in the philosophy of science. His doctoral thesis was published two years later with the title *Madness and Unreason: A History of Madness in the Classical Age (Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique)*

²² *Madness and Unreason: History of Madness* (1961): Michel Foucault handles the archeology of madness beginning from the Medieval Times during which madness was accepted as an inevitable part of the daily life till the 18th century which regarded madness as something dangerous and found it necessary to imprison them or exclude them to be able to keep them away from the same daily life.

both rigorous division and absolute Passage, serving to underline in real and imaginary terms the liminal situation of the mad in Medieval society. (11)

It is clear that there is a passage between two worlds both in *Murphy* and what Foucault discusses, and the madness is excommunicated from the big world as Beckett identifies. It is not only the madness that is excommunicated but also almost every piece of rebellion and absurdity which may “damage” the order or the image of the order. The case in *Murphy* shows itself via the isolation of the socially disturbed people from the society with the help of the MMM. Foucault pictures almost the case by using the metaphor of ship passing from the one world that is the big one in “Murphyian” terms into the unknown world that will keep them out of the system. It is clear that both the mad people in *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* and patients in the MMM of *Murphy* have broken the rules and traditions of the society as they think that life is meaningless. As a result, they assume that it is meaningless to obey the rules determined by the “weird” norms of the society. However, it is probably neglected by them that they were not more powerful than what they have rejected. The system is able to preserve its management and it has developed solutions or more norms to be able to overcome or rather undertake the absurdity of all those people. Michel Foucault continues as it is quoted below:

It was a highly symbolic role, made clear by the mental geography, involved where the mad man was confined at the gates of the cities. His exclusion was his confinement, and if he had no prison other than the threshold itself he was still detained at this place of passage. In a highly symbolic position he is placed on the inside of the outside, or vice versa. A posture that is still his today. If we admit that what was once the visible fortress of social order is now the castle of our own consciousness. (11)

The most gripping phrase through the passage above is “inside of the outside” which may summarize the exclusion best. If the MMM is handled, it will be more visual for the reader that all the patients and Murphy is inside that rehabilitation center, but it should be noted that this center which includes Murphy and all the other patients is excluded by the world which is called “the big world” by Beckett’s Murphy and “inside” by Foucault. What is the reason for that exclusion? The reason is the image of the system. The system should be depicted in order and whenever there appears a disorder or absurdity, *the machine* of exclusion appears, too.

In *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, they are the madman breaking the order, so they are imprisoned in a ship, and in *Murphy*, they are the patients and Murphy whose duty is taking care of those patients. Apart from all these, both the madman in the ships and Murphy and “his patients” are stuffed in a cage-like places just because their personal attitudes towards the whole world. In addition, they are left motionless as well since they do not have a specific or arranged direction to follow. Wherever they turn their feet, they regard movement as meaningless. The madman of Foucault experiences that kind of despair on the sea. Foucault describes it by making references to uncertainty and ambivalence.

Water and navigation had that role to play. Locked in the ship from which he could not escape, the madman was handed over to the thousand-armed river, to the sea where all paths cross, and the great uncertainty that surround all things.

(11)

A similar uncertainty and imprisonment is being described in *Murphy* with the MMM. They, the patients, can not escape from there. They even can not die unless the MMM confirms their death. Everything is under register and a fact becomes a fact only if it is registered and approved by the MMM. It has been mentioned a few times previously, the MMM is the place which can be labeled as “the little world”, but it is not different

from the big world if they are handled within the issues of management and the position of the individuals. They were the inevitable and inescapable authority and repression from which Murphy had been in an effort to escape by ignoring them via his meaningless and weird attitudes.

It is ironic that the place that he managed to escape practices almost the same negativity over its *dwellers*. However, there is a significant difference and it is the exclusion of absurdity. There is not the concept of absurdity in the MMM as the MMM itself is totally a meaningless and an absurd place from Murphy's perspective. In other words, all the patients in the MMM are the ones who have already broken the social order and fallen into the absurdity and this center is a *habitat* for them where they can practice their absurdity. That's the exact point which has a direct parallelism between *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* and *Murphy*. Both the ship and the MMM in *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* and *Murphy* respectively, act as a part of the system from which the madman and the patients are endeavoring to escape. The system with its all norms, traditions and obligations builds a cage that may help it to control the ones whom it can not control within the macro-world; therefore, a micro-world is founded to make the control less difficult.

Cornwell has already quoted in his article as well, but it would be useful to make emphasis on what Beckett narrates about the MMM and the circumstances of the patients and Murphy in there once more. Murphy, from the first moment he had stepped into the rehabilitation center, has a kind of attitude as if he is an inspector or observer; therefore, he keeps his senses very alert and he develops implications, too. Samuel Beckett pictures Murphy's understanding of the MMM through the excerpt below:

All this was duly revolting to Murphy, whose experience as a physical and rational being obliged him to call sanctuary what the psychiatrists called exile and to think of the patients not as banished from a system of benefits but as escaped from a colossal fiasco. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 107*)

Experiences and facts can be perceived or interpreted differently by different focuses. Samuel Beckett tries to emphasize that even though it seems as if the system excluded the patients and they are imprisoned into that cage-like hospital, it should be noted that what is left outside the center is, in Beckett's terms, "a colossal fiasco". As a result, the condition should not be assessed with a full pessimism. It is an inevitable and undeniable truth that all the patients have been drawn out of the system due to the fact that they have been breaking the order and damaging the image of the system just like Murphy. Beckett uses this cemetery-like rehabilitation center both as a favor and punishment for Murphy.

Murphy has always been in an effort to run an isolated life as he does not have the ability and desire to behold a meaningful particle within the society and way of life introduced by that society. As a conclusion he always tries to be out of the chain which makes him perceived as an outlaw individual. He, thanks to the MMM, has a kind of freedom letting him do anything he wishes. However, it is not that much optimistic, Murphy is kept under almost a total control. It is ironic that his duty is to keep control as well. As it is seen clearly, almost every detail or interaction reflected by Beckett, has a kind absurd phase. On the one hand, the reader encounters a character who goes beyond the norms and requirements of a communal life by ignoring them on the other hand the same reader reads the circumstances experienced by the same character who goes beyond his own purposes by accepting what he has already rejected: an external control which is founded by community.

The only difference between Murphy and patients is that it was Murphy's own choice to work as a ward orderly, but he is not different from the patients. He is a socially disturbed person too. As it has been argued before via Cornwell's statements, Murphy has a kind of feeling of jealousy because of the indifference of the patients. It should also be noted that this indifference is not conscious. They do not know what they are doing or what kind of attitude they have, conversely, Murphy, interestingly enough, is aware of everything and he chooses to be as such. He uses "indifference" as a shield and he does not exhaust himself by digging the fact lying behind his indifference. The MMM provides him a territory outside of the outer world and he does his best to examine that outer world.

The nature of outer reality remained obscure. The men, women and children of science would seem to have as many ways of kneeling to their facts as any other body of illuminati. The definition of outer reality, or of reality short and simple, varied according to the sensibility of the definer. But all seemed agreed that contact with it, even the layman's muzzy contact, was a rare privilege. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 107*)

The reality of the outer world is eulogized by Beckett as he claims that a contact with that reality is a "privilege". As a result, Murphy and the patients are debarred from that privilege. Beckett describes them as "cut off". The case is different for Murphy, though. He regards that contact as a punishment as it may bring obedience as well.

On this basis the patients were described as "cut off" from reality, from the rudimentary blessings of the layman's reality, if not altogether, as in the severer cases, then in certain fundamental respects. The function of treatment was to bridge the gulf, translate the sufferer from his own pernicious little private dung heap to the glorious world of discrete particles, where it would be his inestimable prerogative once again to wander, love, hate, desire, rejoice and howl in a reasonable balanced manner, and comfort himself with the society of others in the same predicament. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 107*)

Murphy is not one of the patients in the MMM, but, it is interesting that the aims of the MMM for its patients are the aspects which are “lacked” by Murphy as well. For instance, he can not settle a balanced interaction with the society, either. On the other hand, he does not want to lose his initiation to govern himself. It is true that he accepts the conditions at first, but as time passes he loses his ability to be permissive and he begins to react as it is shown below:

Murphy was revolted by Suk’s attribution of this strange talent solely to the moon in the Serpent at the hour of his birth. The more his own system closed round him, the less he could tolerate its being subordinated to any other. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 110*)

The excerpt quoted above is a clear manifestation of Murphy’s rebellion-like reaction against the system which may have the potential of limiting his own system. The passage clearly speaks of Murphy’s desire for individuality. He suddenly reacts against the existence of restrictive power. This kind of reaction brings a natural alienation process as he rebel against the system which gives a major importance to its healthy operation. If it encounters a rebellion or any kind of negative reaction, it regurgitates the owner of that reaction out of its body. As time passes, the meaning of the MMM, or rather the patients in the MMM begins to change for Murphy. He sanctifies the patients and the relationship with them. Besides he is unhappy and disappointed when the time of farewell arrives.

Nor did he succeed in coming alive in his mind anymore. He blamed this on his body, fussy with its fatigue after so much duty, but it was rather due to the vicarious autology that he had been enjoying since morning, in little Mr Endon²³ and all the other proxies. That was why he felt happy in the wards and

²³ “However, as appealing as Murphy finds the physical organization of Magdalen Mental Mercyseat, the asylum’s chief attraction proves to be its patients, and its chief patient proves to be Mr Endon (*Samuel Beckett and the End of Modernity*, 52)”.

sorry when time came to leave them. He could not have it both ways, not even the illusion of it. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 113*)

The passage can be regarded as an indication and evidence that Murphy could adapt himself into the hospital, and he apparently considers that building and the patients who have been under treatment as his own *communal* surrounding. The alienation of all patients in the MMM is one of the most influential elements hidden behind that easy and welcomed adaptation, as he himself can not put up with the society and the system introduced by it. As a conclusion, there appears a close relationship or an emotional or rather pragmatic (for Murphy) communication between Murphy and the patients.

Why was it that much easy for Murphy? The answer to that question is hidden in Murphy's character, though. He has been depicted as an absurd and indifferent character who possesses meaningless behaviors from the very beginning of this story. It is very natural that he does not care how the interaction "happens". It just happens and he experiences it. He is indifferent, isolated and absurd as he goes beyond the rules or the norms of the community. Why would not it be that much easy (?)

By day he had not felt the gulf so painfully as he did now, walking round and round the wreck. By day there was Bom and other staff, there were the doctors and visitors, to stimulate his sense of kindred with the patients. There were the patients themselves, circulating through the wards and in the gardens. He could mix with them, touch them, speak to them, watch them imagine himself one of them. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 143*)

Beckett, in a very simple and equally sincere style, talks about how Murphy is socializing with the patients with whom he could not communicate at first. However, as it is indicated through the passage, Murphy can do any kind of communication with them now. Moreover, it is that communication between him and those patients which

makes the hospital bearable place. Murphy feels uneasy and impatient without the patients.

But in the night of Skinner's there were none of these adminicles, no loathing to love from, no kick from the world that was not his, no illusion of caress from the world that might be. It was as though the microcosmopolitans had locked him out. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 113*)

Murphy is jamming between the worlds day by day. On the one hand he has developed a kind of interaction with the patients and with the whole absurdity thanks to his own absurdity which can be sensed in particular "time pieces". When he is away from the patients, he severely feels the loneliness and melancholy of the alienation which makes him feel that he is locked out. On the other hand, when he is among the patients, he can develop a close link with them. He can even sense that he is one of them. However, when he is desolate, he suddenly realizes the gap and he becomes aware of the reality which utters that "he is not among and one of them". He, in despair, accepts his desolation and *homeless* or rather *placeless* circumstance. Neither the world of patients nor *the outer reality* can provide "a communal territory" for Murphy. In chapter three, the despair that has been experienced by Murphy will be cleared through a comparison between *Murphy* and *The Stranger* by positing their ends to the center.

All in all, as it has been closely studied, Murphy, the protagonist of the novel, can not create a link between himself and the community which he called "the outer reality". Every act he does and every word he utters have the potential to be perceived as absurd as he favors the loneliness and the individuality which has a strong relationship and parallelism with freedom. As he wishes to follow his own rules and *norms* instead of or rejecting the rules and norms of the society, he turns out to be *outlaw* and conceived as absurd. He is actually an absurd person through his whole

existence. First of all, he does not follow what has been followed by many. This carries him out of the circle. Furthermore, he does not feel alienated among *the madness* in the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat. Conversely, he feels relaxed and forgets homelessness of himself. Throughout the lines of the whole novel, it is almost impossible to encounter a proper communication between Murphy and the community of the novel except for the days he spent in the MMM. He even plays chess with a patient in the MMM, even though it has also some absurd aspects which will be spoken out aloud in chapter three.

CHAPTER TWO

The Escape from and to the Self in *The Stranger* by Albert Camus and a Study of Absurdity of this Personal Expedition

Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday; I can't be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday. (*The Stranger* 1)

The novel, *L'étranger*²⁴, begins with that very well-known and authentic introduction which is narrated by a *precious* son. He is actually talking about his *beloved* mother's death of which date he can not be sure about. It can be implied from that uncertainty that he does not live with his mother and he is far from her. However, it is weird and unusual that while talking about her funeral, he has a kind of attitude as if he is talking about something like her birthday or one of the days she phoned him, but it is her funeral, in fact. The novel gets started with that *absurd* beginning which tells the reader a lot about its protagonist, Meursault and it continues with the same absurdity which is indicated through the passage below:

The home for aged persons is at Morengo, some fifty miles from Algiers. With the two o'clock bus I should get there well before nightfall. Then I can spend the night there, keeping the usual vigil beside the body, and be back here by tomorrow evening. I have fixed up with my employer for two days' leave; obviously, under the circumstances, he couldn't refuse. Still, I had an idea he looked annoyed, and I said, without thinking: 'Sorry, sir, but it's not my fault, you know.' (*The Stranger* 1)

²⁴ *The Stranger* by Albert Camus is a short novel about an ordinary little man living quietly in Algiers. Life begins to stalk him quietly and slowly, but inexorably. The pace quickens until the little man commits a pointless murder- and reaches its climax after his trial. *The Stranger* presents an indelible picture of a human being helpless in life's grip. (From the backcover of *The Stranger*)

He does not dig or devise the circumstances and he does not prefer taking any responsibility for the events taking place around him which can be related to passivity because he just performs what comes and he prefers *remaining on the surface* of the condition but *not in* it which may add him a kind of liability. It should not be denied that as an individual, we, all human-beings as it has been emphasized in the introduction and chapter one, too, are expected to have certain behavior codes which are determined by the entity in which we *survive*. Therefore, if those codes are *hacked* by the individuals, the society labels those individuals as outlaws or absurd. They, the individuals, break the rules and they do not follow the way chosen by the social expectations.

It is seen in the very beginning of the novel as it has been quoted above, Meursault does not go beyond the simplicity of a daily life and he equates death of his mother with very daily issues such as going to work, coming home, having lunch, and sleeping eventually. He does not cogitate for his mother's funeral more than he cogitates how to get to work in the morning. Such an indifferent attitude may be interpreted in a way which tells that there is no difference between death and sleeping as they are both matters of life and life is for itself and it's meaningless and purposeless, therefore the protagonist does not disassociate the very prosaic experiences and vitally important or rather fatally *important* ones. As a conclusion he avoids taking responsibility of being agent to the serious affairs such as death with its all appearance as Camus argues in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as well:

I came at least to death and to the attitude we have towards it. On this point, everything has been said and it's only proper to avoid pathos. Yet one will never be sufficiently surprised that everyone lives as if no one 'knew'. This is because in reality there is no experience of death. Properly speaking, nothing has been experienced but what has been lived and made conscious. (504-505)

With that philosophy, what is felt more effectively by the person is as simple as waking up in the morning, going to the toilet, having breakfast, and drinking a beer. Can the questions such as death, life after death and all its variations be a matter of fact for that same person? Probably not since the answers to those questions are not on the surface, but they can be found if s/he goes deeper and deeper but s/he doesn't in *L'étranger*.

L'étranger, from the very beginning till the very end, tells the story of a character who does not or can not have a proper communication with the society in which he is endeavoring to exist and he has no responsibility, no choice, and no resignation. He refuses to have any initiative as everything has equal significance and equal absurdity. They all end with death which can not be known as it can not be comprehended and explained after it is experienced. Therefore, the character thinks that there is no difference between being in the community and staying outside it. It can be either and neither of them is better than the other and that kind of attitude creates a miscommunication between the *holy* community and the individual person.

Albert Camus was among those who deal with alienated characters and who tells the pointless strives for and against life. He reflects that pointless manner of life very effectively through his way of characterization. Actually it is the political, social and historical context which has the major influence on the determination of his attitude towards life and the same reasons are valid for the motivation which persuades him to tell the meaningless aspects of life and death as well. As it is also given tongue by Lev Braun in his book *Witness of Decline Albert Camus: Moralistic of the Absurd* that the period during which Camus had entered the intellectual and political life of France was one of those periods when France was under the most problematic circumstance. Braun summarizes that period as it is shown below:

There are moments in the lives of men when politics become their fate. Such was the case in France for those who entered adult life in years preceding the Second World War. If ever a time created the impression that the universe was absurd, it was indeed the period. Events seemed beyond control. Men felt trapped, a prey to anonymous forces, unavoidably drawn into a war that nobody wanted to face, that spurred no heroic anticipations, not even an elementary feeling of national solidarity. (Braun 30)

As it has been discussed in the very beginning of the study, with wars taking place in the 20th century men began to lose the sense and feeling of safety and meaning in life. That was the condition, condition told by Braun, to which Camus was in an effort to put his intellectual and political perspective. He clearly points out his position against or in all those circumstances in his speech²⁵ in the ceremony of Acceptance of the Nobel Prize quoted by Braun, as well. He, Lev Braun, establishes a connection or rather a parallelism between the conjuncture of the political, social and historical circumstances and Camus's individuality. He sets a cause and effect relationship between those two by telling that:

Although Camus seems to trace man's unhappiness back to the rift between the personal and the cosmic, to all practical purposes, that is to say, in his ethics and politics, Camus is a convinced individualist. For his individuality, from which man should detach himself in order to unite with the rhythm of life and nature, may not be trampled upon by other individuals or by groups that would inevitably substitute their own purposes for his. (Braun 28)

In *The Stranger*, Camus sets his plot on this detachment from the unity (it is meant all the socially compulsive rules, traditions, and norms given by the community by unity) and conflict taking place between that unity and individual which is

²⁵ These men, who were born at the beginning of the First World War, who were twenty when Hitler came to power and the first revolutionary trials were beginning, who were then confronted as a completion of their education with the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the world of concentration camps, a Europe of torture and prisons - these men must today rear their sons and create their works in a world threatened by nuclear destruction.(quoted by Braun 30)

exemplified by Meursault in this particular novel. The character does not specifically use any kind of initiative to follow his own values nor the values given which indicates the importance of existence of being for itself and by itself. In other words, Camus rejects any compulsion which may debar him from the liberty of existence. Braun specifies his perspective by arguing that:

It is for each man to choose his way. From this conviction spring two basic values in Camus's ethics. The first one is life itself, in its tragic sweetness. The other one is happiness understood here as a sense of unity with the sensuous world. (Camus, of course, has other concepts of happiness to offer, but, in his early works, the stress is on sensuous happiness.) The recognition of a man's right to life and happiness was Camus's fundamental ethical demand and always remained so. This made him the enemy of despots and moralists alike. (Braun 28)

It is not only the despots and moralists who regard him as danger. As it is reflected in *The Stranger* through the characterization, any kind of settled and adopted values and their guards think of him as a potential danger for the chain. However, Meursault insists on the conflict instead of being a vassal under its control. It is ironic that as a reader it may not be possible to feel that Meursault is aware of what he is doing. Isn't it problematic that there is a character that ruptures the society, but he is reflected as if he is unconscious of it (?) It is a question which concerns Camus. He tells the story of a simple man, but an unconventional one from society's perspective and he portrays him as someone who rejects, but who doesn't reflect any sign of awareness showing him as an agent. Braun ends up telling that rejection with the words below:

No faith, no duty, no heroic ideal entitle a man to deprive another of his life or happiness. No ethics of submission or sacrifice may be imposed from outside. This is Camus's unflinching conviction. (Braun 28)

That's a manifestation-like statement for individualism and the vitality of existence by itself, but not by the chain of community. It can be accepted that there is a concern for individualism and there are some references to existentialism in *The Stranger*. However, Camus, by purpose or by coincide, creates an atmosphere of passivity for the character. On the one hand, he is shown and narrated while he is asking questions related to conventions or suitability of his deeds, on the other hand he *chooses* one way to act, but he does not choose in fact. He does it because he does it. There is no meaning or purpose lying behind it just like life itself. Absurdity takes its role right here. It is absurd to think on actions and to organize them while all the things are the same. The only thing that is created by that passivity is a kind of tension between the whole and the part, society and individual, respectively as the person has no a crucial engagement with the society.

*L'exil et le Royaume*²⁶, *La Mort heureuse*²⁷, and *L'Homme Révolté* are few of his literary works telling the tension and gap between the community and the individual both in fiction and reference works which are written on a more philosophical base. In his one of the most significant and most quoted article-book *The Myth of Sisyphus*, for instance, he openly deals with the absurdity of life and he posits the suicide into the very core of his concern. He points out that:

Suicide has never been dealt with except as a social phenomenon. On the contrary, we are concerned here, at the outset, with the relationship between individual thought and suicide. An act like this is prepared within the silence of the heart, as if a great work of art. The man himself is ignorant of it. One evening he pulls the trigger or jumps. (*The Plague The Fall Exile and The Kingdom* 496)

²⁶ *Exile and the Kingdom*(1957)

²⁷ *A Happy Death*(1936-1938)

Such a serious issue is as simple as it is described above because it is thought that death is the absolute and the inevitable end and it will come eventually earlier or later and while life is continuing. It should not be exaggerated as life itself is simple and equally meaningless. It is a case of dying one way or another and when it begins, absurdity conquers the life.

Society has but little connection with such beginnings. The worm is in man's heart. That's where it must be sought. One must follow and understand this fatal game that leads from lucidity in the face of existence to flight from the light. (*The Plague The Fall Exile and The Kingdom* 496)

It can be inferred that human mind with the companionship of heart is a very difficult question mark of which motivations for actions they decide can not be easily analyzed and predicted. The motivation – if there is one – for suicide is one of those, for instance. Similarly, the motivation for murder – if there is any again – is difficult to be analyzed of which story is being told in the novel, *The Stranger*.

As it has been stated in the introduction, Meursault is a type of character “who does not play the game” in David Sherman's words. That's absolutely true: he keeps himself outside the game. However, the game that he does not allow himself to enter is the game that community plays. It has a crucial significance for community to create an image showing its order quite regular and well-organized. On the other hand, there is one more game that he is just in the center: his own game of which rules can not be known and perceived clearly as he *opts out* in the determination of decisions. He excludes agency and praises indifference making him *choiceless* for the actions. He does as anything he does will fall into the absurd. Death is the end as it is argued before. He is pictured by Camus as an *absurd* character whose emotions and reactions to the circumstances are quite different from the other people around and out of the accustomed order of the community. René Girard portrays Meursault in his article

“Camus’s Stranger Retried” as being one of those absurd who are mentioned in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as it has been quoted below:

We have always pictured Meursault as a stranger to the sentiments of other men. Love and hatred, ambition and envy, greed and jealousy are equally foreign to him. He attends the funeral of his mother as impassively as he watches, on the following day, a Fernandel movie. Eventually, Meursault kills a man, but how could we feel that he is a real criminal? How could this man have any motive for murder? (79)

Girard raises the questions related to Meursault’s indifferent attitudes towards the conditions he has been experiencing. He also argues or rather points out how he is foreign to the very daily emotions. This shows his *choiceless* manner in life. He does not differentiate any detail *encountered*. Life, therefore, can be described or labeled as *a total encounter* and we experience it as we can not escape from any encounter of which nature is being unexpected. He, Girard, continues to put emphasize on his absurdity in the same article.

Meursault is the fictional embodiment of the nihilistic individualism expounded in *Le Myth de Sisyphe* and commonly referred to as *l’absurde*. Meursault is possessed by this *absurde* as others, in a different spiritual context, are possessed by religious grace. (79)

Like many other characters such as the characters in *Dubliners* as a whole, Watt and Murphy in Beckett’s *Watt* and *Murphy* respectively, and Zebercet in *Hotel Anayurt* by Yusuf Atılgan, Meursault praises his own existence and individuality has a crucial significance for his own world of mind and emotions. As a result, his attitudes towards the community around him may be perceived as being indifferent and absurd, so are they in fact.

Moreover, Meursault, as Brian Masters, tells in his book *Camus: A Study*, does not run a complicated life. He exists within his ultimate simplicity. He does not *magnify* his daily concerns as he may have the idea that life is not to be taken that much serious since it has too many *pointless points* which can be labeled *absurd*. As a result, he locates his own individuality to the core and he tries and manages to experience it with a full simplicity. Masters argues that:

It must not be forgotten that Camus was not writing for intellectuals, nor did he enjoy being lionized by them. As in his first books, he was concerned with the little man, whose sufferings went unnoticed, who was inarticulate, introverted, discontented in silence. (19)

It is true that Meursault is simplifying his mental, emotional, and physical experiences as it is written by the author of *The Myth of Sisyphus* telling how life is absurd and meaningless. However, it should not be forgotten that simple is the way chosen by Camus for his character, not the character himself. This choice of simplicity to shape his character is a kind of reaction or rather a rebellious attitude towards that meaninglessness, in fact. Masters continues discussing the purpose of writing that Camus does not write it for deeper analysis, but he tells the banality and simplicity of Meursault's day. He rejects most communal obligatory attitudes which are happily accepted by the majority. It can be perceived as a shelter or as a protection against the bothering outcomes of a very mundane life. Rene Girard, in his previously quoted article, argues that:

Meursault has no responsibilities, no family, no personal problems; he feels no sympathy for unpopular causes. Apparently he drinks nothing but café au lait. He really lives the prudent and peaceful life of a little bureaucrat anywhere and of a French petit bourgeois in the bargain. He carries the foresight of his class so far that he waits the medically recommended number of hours after his noonday meal before he plunges into the Mediterranean. His way of life should

constitute a good insurance against nervous breakdown, mental exhaustion, heart failure, and, a fortiori, the guillotine. (84)

Apparently, there is no unusual circulation in Meursault's life. However, the way that is chosen by him in order to get rid of any kind of disturbances coming from the outside takes him beyond the borders. He extends the line and goes out of the traditionally determined and accepted values and norms. He does not apply, for instance, responsibilities and conventions as it has been emphasized within the excerpt too.

I entered the mortuary. It was a bright, spotlessly clean room, with whitewashed walls and a big skylight. The furniture consisted of some chairs and trestles. Two of the latter stood open in the center of the room and the coffin rested on them. (*The Stranger* 5)

Meursault is describing the mortuary in the passage. He is extremely and *dangerously* relaxed. It is the place where his *beloved* mother is lying dead, but he lets the reader imagine or visualize him walking in the mortuary looking around with the assistance of the style he is using. He is pictured as rakish and ignorant by Camus. He, Camus, continues to let him speak in the same manner.

The lid was in place, but the screws had been given only a few turns and their nicked heads stuck out above the wood, which was stained dark walnut. (*The Stranger* 5)

If these two descriptive passages are considered together, it can be claimed that Meursault is pictured as having a kind of ignorance as a protection against the sorrowful circumstance he has been experiencing. However, it should not be underestimated that he, while giving a picture of the mortuary just like a *masterful director*, does not miss any point. The reader can, as it has been already pointed,

visualize the mortuary. It should not be also forgotten that he is there, in this remarkably described mortuary, for his mother who died “yesterday” “maybe” “today”.

One of the purposes of this study is to analyze absurdity and alienation in the context of existentialism. Camus, through his protagonist, lets the reader observe all three. In *The Stranger*, Camus pictures a character, as it has been described previously, who does not differentiate anything that he experiences. He does not make choices and everything, almost everything, has an equal importance that’s because life, in itself and by itself is the crucial part. It can be perceived as a reaction against inevitability of death which may create a kind of alienation as the person, unintentionally, welcomes life as it comes by ignoring any metaphysical powers such as society, morality, and traditions. However, this liberty may end up with the case of being regarded as absurd since the ignorance may result in rupture. Even if his mother is dead and lying still in this room, he is able to neglect that point and open his perception for the surrounding.

I don’t know whether I made some gesture, but instead of going he halted behind my chair. The sensation of someone posted at my back made me uncomfortable. The sun was getting low and the whole room was flooded with a pleasant, mellow light. Two hornets were buzzing overhead, against the skylight. I was so sleepy I could hardly keep my eyes open. (*The Stranger* 7)

There is no straight line in his attitudes. By drawing him in a paradoxical attitude, Camus focuses that there is no absolute way of behavior no matter what is the circumstance as, no matter what is done, death will invade life which is the inevitable and unquestionable final destination. As an outcome of such an attitude, the position of agency changes a little bit. It can be argued that it is counteracted. As it is seen in the excerpt, Meursault may give the same reaction to extreme opposite issues in terms of solemnity. His perception and description of mortuary is, therefore, absurd as he

goes beyond the conventional attitude. He is also out of traditionally applied manner. However, he observes and experiences the world²⁸ as he senses, but he has a clear gap between his experiences and feelings which means that it is not his experiences which shapes his feelings but “his sensations” as Leo Bersani²⁹ mentions too in his article with the title of “The Stranger’s Secrets”.

Camus’ title has been, for criticism, an unfortunate challenge. What exactly is the quality which makes Meursault a “stranger”? Some early readings of the novel- most notably, those of Sartre and Blanchot- inspired dozens of essays in support of the idea that Camus’ hero lives only by sensations, that he never synthesizes his experiences into “feelings”, that he is uncontaminated by any of the psychological and more fictions by which society attempts to make life coherent and significant. (212)

Camus does not depict Meursault while he is taking seriously and internalize his experiences with a harmony of feeling he has as life is absurd enough to be breathed momentarily. As a deduction, instantaneous sensations gain more and more importance. He, apparently, makes use of his sensations in order to get a chance to practice ignorance. It is our feelings and thoughts making our lives significant and equally problematic which require the necessity to be taken serious, but thanks to the sensations which prevent the experiences from being internalized. It is also clearly stated that there is an effort to create or to form a distinction between the values of society and those of Meursault. In the novel, this stranger does not let what he experiences control what he feels. It can not be denied that society strives for giving prescriptions for the feelings of an individual for particular experiences such as crying at his/her mother’s funeral which is broken in the case of Meursault. He, in a way,

²⁸ “The world” does not have to be a macro-world. He creates micro-worlds and for which he “develops” particular attitudes. In this circumstance, mortuary is meant by “the world”

²⁹ Leo Bersani (1931-) is a literary theorist and Professor Emeritus of French at the University of California, Berkeley.

tears apart that prescription. What makes him that much ignorant can be found in his daily life and his interaction with the world. First of all, it would be better to give a summary of his life: What does he do? Brian Masters in his book *Camus: A Study* summarizes Meursault.

Before the chain of events which lead to his arrest and trial, Meursault's awareness of life is severely limited. He is affected by a profoundly apathetic *ennui*, which makes him uncommonly sensitive to the dullness and monotony of existence. Though he does not say so, the reader feels that he sees very little point in life, but merely carries on for want of anything better to do. He sleeps, eats, works, all without enthusiasm and observes with detachment the mechanical gestures with which people fill their lives. (20)

It is openly stated by Masters that *Camusian* protagonist does not go into the depth of life. He experiences the surface which is filled by the repetitive concerns and all he experiences is limited by that repetition. Actually, he experiences that repetition in isolation. In other words, it is true that he does similar things each coming day, but he isolates himself from the determination of community. Does he have an authority to determine? It is not reflected clear enough to make a positive or negative judgment about the case authority in the novel practiced by Meursault. However, it can be claimed that he remains passive in confronting life. He needs to survive therefore he does whatever he does. When there appears an occasion which he has to face with all the norms and traditions of the society in which he exists, he can not be sure about the correctness of his attitudes. On the one hand he does want to avoid submission imposed by society, on the other hand he develops a mechanism of control for his actions. It is even inevitable for him to question even the simplest details as it is seen in excerpt below:

But I wasn't sure if I should smoke under the circumstances- in mother's presence. I thought it over; really, it didn't seem to matter, so I offered the keeper a cigarette, and we both smoked. (*The Stranger* 9)

It can be perceived as an unnecessary detail, but it should be noted that even this unnecessary detail (smoking in the mortuary) occupies his thoughts. In addition what Camus seems to argue is that the protagonist is always in between his own perspective and the conventional ways of behaviors. Even though he has both of them in his mind to question, he prefers the one which does not make him hypocritical towards or against himself and the society. He, as it has been focused previously, does not engage in the play. He keeps being sincere meaning that he does not abstain experiencing his deviation. As a result, he accepts being regarded as a derogative individual and absurd. Moreover, Camus is endeavoring to draw the picture of Meursault by excluding him from the description of the whole. It is meant the surrounding such as mortuary and other people by the word *whole*.

Nearly all the women wore aprons, and the strings drawn tight round their waists made their big stomachs bulge still more. I'd never yet noticed what big paunches old women usually have. Most of the men, however, were as thin as rakes, and they all carried sticks. What struck me most about their faces was that one couldn't see their eyes, only a dull glow in a sort of nest of wrinkles. (*The Stranger* 10-11)

Camus lets Meursault give a physical description of "outer reality" which is a phrase used by Beckett. In addition, this description depicts his, Meursault's perplexity as well. The reader is given an abstract picture of Meursault by the author. He, Camus, treats Meursault just like Meursault treats himself within the novel. It is felt in the novel that Meursault is excluding himself from the social environment with its wholeness and he watches them. He is such a character that lacks communicative

skills and desires. Camus, similarly, gives him a solitude and alienation through *excommunicating* him and just reflecting the people around from Meursault's alienated perspective. Before, during and after the funeral, he, strangely enough, is able to keep his mind away from the conditions surrounding him, but such an attitude will be harshly criticized and *questioned* later on upon an event of which center is *invaded* by him. The funeral is *thankfully* over and Meursault is back home. The reader, from now on, has the chance to get to know him more closely and independent of his newly buried mother.

On waking I understood why my employer had looked rather cross when I asked for my two days off; it's a Saturday today. I hadn't thought of this at the time; it only struck me when I was getting out of bed. Obviously he hadn't seen that it would mean my getting four days' holiday straight off, and one couldn't expect him to like that. Still, for one thing, it wasn't my fault if mother was buried yesterday and not today; and again, I'd have had my Saturday and Sunday off in any case. But naturally this didn't prevent me from seeing my employer's point. (*The Stranger* 22-23)

On the one hand, Meursault may be in an endeavor to keep his mind and all his concerns from the *compulsory* details of a daily life, on the other hand his own existential matters dominate his attitude. It may be felt that he seems to *export* an attitude towards what has been happening for a few days. What the striking point about the excerpt is that Meursault managed to diminish socially appreciated behaviour from his perspective. For instance, community may not welcome a sudden forgetting of a death, the death of a mother. Meursault does it. He suddenly forgets his mother and manages to adapt himself into his ongoing personal life. What he cares is just life which is threatened by death and his interactions with the world and it is supported by the following passage too.

Getting up was an effort, as I'd been exhausted by the previous day's experiences. While shaving, I wondered how to spend the morning, and decided that a swim would do me good. So I caught the streetcar that goes down to the harbor. (*The Stranger* 23)

Following the previous quotation, the excerpt above proves Meursault's endeavor to exist for his own sake therefore he has the ability to adapt totally the daily life for his own desires. As it is reflected above, he suddenly and very easily passes into a new and equally contrasting phase which is for his own favor instead of the society's and all established norms'. All those things are not actually acceptable for the conventions of community. However, he does not have a mechanism to negotiate what the conventions may require. Even waking up and getting up from the bed can constitute a serious matter for him. Therefore, he does not have a proper affair with the conventions to shape his daily life, on the contrary, he is free and *irresponsible* enough to be able to ignore *the eyes of "outer reality"*. However, a question appears as a paradox: Is he really aware of his irresponsibility? Probably 'Yes', probably 'No' as Camus seems to prefer keeping him far from the agency of having a choice or not having. This can be interpreted from various perspectives such as absurdity and existentialism. His attitudes towards the external world and especially and more personally towards his mother's death may be regarded as absurd and also his perspective is mostly purposeless. He locates himself to the center and his existence within the community against the conventions is his primary concern. However, he is the same person who lacks the authority. He is pictured by Camus in such a way that his simplicity can be conceived as a privilege granted for him. He does not magnify anything and this is, even though it seems very ordinary, a serious reaction to the power of outer reality. In addition, he manifests his reaction against the controlling authority by telling that "..... and I dislike being questioned....."(*The Stranger*

25). He clearly declares his hatred against a “parental” mechanism and an interrogation it does. He does not *delight* questioning and being questioned. He keeps his mind away from even the most vital decisions. Marriage is an example of those. “Marie came that evening and asked me if I’d marry her. I said I didn’t mind; if she was keen on it, we’d get married” (*The Stranger* 52). Marriage is, as previously focused, is a decision which is vitally significant in communal life and it is, therefore, a serious decision that is needed to be cogitated very carefully. However, our protagonist does not mind that decision even if he is the one who gets a proposal from Marie. He does not dig the issue, in other words and he walks on the surface. He just lets her do with the case which shows his ignorance against such conventional occasions. He not only ignores the conventions but also he excludes the conventions from its context.

I explained that it had no importance really, but, if it would give her pleasure, we could get married right away. I pointed out that anyhow, the suggestion came from her; as for me, I’d merely said ‘yes’. Then she remarked that marriage was a serious matter. To which I’d merely said : ‘NO’. She kept silent after that staring at me in a curious way.

Then she asked:

‘Supposed another girl had asked you to marry her. I mean a girl you liked in the same way you like me. Would you have said ‘Yes’ to her, too?’

‘Naturally’ (*The Stranger* 53)

He, clearly, posits and picks up an approach of passivity in his relationships with other people. He rebels against the institution of agency. It is not the convention, but the action or the case itself which is important or worth to be discussed for Meursault. It is *his* marriage and he never cares for marriage itself or whom he is going to marry. What matter for him is his own existence with or without marriage. He does not accept marriage as it is something traditional. He simply marries and that’s all for him.. In

addition, marriage is not the only decision he, Meursault, gives no importance, there are many other serious and *fatal* events in his life having no significance. One of the most noteworthy of those is the murder that he has committed. He murders an Arab and he *welcomes* that event with *tranquility* as even murder is as significant as waking up, too. According to what he tells, the reason lying behind it is weather. It is interestingly true that the murder is described with the weather.

Then everything began to reel before my eyes, a fiery gust came from the sea, while the sky cracked in two, from end to end, and a great sheet of flame poured down through the rift. Every nerve in my body was a steel spring, and my grip closed on the revolver. The trigger gave, and the smooth underbelly of the butt jogged my palm. And so, with that crisp, whipcrack sound, it all began. (*The Stranger* 76)

The first and most emergent question is what has begun: return home, running, or rather sleeping? After such a description, the reader may expect to read a simple and daily thing, but the story does not follow the way in accordance with the expectations.

I shook off my sweat and the clinging veil of light. I knew I'd shattered the balance of the day, the spacious calm of this beach on which I had been happy. But I fired four shots more into the inert body, on which they left no visible trace. And each successive shot was another loud, fateful rap on the door of my undoing. (*The Stranger* 76)

Moreover, his tranquility continues during the trial and while he is being questioned.

At first I didn't take him quite seriously. The room in which he interviewed me was much like an ordinary sitting room, with curtained windows, and a single lamp standing on the desk. Its light fell on the armchair in which he'd had me sit, while his own face stayed in shadow. (*The Stranger* 78)

He holds an attitude as if he is having coffee and reading newspaper in his sitting room and waiting dinner to be served by his servants. He has an absurd perception allowing him the chance of ignoring the conditions which he may dislike. He is under question by officers and he is *expected* to take it serious since he has the risk of being persecuted. However, the light falling on the armchair is more significant than the trial for him for the time being. It is totally beyond the understanding of any kind of convention, tradition, and rule. He has no action, nor he thinks of what he has already done and what he may exposed to as a punishment. As life is simple and is not worth to give a meaning in his world of mind, he regards the death as equal to it and ignores its solemnity. Actually, his attitude is an outcome of his neutral existence.

Then all day there was my appeal to think about. I made the most of this idea, studying my effects so as to squeeze out the maximum of consolation. Thus, I always began by assuming the worst; my appeal was dismissed. That meant, of course, I was to die. Sooner than the others, obviously. ‘But,’ I reminded myself, ‘it’s a common knowledge that life isn’t worth living, anyhow.’ And, on a wide view, I could see that it makes little difference whether one dies at the age of thirty or threescore and ten since, in either case, other men and women will continue living, the world will go on as before. (*The Stranger* 142-143)

Stated clearly, death is the inevitable end that comes for men and women and there is nothing that can be done against it. It can be argued that life means the beginning of death. Therefore, it is the event itself but not the timing. Meursault’s absurd manner against the concepts of life and death takes the issue into consideration by taking them out of the whole. It is his own life and death making his mind busy. He says even if you die, life will go on, so the questions should not be ‘When does it come?’ and ‘What happens to the world?’, but it should be ‘Where is my existence going?’. On the one hand, Camus negates the concerns for life and death on the other

hand he has a feeling for death similar to *missing* since life, as he *confesses*, has no meaning and value. This confession can be also interpreted as an indication or rather manifestation of his *irresponsibility* and *passivity* which is mentioned before. He is not Meursault, but Camus talking and choosing irresponsible and passive. This issue can be easily related to the choices of being in the depth or on the surface of the issue. Camus does not need any extra effort to grasp the condition as he does not go into the deeper aspects of life. Meursault is one of those little men thus, whose story he prefers telling. Brian Masters do an analysis of such a passivity and irresponsibility as it continues below from *Camus: A Study*:

Meursault's passivity is so total that he is wholly indifferent to the relative importance of courses of action which are proposed to him. Drinking a cup of coffee or going to bed with Marie have the same significance in his mind. There is no hierarchy of values. He restricts himself to answering questions, never affirms a choice. (26)

He totally imprisons all those concerns for a choice into the label of meaninglessness and he does not find any kind of sense and difference in and between choice and denial. None of them matters in his perception. He, Masters, keeps talking about his passivity and indifference by exemplifying the circumstances.

He accepts to write Raymond's letter for him not out of generosity, but because he sees no reason not to; he does not weigh the likely merits or consequences of such and act (p.49). he does not intervene when Raymond is bullied and struck by the policeman (p.53); indifferent even to distress of his neighbour, he stands aside and watches. (26)

He denies any kind of engagement which will make him a part to the chain of community. For this purpose, he prefers not to have a choice and favors the passivity by abstracting himself from the expositions of the system. He does not act the way that

may be expected from him, Camus shapes him in a way making him being a stranger or rather an outsider as he intrudes to the system not as a part which can be identified with it but as the “interloper” (Masters 27) in Masters’s terminology who breaks the rules and performs his own absurdity.

His attitude continues during the trials and during the all long days passing in the jail. The first spark of conflict between him and the rules is uttered by his lawyer. Meursault puzzles his lawyer by his opinions about life and death which makes lawyer’s perceptions upside down. He, the lawyer, wants him to act in accordance with conventions and tries to prevent him from telling what he feels and thinks that is quoted below:

All normal people I added as an after-thought, had more or less desired the death of those they loved, at sometime or another. Here the lawyer interrupted me, looking greatly perturbed. ‘You must promise me not to say anything of that sort at the trial, or to the examining magistrate’. (*The Stranger* 80)

It is possible for the reader to witness the clash between the common sense and Meursault’s point of view. The lawyer who determines his behaviors and attitudes within the limits of laws given by the system can be taken into account as the symbol of the community. In addition, he can also be regarded as the projection of the norms for the reader and what Meursault utters is a clear indication of how he is a stranger and how he is absurd for the world that is governed via and in accordance with conventions. What is told by Meursault can also be interpreted as a proof showing his sincerity for his own feelings and truths. He takes the risk of being labeled as absurd for the sake of his emotional and mental existence showing the ignorance he has for being in a society. Masters supports that claim too by uttering that:

It would be admitted a man like Meursault would seem an outsider in almost any society, he would excite antagonism and aggression in us all. We all

assume feelings, points of view, reactions, that are more or less manufactured, and take it for granted that we must lie or exaggerate to some extent every day. (Masters 27)

Masters, so far, has argued that all those manufactured values force us to fall into *hypocrisy* for the sake of community. Nobody dares or prefers breaking the order and that *social fraud* as they want to avoid being labeled absurd.

All except Meursault. He is consistently loyal to the truth of his own feelings, this being the only truth that he can know, that he can be sure about. Take from Meursault his sincerity, and he would crumple in vacuity. (Masters 27)

As it is indicated within the excerpt, Meursault revolts against that hypocrisy and practices his sincere feelings even though he will be labeled absurd in a social and systematic context. He does not hide his peace of mind even in his mother's funeral and just on the day after the funeral. He pushes his feelings to the frontier and *performs* them just like as a vital responsibility for his own *existence*. Meursault, upon lawyer's warning about and during the trial, gives some promises about his attitudes. He says that:

I promised to satisfy him, but I explained that my physical condition at any given moment often influenced my feelings. For instance, on the day I attend Mother's funeral, I was fogged out and only half awake. So, really, I hardly took stock of what was happening. Anyhow, I could assure him of one thing: that I'd rather Mother hadn't die. (*The Stranger* 80)

Although he utters his statement with an intense repetition of 'I', it is an irony in fact. He does not have the authority or the mechanism of determination while he is using 'I'. It is his indifference, in fact, which is carried to the reader as he is talking about opposite and inharmonious experiences in his life and he has no change in his mood no matter what he experiences. It seems like a confession that his mental and physical

conditions are influential on his feelings and no matter what he experiences due to the external circumstances he is not able to conceive what is happening. Therefore, he may not give the conventional respond to particular events. That can also be considered as an indication how he does not heed the conventions in stated situation, but he minds his own juncture and acts in accordance with that juncture.

Albert Camus establishes a court scene for the reader and it is Meursault's trial. As stated previously he murders an Arab and after then he is arrested and put into a jail. The novel naturally *administers the law*. There is nothing unusual. He, Meursault, is a homicide and he has to be imprisoned in accordance with the laws, but what is unusual during his trial is the case that he is being judged and is the way he is being questioned. The trial scene will be closely discussed in chapter 3 by setting a connection in terms of compare and contrast the aspects of absurdity, existential concerns and society with *Murphy*.

Taking everything into consideration, Albert Camus creates a type of character who does not engage in and admit the system given to the individual as a dogmatic principle. Instead, he, by not making a concession, maintains *his own laws* which is not to have any laws. It is true that society persuades him just like a voyeuristic eye and *knocks* his attitudes. It is not only the whole concept of society but also his friends even his girlfriend who endeavors to stereotype him. However, he keeps performing and applying his own desires in the way he desires. He omits the factor of questioning from his thoughts and concerns. He argues that it is his own day, his own problems, and his own life in general and he thinks it is his right to have the right of not to have a choice. He thinks of life meaningless and so he does not carry any concern of attributing a meaning to his life. As a conclusion of such a perspective which goes beyond the rules and conventions, the institutional centers of those conventions such

as community with its traditions and norms *sticks* the label of absurd on his personality and no matter what he does; he, nevertheless, defends his feelings and the way that they mentor him. Camus, through Meursault, argues that life is life until death knocks on your emotions, desires, mind and finally your breath, therefore he does not prefer *paying attention* to this meaningless life as he discusses in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as well. He utters that:

We live on the future: ‘tomorrow’, ‘later on’, ‘when you have made your way’, ‘you will understand when you are old enough’. Such irrelevancies are wonderful, for after all, it’s a matter of dying. (*The Plague The Fall Exile and The Kingdom* 503)

Camus criticizes the endless plans in life just like obeying the traditions and being a slave in service of them, instead he defends the idea that there is no difference between doing something and not doing the same thing so it is unnecessary to trouble oneself by making plans and thinking about future. He negates the excessive questioning within the borders of a meaningless life, therefore he instills the individual to *hold out* even though he may be labeled outlaw and absurd from a more united perspective introduced and imposed by the system. Society is the most concrete chain of that system which plays a key role in *The Stranger* with all its particles such as traditions, conventions and laws and which will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

The Similarities and Differences between *Murphy* and *The Stranger* from the Perspective of Absurdity and Existential Philosophy

It seems that *to obey or not to obey* is one of the questions being asked by Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett in their novels *The Stranger* and *Murphy*, respectively. They mirror their characters while they are experiencing a rupture from the community and they are reflected as opening a new place for themselves as it has been mentioned in the previous chapters.

Even though the characters seem to be a ring in the whole chain of the system, they do not cease striving to escape from communal life and whatever it offers to or rather orders the individual. These efforts, inescapably, may result in such a way that those characters cannot escape from being defined as absurd by that same system. The system, surely, does not lose its role over the individual as those fictional works are not written in a way that excludes the daily lives of the characters. George F. Seffler, in his article “The Existential vs. The Absurd: The Aesthetics of Nietzsche and Camus” argues that:

Art is an instance of this perseverance; it is a recreation of man’s senseless situation. As a result, description is the technical keynote of Camus’s aesthetics. The absurd art work is constantly representing to man his existential predicament in “a sort of monotonous and passionate repetition of the themes already orchestrated by the world...” Art confronts man anew with the contradictory tensions which plague his own life. Even in fictional writing, wherein feigned situations constitute the structural basis of the art form, man is not separated from his everyday experiences. (416)

By not separating man from his mundane life, the fiction sets the background for the attitudes displayed by the men. In other words, if *Murphy* is considered, Beckett tells almost every detail taking place in the daily life of the protagonist. Even though he does not experience the repetitive side of this daily life, he happens to witness the repetition imposed on others by the communal necessities. To put it differently, Murphy refuses to have a repetitive daily life so he limits himself with himself both metaphorically and literally, as it has been depicted with the scene of rocking chair onto which he ties himself.

The case is similar in some ways but not totally for Camus. Meursault in *The Stranger* witnesses what may happen in a simple day or he is pictured in the center of this simple day and all the repetitions taking place. He works in an office, wakes up early almost every morning to go to work. He has a lunch break and has things to do after lunch. This routine goes on each following day. What the striking point in the case of Meursault is that even though he has to experience or maintain that routine, he is *unable* to settle or prefers not to set a clear and conventional way of communication with the society, or at work he is a passive and irresponsible character as he is pictured by Camus. As a result, putting his concerns to the center and not putting have equal significance and this concern may force him to rupture the conventions as it can be clearly seen in the *famous mortuary*.

In the case of the mortuary, Camus narrates the scenes there in a very detailed manner and the reader can observe or sense how he is an outsider to the circumstances as he forgets even his feelings. Neither Murphy nor Meursault engages in a close relation to *the outer reality* to shape their approach to the circumstances or their experiences, which can be *translated* as an indication of the importance of life in itself and their own existence rather than the communal existence.

Avoiding a proper communication with society and *preferring to lack* the ability to adapt themselves to the principles of the establishment are not the only common aspects of Albert Camus's and Samuel Beckett's characters. Absurdity can be carried to the center; in fact, both characters, in a way, fall onto the ground of absurdity as an outcome of their attitudes and behaviors towards particular events and experiences.

Neither Murphy nor Meursault follows the conventional way of attitude even in simplest conditions. Beckett and Camus insist on the way that they reflect the existence of their characters both mentally and physically. This is the crucial part of their self-centered existence which consists of another similarity between these two characters. It is a self-centered attitude to a certain extent, but as it has been mentioned for Meursault, he is depicted as self-centered by Camus. His social context and the way he is characterized as the protagonist of the novel do not give the sense of that self-centered attitude. It is perceived as passivity rather than self-centered existence.

In *Murphy*, for instance, the protagonist does not ever abdicate performing his own *system of values*, which can be described as *the lacking of the values imposed by the macrosystem*. In other words, he prefers lacking the values given by the system. He, for example, does not find a job which is one of the necessities and responsibilities in a society. He does not even look for it. He rejects working.

Immediately she wanted to know all about it. It was in order to torment at his ease this tardy concern that he had sat down. He still loved her (Celia) enough to enjoy cutting the tripe out of her occasionally. When he felt appeased, as he soon did, he stopped rocking held up his hand and said:

“The job is your fault. If it doesn't come off I will be back this evening. If it does come off I don't know when I'll be back.” (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 86)

As it is seen, he does not prefer the job to *come off* since it may drive his daily life into its obligatory determination meaning that he will have to complete his duties within arranged or non-arranged working hours, which may diminish his freedom. Therefore, he avoids working and labels job as a fault. What lies behind it? It is very clear, in fact, if Murphy is taken into account: the belief in the meaninglessness of life. It is Celia, however, who ironically manifests this meaninglessness. It is ironic because she is the person who tries to persuade Murphy to find a job or at least to seek for it. It is interesting that she is the same person who accepts its absurdity when she beholds the workers. Beckett echoes this view as it is clearly shown below:

Thus in spite of herself, she began to understand as soon as he (Murphy) gave up trying to explain. She could not go where livings were being made with out feeling that they were being made away. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 43)

It is, in fact, working in a place from Murphy's point of view. If these people who work under such severe conditions are earning their lives, how will they be while they are losing their lives? Therefore, he has a reactionary rejection towards working. The case is not that much different from Meursault's perspective. The major difference between Murphy and him is that Meursault has a job and his daily life runs on within the limits of his job to a certain extent. However, he does not attribute any positive aspect to having a job. He does not find any difference between having and not having work to go every morning on five or six days of the week. If he is asked why he works, he may give an answer as follows: 'Well, not having is not better than having'. Conversely, if he did not have a job and was asked the opposite question, 'why don't you work?' he would answer: 'Well, having a job is not better than not having it'. As it is seen clearly, he does not work because it is necessary or obligatory. He does not become a *worker* meaning that he is not the agent of his job. He works because he

works. The same sentence can be adapted to Murphy's case. He does not work because it is as meaningless as working.

Apart from this, both Murphy and Meursault, as it has been previously stated, do not or cannot establish a proper interactive communication with society. In *Murphy*, for instance, it is almost impossible to read the protagonist while he is setting an interaction with the unity, the society or in his own words, with *the outer reality*. He just has short and limited conversations with particular people around him and they are not inevitable particles of his world, but they play figure roles in his *inner world* or microcosm that he creates for himself. He, by purpose, avoids any contact as much as possible. The reader cannot *attain the chance of encountering* such contacts between him and the patients even in the MMM in which he is surrounded with socially ill people or outlaws similar to him. One of the most striking examples of the lacking of any kind of communication can be witnessed through the game of chess between Mr. Endon and Murphy. Samuel Beckett describes Mr Endon, a patient in the MMM in these words:

Mr Endon was a schizophrenic of the most amiable variety, at least for the purposes of such a humble and envious outsider as Murphy. The languor in which he passed his days, while deepening every now and then to the extent of some charming suspension of gesture, was never so profound as to inhibit all movement. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 111)

Beckett gives particular importance to Mr. Endon as he is the patient to whom Murphy gets closest among all the other patients. This interaction is not an accustomed kind of interaction, however. The reader can read them while they are playing chess, but the same reader does not see them together on the table as they do not see each other while playing it:

It was the same with chess, Mr Endon's one frivolity. Murphy would set up the game, as soon as he came on in the morning, in a quiet corner of the wreck, make his move (for he always played white), go away, come back to Mr Endon's reply, make his second move, go away, and so on throughout the day. They came together at the board but seldom. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 112)

They rarely see each other during the play which is not a common way of playing chess, but they are not the ordinary characters that we encounter in the street very often. The quote goes on describing the way they play:

One or two minutes was as long as Mr Endon cared to pause in his drifting, longer than Murphy dared snatch from his duties and the vigilance of Bom. Each made his move in the absence of the other, inspected the position with what time remained, and went away. So the game wore on, till evening found it almost as level as when begun. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 112)

Apparently, it is not important to have the sight of each other for them as they can communicate through their moves during the play. They just move when it is their turn and their relation is limited to those moves. It is not that vital to have the eyes, hands, breath, and words of the opponent. Surely, it is not an accustomed way of playing chess, but it does not matter for them whether to play in this way or another.

From the very beginning till the end of the novel, Beckett does not picture Murphy while he is maintaining a reasonable communication with the people around or with the system in general as it has just been mentioned in the chess scenes, so he does not prefer settling him into a proper surrounding. In addition, Murphy never feels a necessity or even a little desire to have one and he is not aware of where he is. The case is different for Meursault, however. He is put into the prison after the murder of

an Arab and in the first days of that conviction, he makes a detailed questioning of his situation. Meursault narrates what he feels in these first days as it is seen below:

There are some things of which I've never cared to talk. And, a few days after I'd been sent to prison, I decided that this phase of my life was one of them. However, as time went by, I came to feel that this aversion had no real substance. In point of fact, during those early days, I was hardly conscious of being in prison; I had always a vague hope that something would turn up, some agreeable surprise. (*The Stranger* 89)

It can be possible for the reader to grasp the different attitude in Meursault's world. In the very beginning of the novel, Meursault is portrayed as a kind of character who never follows the conventions. It is true and clear that he has the mechanism which directs him to ask questions, but eventually, he follows his sensations in accordance neither with his wishes and preferences nor with the established values. Life shapes it within its nature. He goes out to his daily routine after the murder and that can be described as a turning point for Meursault as a character and for the whole novel.

As previously stated and quoted, asking questions takes place when he is put into the jail, but he interrogates himself and his condition rather than the conditions of the environment as he does before. The real interrogation begins when he is exposed to concrete and inescapable questions by the lawyer and the magistrate. He has to face what he has done upon the questions being asked, which is not the way he takes issues into consideration. First of all, he does something new; he defines himself within a group and as a part of it.

I was on the point of replying that was precisely because they were criminals. But then I realized that I, too, came under that description. Somehow it was an idea to which I never could get reconciled. (*The Stranger* 87)

What is more, he is being recorded, which may contradict his perspective of life as he does not possess any control over his behaviors as there is no difference between his actions in terms of meaning and purpose, nor is there in life.

For some moments there was a silence during which the typewriter, which had been clicking away all the time we talked, caught up with the last remark. Then he looked at me intently and rather sadly. (*The Stranger* 87)

His passivity which gives him the chance of being ignorant is taken out of him and he is being watched within a very small and limited place and begins to go down into the depth of life from the surface. When he was literally free, as he had plenty of space outside, it was easier for him to hide himself from the community and all its rules. However, he is imprisoned now and all the issues from which he was alienated through his passivity are in front of him for the time being and he is being recorded within the borders of this newly introduced world. In addition, he is not alone during that period. It is meant that not only does he have to face himself but also all the conventions not because he wants but he has to. Meursault is not accustomed to that kind of pressure. He, from now on, is in a context that involves society, religion, and morality and he is in front of contextual questions waiting for a reply.

To indicate, presumably, that the interview was over, the magistrate stood up. In the same weary tone he asked me a last question: Did I regret what I had done? After thinking a bit, I said that what I felt was less regret than a kind of vexation – I couldn't find a better word for it. But he didn't seem to understand... This was as far as things went at that day's interview. (*The Stranger* 87)

He is being inquired as if his feelings are under arrest. As it has been indicated previously, he does not *turn off* the mechanism which tells him to ask questions about the truth or conventionality of his deeds. There is one more mechanism which he

keeps working; his praise of individuality. This praise of individuality which renders the existence more important makes the final decision in his attitudes. He, both in prison and out of the prison, is kept under the eyes of the society. That is undeniably true as it can be seen in the case of the funeral. Firstly, he is being watched by the man who works in the mortuary and then his mother's friends watch his reactions during the funeral. The man in the mortuary can be interpreted as a voyeur and one can claim that he is the eye of the community and conventions.

The glare off the white walls was making my eyes smart, and I asked him if he couldn't turn off one of the lamps. 'Nothing doing,' he said. They'd arranged the lights like that; either one had them all on or none at all. After that I didn't pay much more attention to him. He went out, brought some chairs, and set them out round the coffin. On one he placed a coffeepot and ten or a dozen cups. Then he sat down facing me, on the far side of Mother. (*The Stranger* 9-10)

Meursault is clearly aware of that man's existence around him and he even feels threatened by his existence. As a result, he always thinks before he does anything; even very simple things such as smoking. As it is shown before, while he is in the mortuary he asks whether it is appropriate before lighting one. Moreover, it can be inferred from this excerpt that he cannot change the order that is determined by the system. It is clear that he is disturbed either very much or little but he has to accept the circumstances as they are and he should make the most of life. The only thing he can do is to ignore because it would be meaningless to endeavor to change them as they have already settled. Can he ignore? That's the question, in fact. He manages to neglect those outer circumstances and follows his own deeds as they appear in his life, but when he is imprisoned everything changes. He is, from now on, under control and a total obedience conquers his own existence. His freedom is taken out of his soul by

that previously ignored system. It is not only his freedom that is taken out from his hands, but his choice of passivity and his luxury of ignorance are also under control as mentioned before.

‘Liberty’ he said, ‘means that you are being deprived of your liberty’ It had never before struck me in that light, but I saw his point. ‘That’s true,’ I said. ‘Otherwise it wouldn’t be a punishment’. (*The Stranger* 97)

Meursault is “being deprived of” the freedom of doing whatever he wishes. What is more, he has to explain whatever he has done and he does if the system asks him to do. His liberty is a liberty that is given, which means that it can be taken out any time. The point is that it should be the person himself who gives liberty to himself, not the third person *companies*. However, Meursault is not that much lucky anymore. He undergoes various compulsory communications and interrogations. In addition, he has to give explanations which is described as absurd by Camus and is also pointed out by George F. Seffler in his article “The Existential vs The Absurd: The Aesthetics of Nietzsche and Camus”. He argues that:

Absurd art gives no meaning or purpose to life; it does not give any solutions to or explanations of the problems of life’s absurdity. ‘Explanation’ feels Camus, ‘is useless’ Any interpretation of life is relative to one’s presuppositions and therein fails to attain ‘the truth’. Explication of the absurd is, then, by its very endeavor, absurd. (416)

That’s the major difference between Murphy and Meursault. Murphy does not feel the absurd. He lacks the awareness of it, but it is totally the opposite for Meursault towards the end of the novel especially in prison and court. It is Murphy’s nature to run the absurdity without realizing it. That is why Murphy does not ask questions or assess his circumstances with someone else or in a general context. He goes out and just experiences what he encounters. He never stops and organizes. However,

Meursault always feels the existence of the society, beliefs and conventions. As it is said before, he prefers doing whatever life brings, but he cannot avoid evaluating. That's his contradiction in himself.

‘That was unthinkable,’ he said; ‘all men believe in God, even those who rejects Him.’ Of this he was absolutely sure; if ever he came to doubt it, his life would lose all meaning. ‘Do you wish,’ he asked indignantly, ‘my life to have no meaning?’ Really I couldn’t see how my wishes came into it, and I told him as much. (*The Stranger* 86)

Even though Camus forms a boundary between Meursault and his lawyer, it is clear that the lawyer can be taken into account as the communal perspective. Here, in this quote the lawyer finds it impossible not to believe in God and Meursault is clearly aware and shows how that belief is crucial for him by saying that ‘if ever he came to doubt it, his life would lose all meaning’. They are discussing their beliefs and they are in conflict. On the one hand, the lawyer, who can be imagined as the embodiment of society, thinks and argues that everything loses its meaning without the *God*; on the other hand, Meursault has the thought that he has no such belief for such a god. That absolutely takes him out of the system and leaves him onto *the sea of absurdity* as he inquires the meaning of life for the society through his praise of meaninglessness. He rejects the way and world of belief that is chosen by the community and he has a critical eye for the same belief as well for which he is going to be interrogated as well by a priest later on.

Murphy neither questions belief nor lets the other to interrogate his belief. He is a totally alienated person who experiences life in an absurd phase and he does not have a religious, social and political context in which he expresses discourses. That does not mean that he has no passions, however. He has certain passions as everybody may have, but he looks for a phase that he can experience indifference which

Meursault cannot achieve after a certain period especially after he was arrested and limited by walls reminding him how he is surrounded and subjugated by the system that he questions but ignores at the same time. David Fletcher, in *The Novels of Samuel Beckett* explains his predilection with these words:

But the trouble with Murphy is that he still is subject to certain passions which he cannot subdue, notably his need for Celia. He goes to the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat in the hope that constant association with those who seem to have achieved 'that self-immersed indifference to the contingencies of the contingent world, which he had chosen for himself as the only felicity' will enable him to clinch the issues in favor of the serenity of the mind for once and for all.... (52)

The keyword in this quotation is 'chosen'. He is the agent of his preferences and he prefers being among those patients who are strangely indifferent to the world. Conversely, Meursault is in the very center of such a world which may bring about an absolute rupture from his accustomed way of understanding which makes him take everything into consideration and deprives him of his right and choice to be indifferent. As a conclusion, he has to accept the power of control by the external world which can be easily rejected by Beckett's protagonist in *Murphy*. John Keller explains that rejection in *Samuel Beckett and the Primacy of Love* by arguing that:

Murphy's picture of his mind operates a manic defence, allowing an escape from the devastating depression of interacting with a complete world, where some people, particularly Celia, are both loved and hated. Murphy's mind 'pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without'(...) (n)othing ever had been, was or would be in the universe outside it but was already present as virtual, or actual, or virtual rising into the actual or actual falling into the virtual, in the universe inside it.' (107) (65)

Meursault, after he is kept in prison, loses all his privileges such as following his own way and ignoring the external world. Conversely, he is totally inside the externality that he once neglects and rejects, but as it is mentioned and quoted by Keller, Murphy preserves his chance of indifference and escape. Keller continues to argue that:

Fantasizing in this way, Murphy escapes depression and rage, by closing off a world he believes cannot love him. He denies that anything has been lost (he is not 'impoverished') since he contains the entire world, completely under his control, effecting a triumph over it. External reality is lost, as the 'virtual' (i.e. wishful fantasy) and the 'actual' are collapsed. (65)

It is clear that outer reality is out of sight, feeling and imagination for Murphy. He experiences his complete world that he has founded inside him. On the other hand, the condition is totally different for Meursault as he is lost in externality and he has become a subject in that externality telling his deeds again and again in a compulsory interaction.

After a short silence he (the lawyer) suddenly leaned forward, looked me in the eyes, and said, raising his voice a little:

'What really interests me is- you!'

I wasn't quite clear what he meant, so I made no comment.

'There are several things,' he continued, 'that puzzle me about your crime. I feel sure that you will help me to understand them.'

When I replied that really it was quite simple, he asked me to give him an account of what I'd done that day. (*The Stranger* 82)

He is being subjugated by explaining not only his current attitudes but also the ones in the past. In addition, his reactions in the past are being carried to the court. His mother's death, funeral and what he did later are some of them for which he is being asked several questions, and he cannot attribute any meaning to them at all. It is his absurdity, to sum up, which is *under arrest and interrogation*. The murder that he has

committed has already been forgotten and what is questioned is why he did not cry after the funeral of his mother, which is a conventional and accustomed reaction to death, and what lies behind going swimming right after the day his mother was buried.

It seems that he was being inquired as it is thought that there is a missing piece in the case of murder which court tries to find out by asking him for explanations that cannot be comprehended sufficiently and satisfactorily. As Albert Camus tries to imply in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, there are some occasions which open the gate of absurdity in life. In the case of Meursault, it is not the murder but his reactions before and after the murder which requires more and more questions to be asked and answered if possible. Camus argues that:

If I accuse an innocent man of a monstrous crime, if I tell a virtuous man that he has coveted his own sister, he will reply that this is absurd. His indignation has its comical aspect. But it also has its fundamental reason. The virtuous man illustrates by that reply the definitive antinomy existing between the deed I am attributing to him and his lifelong principles. 'It is absurd' means 'It's impossible' but also 'It's contradictory'. (*The Plague The Fall Exile and The Kingdom* 516)

It is the established way of life which is being taken into account in this quote meaning that there are certain codes in life which have been converted into tradition through the values accepted by the system. If those certain codes are encountered in a certain place and time, there should be particular reactions which have already been stereotyped. Whereas it may not be possible all the time to witness or to give those reactions, an unusual reaction may sometimes be given. In the novel, Meursault's retroaction is being analyzed in a context that has just been told. Even his trial is being contemplated in the same manner as it is depicted below:

'Gentleman of the jury, I would have you note that on the next day after his mother's funeral that man was visiting the swimming pool, starting a liaison

with a girl, and going to see a comic film. That is all I wish to say.' (*The Stranger* 118)

It is not feasible from now on for Meursault to go beyond any context as his whole life is under detainment. On the other hand, Murphy never falls into or exposes himself to such a condition from the very beginning till the very end. He wishes what he possesses within his existence as a whole to be united freely. The Magdalen Mental Mercyseat can be related to the prison in *The Stranger* as both of them keep mentally and legally outlaw people inside them and outside the system which should be depicted as faultless.

When these two *institutions*, hospital and prison, are considered with Murphy and Meursault respectively, the former is the one who chooses to be a part of hospital, but the latter does not mind being inside or outside the jail even though he is brought in having committed a crime. Meursault loses the privilege of having the passivity and he is being subjugated, but Murphy never falls into such a condition and he tries to keep the control with his soul, mind and body together. What may matter to Meursault most is that his attitude towards life has been ravished from his hands. It is problematic and a major question: Will he be able to regard this assumption as a part of the absurdity of life? Maybe 'yes', maybe 'no' *as he rarely says*. However, Murphy maintains his absurdity and he praises his own existence as a whole and never takes the outer world into account. Beckett discusses and manifests, via a letter by Murphy which may be addressed to Celia in *Murphy*, that:

With regard to the disposal of these my body, mind and soul, I desire that they be burnt and placed in a paper bag and brought to the Abbey Theatre, Lr. Abbey Street, Dublin, and without pause into what the great and good Lord Chesterfield calls the necessary house where their happiest hours have been spent, on the right as one goes down into the pit, and I desire that the chain be

there pulled upon them, if possible during the performance of a piece, the whole to be executed without ceremony or show of grief. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 161)

On the one hand, it can be seen as an indication of the desire of being free and united independent of *the outer reality*; on the other hand, it can also be interpreted in such a way that he has not achieved this unity while he was alive even though he wished a lot. Moreover, he, by writing a letter instead of a concrete interaction, preserves his solitariness from the externality as opposed to Meursault. Meursault is being exposed to the externality in despair. He is not only imprisoned in a prison of wall and iron; he is also imprisoned or surrounded by the questions and investigations asking him even the simplest and the least necessary details to explain the murder he has committed. Escape, which is the only thing that Murphy does, is not an option for him anymore. He is being sought by several people and Murphy has special meanings in their lives, but Murphy is not around. He favors being away from the people who are looking for him and who need him in one way or another.

Murphy then is actually needed by five people outside himself. By Celia, because she loves him. By Neary, because he thinks of him as the Friend at last. By Miss Counihan, because she wants a surgeon. By Cooper, because he is being employed to that end. By Wylie, because he is reconciled to doing Miss Counihan the honour, in the not too distant future, of becoming her husband. Not only did she stand out in Dublin and in Cork as quite exceptionally anthropoid, but she had private means. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 121)

Beckett tells his reader how important Murphy is and what a special place he has for those people mentioned in the passage above. It is similar to the trial scene in *The Stranger* in that Meursault, like Murphy, is a source of interest and he is being observed with an ultimate concentration. However, he is being witnessed and he is

easily attainable as he is captured by the laws belonging to system that prevent him from any possible escape. Conversely, Murphy is out of sight and he is not easily attainable. He is not around, but his existence can be deeply felt through the concerns of people about him. On the other hand, Meursault is just in front of the eyes of the reader as concrete as he is in front of the court, and strangely enough, the concerns of the people in the court about him lessen his existence and he becomes invisible and lifeless gradually for the reader as he loses his interest for himself. This can be shown by the below quote as well:

What with the crowd and stuffiness of the air, I was feeling a bit dizzy. I ran my eyes round the court room but couldn't recognize any of the faces. At first I could hardly believe that all these people had come on my account. It was such a new experience, being a focus of interest; in the ordinary way no one ever paid attention to me. (*The Stranger* 104)

He does not understand the attachment of the people to his trial, but he cannot escape from that attachment, either. He has to go along with it no matter what he thinks of the circumstances. It may be felt that he is being driven into a change as he cannot avoid engagement or grasp the opinion that life is meaningless as he had done before he was brought to the jail. External world and its subsistence in his world seem to create or cause a difference for him which contradicts his indifference and passivity he had before. He begins to take the role given by the externality and he loses his interest for himself. However, it should not be underestimated that he becomes more and more aware as he loses his individuality which is a missing piece in the case of Murphy. Before, during and after the trial Meursault has been asked too many questions which bother him enough and he is exposed to several ways of understanding of life which may inevitably create a confusion in his mind regarding the life, society, belief and morality. He is not being inquired by the lawyer and the court; after the trial, he has also

been contacted by a priest whom he refuses for what can be inferred from the conversation below:

All of a sudden he jerked his head up and looked me in the eyes. 'Why,' he asked, 'don't you let me come to see you?' I explained that I didn't believe in God.

'Are you really so sure of that?'

I said I saw no point troubling my head about the matter; whether I believed or didn't was, to my mind, a question of so little importance. (*The Stranger* 145)

In this particular passage including a conversation, it is indicated that the external pressure imposed on him still continues, but it can also be felt that he tries to maintain his indifference which is lost during the trial. It can be concluded that Meursault experiences tidal thoughts in his mind which is not felt in the case of Murphy who manages to maintain his absurdity even during and after his death. His death is a confusing point as it cannot be cleared out whether it was a suicide or not, but it was a death as described below:

In contrast with the forenoon which was pitch black, cold and damp, Murphy felt incandescent. An hour previously the moon had been obliged to set, and the sun could not rise for an hour to come. He raised his face to the starless sky, abandoned, patient, the sky, not the face, which was abandoned only. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 150)

He creates such an atmosphere similar to the case experienced by Meursault as he is also *in the clouds*. After the trial, Meursault imagines and thinks of death or solitariness approaching all the time. It can also be named despair and fear which may differ from Murphy's point of view. Meursault is exposed to an arranged death, but Murphy is fantasizing it by taking pleasure of it through certain periods as the quote continues below:

He took off his shoes and socks and threw them away. He set off slowly, trailing his feet, through the long grass among the trees towards the male nurses' quarters. He took off his clothes one by one as he went, quite forgetting they did not belong to him, and threw them away. When he was naked he lay down in a tuft of soaking tuffets and tried to get a picture of Celia. In vain. Of his mother. In vain. Of his father (for he was not illegitimate). In vain.-----
----- He tried again with his father, his mother, Celia, Wylie, Neary, Cooper, Miss Dew, Miss Carridge, Nelly, the sheep, the chandlers, even Bom and Co., even Bim, even Ticklepenny and Miss Counihan, even Mr Quigley. -----
----- In vain in all cases. He could not get a picture in his mind of any creature he had met, animal, or human. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 150-151)

The case that is being described in the quote can be labeled as an evacuation of one's life. So it can be, in fact, as Murphy dies after a short while; he is being described as such. What is felt deeply is the sense of control or tranquility for the death coming soon. However, it is not possible to get the same sense in the case of Meursault which regards life meaningless as it will be finished by death. He cannot have the feeling of tranquility about death which he had during the murder. He confesses his fear as he regards anything reminding death as coercion, so his description of the approaching death which finalizes this meaningless life is much harsher and intimidating and distracts every moment he spends waiting as depicted below:

They always came for one at dawn; that much I knew. So, really, all my nights were spent in waiting for that dawn. I have never liked being taken by surprise. When something happens to me I want to be ready for it. That's why I got into the habit of sleeping off and on in the daytime and watching through the night for the first hint of daybreak in the dark dome above. The worst period of the night was that vague hour when I knew, they usually come; once it was after midnight I waited, listening intently. (*The Stranger* 141-142)

It is not the way he takes the issue of life into consideration as he has the ability or aspect of being indifferent and motionless in case of anything that may happen in life. In addition, death is, partly, the source of his specific attitude towards life in general as it has been discussed several times. He, to be honest, seems to have no concern for any experience that he may face, so he is perceived as a careless person supported by his passivity and he is naturally expected to have the same reaction when the execution is the case. However, he undergoes a drastic change which cannot be seen in the case of Murphy: It is the lack of control or acceptance of the ultimate end. He loses his sense of ignorance. In *Murphy*, death is not cold and Murphy, the character, has a kind of comprehension of death which can be felt through his mood of peace while he is being depicted during death. The reader can visualize him while he is walking towards his ultimate end. It can also be regarded as the end of his absurdity that he never loses throughout his life, even in his death which will be mentioned soon in this chapter. Meursault, on the other hand, feels very uneasy and life seems serious acting against the opinion that he has for it. He imagines, edits death, and apprehends from it what he has never felt before. He, as it is shown below, is in an endeavor to comprehend his would-be execution.

Another thing I had to recognize was that, until now, I'd had wrong ideas on the subject. For some reason I'd always supposed that one had to go up steps and climb on to a scaffold to be guillotined.----- Then one morning I remembered a photograph the newspapers had featured on the occasion of the execution of a famous criminal. (*The Stranger* 140)

The key phrase that should especially be taken out is *had to* which has a connotation with an obligation that is not a usual circumstance for Meursault. As he always had the idea that life comes as it comes whatever the person does and there is

no difference between doing something and undoing, it is useless and unnecessary to have the feeling of obligation in our deeds. However, it is not difficult to observe how his rapprochement has been undergoing a permutation. He, himself, gives the manifestation of this alternation through a confession-like statement written below:

There were two other things about which I was always thinking: the dawn and my appeal. However, I did my best to keep my mind of these thoughts. I lay down, looked up at the sky, and forced myself to study it. When the light began to turn green I knew that night was coming. Another thing I did to deflect the course of my thoughts was to listen to my heart. I couldn't imagine that this faint throbbing which had been with me for so long would ever cease. (*The Stranger* 141)

He prepares the physical atmosphere for his state of mind and his agency for his own deeds is felt very clearly. His voice can be heard with a self-confident tone as he is saying 'I' or 'my' and he turns his descriptive manner into himself that was for the external world before. When the time arrives, he utters the change he experiences that can be labeled as the disappearance of absurdity, which is just the opposite in the case of Murphy.

Imagination has never been one of my strong points. Still, I tried to picture a moment when the beating of my heart no longer echoed in my head. But, in vain. The dawn and my appeal were still there. And I ended by believing it was silly thing to force one's thoughts out of their natural groove. (*The Stranger* 141)

He continues experiencing tidal emotions which jam him between two different circumstances. For one thing, it may seem more possible for him to have self-control over the events happening around him and he becomes a stronger agent for his own deeds, but for a second thing he suddenly goes back to his passivity, and events and emotions lose their originality and fall into the same sameness which has been

happening to him. However, Murphy flourishes without giving any concession from his existential concerns and absurd way of approaching life. He remains what he was at the end of the novel. He never loses his contentment in his deeds even when death invades him.

At one of the rock's dead points he saw, for a second far beneath, the dip and radiator, gleam and grin; at the other skylight, open to no stars. Slowly he felt better, astir in his mind, in the freedom of that light and dark that did not clash, nor alternate, nor fade nor lighten except to their communion. The rock got faster and faster, shorter and shorter; the gleam was gone, the grin was gone, the starlessness was gone, soon his body would be quiet. Most things under the moon got slower and slower and then stopped, a rock got faster and faster and then stopped. Soon his body would be quiet, soon he would be free. The gas went on in the w.c., excellent gas, superfine chaos. Soon his body was quiet. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 151)

He no longer breathes. He is dead eventually after such a *peacefully described death* which is totally different from the description of death by Meursault. Meursault has never reached tranquility while he is waiting for his execution and it is not abnormal to have the feeling of fear and nervousness while waiting for an execution especially if it is one's own, but there is a conflict in what Meursault thinks about life and death in the beginning of the novel. He, even though, has the opinion or a kind of understanding of giving a place to death in the meaninglessness of life before he commits murder, his attitude changes drastically which lets the death to invade all his thoughts. This attenuates his absurdity which has connotations of passivity and meaninglessness of life. Beckett's Murphy, on the other hand, never defines death as part of life, nor is he aware of it. He describes it and it happens suddenly, there is no concern, no fear, and no internalization. It comes when it comes in Murphy's

perception. Meursault, however, loses his ignorance of it gradually and it begins to constitute a source of fear for him, which contradicts what he says below:

Then all day there was my appeal to think about. I made the most of this idea, studying my effects so as to squeeze out the maximum of consolation. Thus, I always began assuming the worst; my appeal was dismissed. That meant, of course, I was to die. Sooner than others, obviously. 'But,' I reminded myself, 'it's a common knowledge that life isn't worth living, anyhow.' And, on a wide view, I could see that it makes little difference whether one dies at the age of thirty or threescore and ten – since, in either case, other men and women will continue living, the world will go on as before. (*The Stranger* 143)

He creates a sense in the eyes of the reader as if he has regained his passivity and the philosophy telling that life is absurd and there is no meaning in our deeds, decisions, and fears. However, it seems problematic as he is always going and coming in a dilemma. He used to attribute no meaning to his life at first, but later on he seems to be worrying about life as death was knocking on his heart in the disguise of guillotine. This fear *disarms* Meursault of his rifle of ignorance and reasonability of being absurd with that meaninglessness. In addition, as a final reaction he manifests his desire for life which can be said to be the absolute turning point in Meursault's state of mind and emotions. He utters this manifestation as if he is chanting slogans which leave his actual perception uncertain as he seems to praise ignorance and concern equally:

'No! No! I refuse to believe it. I'm sure you've often wished there was an after life' Of course I had, I told him. Everybody has that wish at times. But that had no more importance than wishing to be rich, or to swim very fast, or to have a better-shaped mouth. It was in the same order of things. I was going on in the same vein, when he cut in with a question. How did I picture the life after the grave? I fairly bawled out at him: 'A life in which I can remember this life on earth. That's all I want of it.' And in the same breath I told him I'd had enough of his company. (*The Stranger* 151)

In the first part of the speech it is easier to have a sense that he has an ignorant way of thinking about the earnings of life, so he does not see any difference between any of them. It is because he does not prefer dividing life into pieces, but towards the end of the speech, he has a kind of attitude which gives the reader a feeling of concern. In contrast with that attitude, the reader does not witness such quick changes in Murphy's world of mind and emotions. He, *successively*, maintains the meaninglessness of his deeds even after his death. As it can be sensed below, death has no more importance than any other thing:

Bim and Ticklepenny paused in the passage to collect Murphy. They slid him out on his aluminium tray, they carried him into the p.m. room, they laid him out on the slab of ruin marble in the key of the bay. In the narrow space to the north of the slab Dr. Killiecrankie and the coroner took up the demonstrative attitude. Bim and Ticklepenny awaited the signal at the head and foot of the tray, the four corners of the sheet gathered in their hands. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt 157*)

Even though it has a ceremonial effect on the reader, it is Murphy's ash to be gathered on the tray, but it is almost impossible to sense even a tiny piece of agitation, fear, melancholy, or internalization. It happens and that is all. Murphy does not let his absurdity wilt even after his dissolution, as it is described below. Moreover, it is not the absolute and ultimate end that he experiences. Beckett lets Murphy continue his absurdity in an absurd way by making his ashes alive for a certain while and he gives them the chance of journey which may not be encountered in Camus, as Camus prefers clearer *ends* and when he says *end* he means *end*. Beckett states Murphy's journey as it is depicted. It should not be forgotten that he is not breathing anymore.

The furnace would not draw, it was past five o'clock before Cooper got away from Mercyseat with the parcel of ash under his arm. It must have weighed well on four pounds. Various ways of getting rid of it suggested themselves to

him on the way to the station. Finally he decided that the most convenient and inconspicuous was to drop it in the first considerable receptacle for refuse that he came to. In Dublin, he need only have sat down on the nearest bench and waited. Soon one of the gloomy dustmen would have come, wheeling his cart marked, 'Post your litter here' But London was less conscious of her garbage, she had not given her scavenging to aliens. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 164),

Beckett leaves Murphy in the end of the novel in a similar circumstance as the novel begins. The novel starts when Murphy is tied onto a rocking chair and he does not have any distracting voice or light around him. He is locked in his room without any physical and emotional interaction with *the outer reality*. In the end of the novel, it is possible for the reader to visualize a similar confinement as his ashes are in a package and he is totally out of any external entity. However, it is interesting that Murphy in the package is as alive as Murphy on the rocking chair, or conversely, Murphy on the rocking chair is as dead as Murphy in the package. It is relatively facile for the reader to sense that life for Beckett's Murphy is not and should not be complicated as it is meaningless and the individual should peel himself from the authorities which have a dictating sanction on the existence of any individual. However, life is as absurd as Murphy depicts via his experiences. His journey begins and ends in a total confinement and he endeavors to keep himself away from any proper social contact. Even his disappearance out of death has a reactive manner as he is being objectified and a traditional funeral is not organized for him. He is packed and carried, instead, which is not a conventional way of treating a dead person. In contrast to Meursault, he does not experience any serious changes as he does not attribute any meaning to anything he does or anything that happens to him, but Meursault does experience certain changes in his perspective of life and death as previously

emphasized. He gains a self at first and then confidence and he is much more self-confident from now on and meaninglessness of life in his mind seems to experience a change as well.

Living as he (the prison chaplain) did, like a corpse, he couldn't even be sure of being alive. It might look as if my hands were empty. Actually, I was sure of myself, sure about everything far surer than he; sure of my present life and of the death that was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into – just as it had got its teeth into me. (*The Stranger* 151)

That's the first time that the reader can witness him while he is making a choice by positing himself, as an agent, to the center of his deeds. He questions and answers the problematic conditions he has been experiencing and getting a solution as it is seen above in the excerpt. He begins making analysis as well and he reviews what happens in life and what may happen in death, which is not a familiar custom.

Every man alive was privileged; there was only one class of men, the privileged class. All alike would be condemned to die one day; his turn, too, would come like others'. And what difference could it make if, after being charged with murder, he were executed because he didn't weep at his mother's funeral, since it all came to the same thing in the end? (*The Stranger* 152)

Camus, even though he gives self-confidence to his protagonist, cannot avoid asking a final question. He asks that final question to praise or rather to appreciate life no matter how it is spent. In opposition to Beckett, Camus leaves his character not in a passive and alienated condition and confinement, but he *recreates* him by putting a new face into his perspective.

To sum up, both Camus and Beckett, in their novels *The Stranger* and *Murphy* focus on the meaning of life and to what extent the individual should consecrate his existence into the unity, which is society and all its particles such as customs, rules,

and belief. In both novels, it is their journey of attitudes towards that unity and life in general. Both Meursault and Murphy regard life as meaningless since *it is a matter of dying*. Murphy, differently from Meursault, performs his absurdity in the society by keeping himself hidden from its existence in his life and conclusively does not encounter any kind of change. His death welcomes him in the same absurd manner. Strangely, the reader does not feel any difference between Murphy, the dead and Murphy, the alive as he prevents himself from having any proper communication and remains hidden and silent, silent like death. Finally, he acts like Murphy, but not like anyone else and he dies in a way a Murphy can die or should die. Meursault, on the other hand, does not give the same impression to the reader as he seems to be aware of his absurdity and sticks it on himself as etiquette and after a while he is imposed to certain changes sourcing from the interrogation taking place which is not encountered in Murphy. Naturally, *Murphy* ends in such a way that the reader does not feel that this is the end:

Some hours later Cooper took the packet of ash from his pocket, where earlier in the evening he had put it for greater security and threw it angrily at a man who had given him great offence. It bounced, burst off the wall onto the floor, where at once it became the object of much dribbling, passing, trapping, shooting, punching, heading and even some recognition from the gentlemen's code. By closing time, the body, mind and soul of Murphy were freely distributed over the floor of the saloon; and before another dayspring greyed the earth had been swept away with the sand, the beer, the butts, the glass, the matches, the spits, the womit. (*Murphy, Mercier and Camier and Watt* 164)

However, Meursault is more active. He has a clear agency eventually and he reaches a resolution and the novel, *The Stranger*, finishes, therefore, in a very different mood from *Murphy* as the reader is not surprised in *Murphy*. *The Stranger*, on the other hand, digs the emotions and feeling of sympathy of the reader as Camus presents his

protagonist to the reader with the changes he experiences. He finishes the novel as it is quoted below:

To feel it so like myself, indeed, so brotherly, made me realize that I'd been happy, and that I was happy still. For all to be accomplished, for me to feel less lonely, all that remained to hope was that on the day of my execution there should be a huge crowd of spectators and that they should greet me with howls of execration. (*The Stranger* 154)

CONCLUSION

The thesis focuses on the similarities and differences between two different novels by two different authors: *The Stranger* by Albert Camus and *Murphy* by Samuel Beckett. The main concerns for the similarities and differences are absurdity and existential statements that can be traced in the lines of the novels through their setting and characterization. As it has been emphasized in a detailed way in the first two chapters, political, social, and economic circumstances of the period, 19th and 20th centuries, had created a chaotic and depressive influence on the individuals which had also frustrated the understanding of meaning in life.

19th and 20th centuries were the years of wars, depressions, and drastic changes which had caused serious alternations in the minds of the people as the most common thing that they had used to witness was death which ends the life totally, which is the ultimate end, inescapably. Of course, that is not the absurd. Neither wars or deaths and all those problems which have just been mentioned nor life can be regarded and labeled as absurd on their own. Absurdity appears out of an encounter meaning that we born to life, we wake up in the morning to experience a life which is waiting outside, we go to work, we come from work and so on. Almost everything, or everything as a whole we experience has the concept of life in the centre, but no matter what we do, think or imagine, death is the absolute end and it can not be prevented. Then, what is the meaning of life, of having a job, of marriage, of divorce, and waking up at six o'clock instead of three in the afternoon? Is there a difference between having a job or not having a job? What makes divorce different from marriage? They all end with a cold death. Albert Camus argues in *The Myth of Sisyphus* how absurdity arises as it is depicted below in the quote from the article:

There are absurd marriages, challenges, rancours, silences, wars, and even peace treaties. For each of them the absurdity springs from a comparison. I'm thus justified in saying that the feeling of absurdity does not spring from the mere scrutiny of a fact or an impression, but that it bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it. (*The Plague The Fall Exile and The Kingdom* 516-517)

Absurdity realizes itself out of an occasion when there is an encounter, otherwise nothing can be identified as meaningless since it does not have an attitude of reaction or rebellion against a dictated life, world of values, and rules without a bigger context such as customs and society in which they are practiced. In those novels, *The Stranger* and *Murphy*, it is clearly depicted that both Meursault and Murphy are in an endeavor to ignore the social environment with all its obligatory influence on the person. What they do, in short, is a rupture or a deviation from a generally accepted way and opening a new phase by purpose or in its nature. Albert Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus* defines that condition as a divorce as it follows. He states that "The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation" (517). When a confrontation takes place between two poles, it is commonly possible to witness an arise of conflict which may cause a tension between them.

In both novels, the protagonists are apparently out of the socially expected and accepted behavioral codes or patterns which can be visualized, for instance, during the mortuary and funeral scenes in *The Stranger*, or in the case of Murphy's death in Beckett's novel. They do not satisfy the expectations and acceptable conventionalities of the community both socially and morally in their writings. Their characters are exposed to unconventional attitudes that they, themselves, possess. As it has been discussed, both novels share certain similarities when they are taken into consideration

from that perspective because both can not settle a proper contact with the environment and they develop personal and particular approaches. Meursault, for example, tries to avoid any kind of responsibility even though he is within the community through his job which is a source for a repetitive circle in his life. Camus gives him the chance or luxury of passivity. He is *actively* passive. This is a thrift assumed by him as a reply to the meaninglessness of life. He clearly manifests that there is no difference between doing something or undoing it as it can be traced in the case of murder. Murphy, as well, has a similar attitude towards life, but we do not encounter his statements about absurdity of life. He just experiences it in his own particular way and he does not ask questions. It can be interpreted that there is no awareness of absurdity in *Murphy*. His absurdity, in other words, is a very natural and conventional way of living for him, therefore he does not regard it necessary to inquire what he has done. As an outcome of that unawareness, he does not undergo any changes from the beginning of the novel till the very end of it.

The same condition is different in the case of Meursault. As it has been discussed, Meursault is witnessed in a mood of inquire before, during, and after his deeds. Even though he does what he prefers, the process of questioning interferes the nature of absurdity. Consequently, it is not unusual for the reader to take in the examination of his deeds by the community as well which is denoted in the end of the novel. It is an organized, preferred, and applied absurdity that can be established in Meursault's condition, but it is absurd absurdity being told by Beckett which ends as it begins, therefore, it is being experienced without awareness, but in its own nature in *Murphy*, by Murphy.

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