



Research Article

Suffering and Survival: A Comparative Study of Ernest Hemingway and Albert Camus' Absurd Philosophy

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Abstract

Twentieth-century literature is characterised by an intense feeling of crisis, disillusionment and fragmentation. Among the writers who powerfully responded to this condition are Albert Camus and Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway, in realistic stories of war and personal loss, offers a version of human suffering; Camus offers a philosophical version of the same condition, the absurd. This paper provides a comparative study of suffering and survival in their works, concentrating on the fiction of Hemingway and Camus' philosophical framework in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. It claims that both writers recognize the absurdity of life, but they react to absurdity differently in tone and method: Hemingway's attitude is one of silent endurance, Camus's attitude is one of conscious acceptance and rebellion. Both ultimately present a vision of human dignity not founded on victory, but on the courage to continue in a world without certainty.

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INTRODUCTION

The early twentieth century was marked by war, destruction, and the decline of traditional values. Within this disturbed historical backdrop, literature started to challenge the very purpose of human existence. Ernest Hemingway and Albert Camus are two of the most significant voices to have explored the predicament of modern man in the face of suffering and uncertainty. Hemingway's writing is grounded in lived experience, particularly trauma of war and emotional loss. His characters often suffer in silence, showing their inner strength in action rather than words. On the other hand, Camus builds a philosophical understanding of existence. He argues that existence is fundamentally absurd because people seek meaning in a universe that offers none. As Camus puts it in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "Absurdity is not the result of a confrontation between the mind and the world, but of the mind's confrontation with itself." The realisation of absurdity is not a cause for hopelessness, but instead a new kind of consciousness and rebellion. In this paper, I try to compare these two views and see how suffering becomes a way to survival, dignity and identity in their works.

Hemingway and Camus on the Idea of Suffering

Suffering is a central theme in the works of both writers, but it is presented in a different guise and expression.

In Hemingway's fiction, suffering is not abstract but actual and corporeal. It comes from war, love, loss, and the brutal realities of life. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic Henry experiences emotional devastation as he loses love and hope. Similarly, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago experiences physical pain, fatigue, and loneliness in his fight with the marlin. Hemingway does not offer philosophical explanations; instead, he presents suffering as a fact of human life.

Camus, on the other hand, gives a philosophical interpretation of suffering. He says suffering comes from the clash between man's desire for meaning and the silent, indifferent universe. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Sisyphus's image is of pushing a rock up a hill forever, a metaphor for the repetitive and meaningless nature of human life. For Camus, suffering is not just physical or emotional; it is existential.

Hence, while Hemingway portrays suffering as a lived experience, Camus describes it as a universal philosophical condition.

Absurdity and the Human Condition

The notion of absurdity is the basis of Camus' thought, and is also a useful way of viewing Hemingway's characters.

Camus defines the absurd as the conflict between man's desire for clarity and the irrational silence of the world. When a person realizes this absurdity life can never be looked at the same way again. But Camus rejects both escape and despair. He suggests rather that one must live with this knowledge and go on acting. Hemingway does not use the word "absurd," explicitly, but the situation in his works is similar. His characters often find themselves in situations where logic breaks down and outcomes are not obvious. One powerful example of this is Santiago's struggle in *The Old Man and the Sea*. He knows success is uncertain and even temporary, but

he continues his effort. His struggle is significant, not for its outcome, but for his attitude to it. In this sense, Hemingway's characters may be viewed as practical examples of Camus' absurd hero. They don't speak of absurdity but they live it.

Endurance and Revolt as Survival

The most important point of comparison between Hemingway and Camus is their understanding of survival.

Hemingway's idea of survival is endurance. His characters adhere to a personal code of conduct that is often described as "grace under pressure." They do not whine or seek sympathy, but meet their difficulties with dignity. Even in defeat Santiago retains his pride because he has struggled courageously. Similarly, Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* accepts death with calm, concentrating on his duty rather than fear.

Camus, however, depicts survival as a form of revolt. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he argues that the only meaningful response to life's absurdity, once it is accepted, is to go on living in full awareness. This continuation is a rebellion in itself. Sisyphus is a hero because he does not fear his fate.

So, if Hemingway stresses silent endurance, Camus stresses conscious rebellion. But both, however, arrive at the same conclusion: survival is not winning but going on despite loss.

The Hero: Absurd Hero and Code Hero

Another key element of comparison is the hero concept.

Hemingway's "code hero" is one who maintains dignity, courage and self-control in the face of suffering. This hero does not show emotions openly but shows strength by action. Santiago is a perfect example of this as he fights on even when broken physically. This is in contrast to Camus' "absurd hero" who is characterised by consciousness. This hero knows that life is meaningless, but chooses to live it to the fullest. Sisyphus is the embodiment of this idea, for he welcomes his endless labour without any hope of release.

Both heroes are different, but they have something in common: they do not surrender. Greatness, after all, is not in being successful but in the attitude towards failure.

CONCLUSION

A comparative study of Ernest Hemingway and Albert Camus reveals a strong connection between their views on suffering and survival. Both writers accept the grim reality that life offers no promised meaning or reward. Still, they won't see this as cause for despair. Hemingway creates a universe where people endure suffering with quiet strength and individual dignity. Camus' philosophy of the absurd encourages individuals to face meaninglessness with awareness and defiance. Their approaches differ, but their final message is mostly the same: human worth lies in the courage to go on. In a world of uncertainty and crisis, their works remain relevant, reminding us that survival is not just a physical act but a moral and existential achievement.

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