



Resistance as Existentialism in Camus' *The Guest*

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Abstract

Camus' The Guest serves as a reflection of personal resistance against colonialism. This study explores resistance as an existentialist concept in Camus' The Guest. Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes freedom, responsibility, and the creation of meaning. This research aims to demonstrate how resistance in the narrative is not merely political but also philosophical. Using Sartre's existentialism as the theoretical framework, this study employs a qualitative method, analyzing textual elements through close reading and interpretation. The findings reveal that resistance in The Guest manifests through Daru's micro expression, reflecting Sartre's notion of existence precedes essence, condemned to freedom and responsibility, anguish, and forlornness. This study highlights how existential resistance challenges not only against external forces but also the burden of their own freedom. Therefore, this study offers insight on how individuals navigate ethical choices in context of oppression and serves as the doorstep for post-colonial studies through existentialism perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism makes an appearance in literature as a double-edged sword as it reflects both the expansion of colonial rule and the resistance against it. Loomba (2005) asserts that "literary texts can also militate against dominant ideologies, or contain elements which cannot be reconciled to them". This highlights the complex role of literature, which does not merely serve as a vehicle for reinforcing colonial narratives but also possesses the capacity to challenge, subvert, and destabilize them. Resistance in colonial-era literature often emerges within social contexts, making postcolonial and decolonial studies crucial frameworks for understanding how literature responds to colonial oppression. However, alternative approaches, such as existentialist philosophy, can also provide valuable insights into acts of resistance within colonial literature. Existentialism emphasizes the individual's responsibility to assert personal freedom and authenticity in the face of external pressures or oppressive systems. By examining resistance through micro-expressions of characters' existence, existentialism uncovers the subtle yet profound ways in which characters assert their autonomy, struggle with imposed identities, and navigate the complexities of oppression, revealing a deeper layer of resistance embedded within colonial narratives.

In post-colonial and decolonial studies, literature resist the dominant cultural values, codes, narratives, and behaviors of colonial discourse (Bhandari, 2022). Violent

resistance in literature is manifested through the behavior of the characters and their motives. These characters are shaped by the social and political influences surrounding them, and their violent actions are often responses to oppression and threats (Mahmoud, 2019). This can be seen in *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling (Kipling, 2008), where Mowgli's struggle against Shere Khan symbolizes resistance against an oppressive force that seeks to control him. Shere Khan, representing colonial power or tyranny, attempts to dominate Mowgli's existence, but Mowgli's violent resistance becomes an act of defiance and survival. On the other hand, existentialism presents resistance from a different perspective. Rather than focusing on structural or political opposition, existentialist resistance is deeply personal and philosophical. It explores how individuals within a colonial system grapple with absurdity, oppression, and their own sense of freedom. In this context, resistance emerges not through collective rebellion but through the refusal to submit to the imposed meanings and roles dictated by colonial power. Therefore, while postcolonial and decolonial studies focus on the broader sociopolitical struggles against colonialism, existentialism philosophy shifts the focus to the individual's internal confrontation with oppression. This perspective is deeply intertwined with the works of thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the most influential figures in existentialism. Sartre's philosophy offers a different form of resistance—one that does not rely on collective rebellion but on individual autonomy in the face of absurdity and injustice.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that seeks to study man and the nature of his existence (Mahmoud, 2019). Sartre (2010) argues that individuals are radically free and must bear full responsibility for their choices, even in absurd and unjust circumstances. "and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does." He also asserts "Life is nothing until it is lived; but it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose" (Sartre, 2010). Existentialism is the idea that a person is defined by the choices they make, rather than by the circumstances of their birth or the environment they are born into (Tambunan, 2016). While such factors undoubtedly influence one's upbringing and experiences, every situation presents a choice. Regardless of the circumstances, it is the decisions made that ultimately shape a person's existence. "Existentialism begins as a voice raised in protest against the absurdity of Pure Thought, a logic which is not the logic of thinking but the immanent movement of Being. It recalls the spectator of all time and of all existence from the speculations of Pure Thought to the problems and the possibilities of his own conditioned thinking as an existing individual seeking to know how to live and to live the life he knows" (Blackham, 1952). Moreover, besides known as the leading exponent of existentialism in 20th century, Sartre nonetheless was strongly opposed to colonialism, which he regarded as a sordid form of state takeover (Flynn, 2014). Sartre demonstrates his resistance to colonialism through the preface of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (Suharto, 2011). One of his notable statements in the preface was "Violence, like Achilles' spear, can heal the wounds that it has inflicted." (Fanon, 2002). Sartre argues that the same force used by colonizers to oppress can be turned against them as a means of liberation. He believed that resistance was necessary for the colonized to reclaim their humanity and agency. Through his intellectual perspective, Sartre has profoundly influenced numerous literary works that explore individuals grappling with moral dilemmas and acts of resistance including *The Guest* by Albert Camus.

The Guest was written by Albert Camus during the Algerian War of Independence and was first published in 1957 as part of a collection entitled *Exile and the Kingdom* (Aswathy, 2024). It is a short story following Daru, a schoolteacher in French-occupied

Algeria, who is unexpectedly given the responsibility of escorting an Arab prisoner accused of murder to the authorities. Torn between his personal sense of morality and the colonial system's expectations, Daru offers the prisoner a choice: escape to freedom or turn himself in. Unlike many narratives where choices lead to clear consequences, *The Guest* presents a situation where every choice carries an existential burden. Daru, the protagonist, is caught in a dilemma that reflects Sartre's idea of radical freedom and responsibility.

Sartre's existentialism provides a compelling framework for understanding *The Guest*, as the story explores fundamental themes central to existentialist thought. Sartre argues that existence precedes essence, meaning individuals define themselves through their actions rather than adhering to a predetermined nature. Furthermore, human beings are condemned to be free, bearing full responsibility for their choices despite external pressures. With freedom comes responsibility, as individuals must acknowledge that every action contributes to the definition of their existence. This realization leads to anguish, the anxiety of knowing that one's choices carry immense weight, not only for oneself but for others as well. In addition to anguish, Sartre describes forlornness as the profound sense of abandonment that arises from the absence of external moral authority. Without a predetermined moral order to guide decisions, individuals must navigate an indifferent world alone which creates a sense of isolation.

Given the philosophical depth of *The Guest*, Sartre's existentialism serves as an appropriate theoretical lens to examine the dilemmas and act of resistance presented in the narrative. The story's engagement with themes of choice, freedom, and responsibility mirrors Sartre's fundamental ideas, making it a rich subject for existentialist interpretation. By analyzing *The Guest* through Sartre existentialism, this research aims to explore how the narrative reflects the act of resistance against colonialism in the inescapability of choice, the burden of freedom, and the existential isolation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of previous related studies is presented in this section to provide context and insight. There are several articles that have explored the theme of resistance and existentialism in literary works. The first article was written by Mahmoud (2019) entitled *Resistance in Postcolonial Literature with Reference to Sahar Khalifeh's Wild Thorn*. Mahmoud's (2019) article explores Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* as a cornerstone of Palestinian resistance literature, framed through a postcolonial lens. His analysis distinguishes between violent and non-violent resistance, embodied by the protagonists Usama and Adil. Both Mahmoud's (2019) analysis of *Wild Thorns* and the present study of Camus' *The Guest* examine how individuals respond to colonial domination, though they adopt distinct theoretical approaches. Mahmoud (2019) employs a postcolonial framework to explore resistance as either violent or non-violent, contextualized within the broader Palestinian national struggle. In contrast, this study draws on Sartre's existentialist philosophy to interpret resistance as a personal and internal act of moral autonomy. Mahmoud's (2019) article supports the present study by illustrating how colonial oppression forces individuals into difficult moral decisions, a context that parallels Daru's existential crisis. While Mahmoud (2019) examines external political pressures, this article builds on that foundation by exploring how such pressures manifest internally, thus deepening the understanding of resistance beyond the sociopolitical into the existential realm.

The article by Aminzadeh et al. (2022), titled "*Postcolonial Study on Guest by Camus in the lens of Homi Bhabha*", applies postcolonial theory as proposed by Homi

Bhabha (1994) to analyze Albert Camus' *The Guest*. The authors explore how colonial power dynamics shape the relationship between Daru, the French-Algerian schoolteacher, and the Arab prisoner, framing their interaction as a reflection of cultural ambivalence and postcolonial tension. Both the study by Aminzadeh et al. (2022) and this study examine Camus' *The Guest* through the lens of colonial conflict, though they apply different theoretical perspectives. Aminzadeh et al. (2022) applies Homi Bhabha's (1994) postcolonial concepts to show how Daru, as a French-Algerian teacher caught in cultural and political tension. In contrast, this article uses Sartre's existentialist philosophy to explore resistance as a personal and ethical decision, focusing on Daru's internal conflict, sense of freedom, and responsibility. Both studies highlight Daru's isolation and his refusal to align with either side of the colonial conflict, portraying him as a figure of resistance. However, while Aminzadeh et al. (2022) emphasize Daru's position within a divided society, this article interprets his neutrality as an existential act of moral resistance. Aminzadeh et al. (2022) supports this study by providing cultural and political context that deepens the understanding of Daru's internal struggle and illustrates how colonial pressure shapes his existential choices.

Siame's (2020) article, "*The Robotic Man by Habit: An Existential Analysis of Camus' The Misunderstanding*," applies Sartre's existentialist philosophy particularly the concepts of *Being-in-itself* and *Being-for-itself* to examine how habitual violence strips characters of their agency and turns them into passive, mechanical beings. Both this study and Siame (2022) explore existentialist themes in Camus' work, particularly through Sartre's concepts of "Being-for-itself" and "existence precedes essence," yet they emphasize different dimensions of existential struggle. Siame (2022) focuses on how the force of habit turns Camus' characters into passive, mechanical beings—"Being-in-itself"—who lose their freedom and become trapped in absurd, repetitive actions. In contrast, this article on *The Guest* examines resistance not as loss of freedom, but as the burden of it. Despite this difference, both articles present existential resistance as deeply personal and often painful, driven not by external rebellion but internal conflict. Siame (2022) supports the present study by reinforcing the existentialist idea that freedom and choice define the human condition—whether one actively chooses or becomes numb to choose.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2018). This research used Camus' *The Guest* translated by Justin O'Brien as primary data to figure out how the characters' experiences are related to Sartre's Existentialism. Data are fragment of narration that consists of power imbalances, oppression, and acts of resistance demonstrated by the characters in *The Guest*.

This research employed the documentation method, utilizing the note-taking technique for data collection. Data collection involved reading the short story multiple times and marking passages that were identified as data and important for the analysis. To maintain objectivity and consistency throughout the analysis, the researcher applied specific criteria for selecting data. In this study, data refers to scenes or dialogues in the short story that illustrate resistance from an existentialist perspective. Furthermore, each quotation identified as data will be referenced with page number to ensure traceability and accuracy. Finally, the collected data is organized according to the requirements of the analysis.

A descriptive qualitative method, combined with textual analysis, is used to analyze the data as the character's resistance can only be understood through their interactions and treatment of others. To achieve the research goals, this study applies Sartre (1946) Existentialism theory. The data analysis consists of several steps including organizing all the collected data for analysis, applying Sartre's Existentialism theory to interpret the short story, and finally drawing the conclusions to show the research findings. Data verification is done through triangulation by checking, re-checking, and cross-checking to ensure the reliability of interpretations made. Through this methodological approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Camus' *The Guest*, highlighting its significance as a reflection of the inescapability of choice, the burden of freedom, and the existential isolation that arises from taking responsibility for one's actions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Albert Camus' short story *The Guest* is set in a remote Algerian schoolhouse during French colonial rule and follows the moral conflict faced by Daru, a French-Algerian schoolteacher. The story begins when Daru is visited by two men: a gendarme named Balducci and an Arab prisoner accused of murdering his cousin. Daru is ordered to deliver the prisoner to the authorities in Tinguit. Left alone with the prisoner, Daru treats him with unexpected kindness, offering food, shelter, and a degree of trust. He refuses to bind the prisoner or guard him, hoping that this gesture of respect might foster a sense of personal responsibility. The next morning, instead of escorting the prisoner to the police, Daru gives him the choice: continue east to the authorities or escape south into the desert. Daru even provides the prisoner with food and money for the journey. To Daru's surprise, the Arab chooses to walk toward Tinguit, seemingly accepting the consequences of his crime.

a. Existence precedes essence

Sartre gave his lecture at Club Maintenant, Paris in 1946 to offer a defense of existentialism against several reproaches that have been laid against it. This lecture was later published under the same title, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. In his brief exposition, Sartre introduced the fundamental concept of existence precedes essence. "Atheistic existentialism, of which I am a representative, declares with greater consistency that if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence" (Sartre, 2010). Existence precedes essence is basically the first principle of existentialism arguing that man begins life as nothing. It means that man first of all exists as nothing and could only define himself after he surges up in the world. "What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards" (Sartre, 2010). Existence precedes essence is based on the idea that humans are aware of their existence, their being, and the meaning of their existence (Purnama et al., 2021).

When comparing humans to objects like a table or a house - for instance, a fundamental distinction emerges. A table or house is created by an artisan who envisions its purpose, design, and function before it even comes into existence. The object begins as an idea, carefully planned in terms of size, materials, and intended use. Its essence—what it is and what it is meant for—precedes its physical existence. However, this is not the case for humans. Unlike objects, man is not born with a predefined essence or purpose. Instead, existence precedes essence—a person first

exists and only later defines themselves through their actions, choices, and experiences. In other words, a human being is nothing at birth and becomes something only through the meaning they create for themselves.

Camus' *The Guest* deeply reflected the idea that existence precedes essence through the way Daru the schoolmaster perceives the Arab.

"The two men were now halfway up the slope. He recognized the horseman as Balducci the old gendarme he had known for a long time. Balducci was holding on the end of a rope an Arab who was walking behind him with hands bound and head lowered." (Camus, 1957, p. 29)

Daru's first impression of the Arab was nothing except the fact that his hands were bound and head lowered. For Daru, The Arab was just a man who existed. There is no immediate sense of who the Arab is beyond this initial observation, as Daru has no knowledge of his personality, character, or even the circumstances that led to his arrest. In other words, Daru is unable to define the Arab beyond the external conditions imposed upon him. He is merely a figure placed in front of him, stripped of any personal identity or essence that Daru can immediately grasp. This moment reflects the existentialist idea that existence precedes essence—the Arab exists before any meaning or definition can be assigned to him. He remains an ambiguous figure whose identity is yet to be determined.

"After all," he said, turning around toward Balducci, "what did he do?" And, before the gendarme had opened his mouth, he asked: "Does he speak French?"

"No, not a word. We had been looking for him for a month, but they were hiding him. He killed his cousin." (Camus, 1957, p. 31)

However, once Daru learns that the Arab is accused of murder, there is an expectation that he should now perceive him as a criminal. This moment reflects the existentialist idea that a man will be what he makes of himself. A person is defined by the choices they make, rather than by the circumstances of their birth or the environment they are born into. Since the Arab chose murder, he is now accepting the fact that people—or in this case, Daru and Balducci—perceive and define him as a criminal. This aligns with Sartre's belief that individuals are not bound by any inherent nature but instead construct their identity through their actions. The Arab, through his past decision, has created a reality where he is seen as a criminal, regardless of any external justification or personal reasoning behind his actions.

b. Condemn to Freedom and Responsibility

Sartre's existentialism is based on human freedom (Mart, 2012). The idea of condemned to freedom proposes that humans have no choice but to make choices. Freedom here refers to the autonomy of man's free choice (Cheng, 2023). "That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free" (Sartre, 2010). Since humans begin their life as nothing and will be defined by the action they possess, they can establish their essence in whatever way they see fit. Humans can be whatever they decide to become. Life begins as a blank slate, and it is through decisions and actions that individuals shape their identity and values. Humanity, therefore, is not inherently good or bad—it is defined by the collective choices of individuals. Sartre emphasizes that meaning is not found in mere intentions or aspirations but in concrete actions.

Regardless of circumstances, individuals inevitably make choices that contribute to their essence. The question is not whether one should choose but rather the inescapable fact that one must. Absolute freedom requires individuals to take full responsibility for their decisions, as every action carries consequences that shape both personal identity

and the broader human experience. Even choosing not to act is still a choice with consequences. Freedom and responsibility are two sides of a coin which profoundly embodies the notion that freedom without responsibility could lead to inauthentic life (Sunarso, 2010). Responsibility is both a gift and a burden, as it can bring about emotions such as anguish, loneliness, and despair (Bautista, 2015). There is no escaping this reality—every person is forced to make choices throughout their life. Thus, individuals are condemned to choose, and through these choices, they define themselves.

Sartre's concept of condemned to be free is profoundly illustrated in Camus' *The Guest*. At the beginning of the story, Daru is given a clear order by Balducci to deliver the Arab prisoner to the authorities in Tinguit. However, he immediately refused the order. As the story progresses, Daru's role in the prisoner's fate becomes more apparent.

"Now look," the schoolmaster said as he pointed in the direction of the east, "there's the way to Tinguit. You have a two-hour walk. At Tinguit you'll find the administration and the police. They are expecting you." The Arab looked toward the east, still holding the package and the money against his chest. Daru took his elbow and turned him rather roughly toward the south. At the foot of the height on which they stood could be seen a faint path. "That's the trail across the plateau. In a day's walk from here you'll find pasturelands and the first nomads. They'll take you in and shelter you according to their law."

Daru shook his head: "No, be quiet. Now I'm leaving you." He turned his back on him, took two long steps in the direction of the school, looking hesitantly at the motionless Arab and started off again. (Camus, 1957, p. 38)

Daru's actions strongly reflect Sartre's concept of condemned to be free. If one were in Daru's position, one might perceive his choices as purely black and white—either handing the Arab over to the authorities for his crime or helping him escape. However, Daru makes a different decision. Rather than directly determining the Arab's fate, he grants him full freedom by showing him two paths: one leading to the authorities in Tinguit and the other toward the plateau, where he could escape and seek refuge.

This decision reflects an awareness of existential responsibility. Daru realizes that he is not the one who should determine the Arab's fate; instead, the Arab himself must take responsibility for his own destiny. According to Sartre's existentialism, human beings are not born with a predetermined essence or purpose; rather, each individual is responsible for shaping their own existence through their choices. By refusing to decide on behalf of another person, Daru returns the burden of freedom to the Arab, who must now confront the existential weight of his own choices. Daru's actions highlight the idea that choices in life are not always limited like two sides of the same coin. The decision to remain neutral is still a choice with its own consequences. In Sartre's philosophy, human freedom is absolute, and every action—even the refusal to act—is still a form of choice that carries responsibility.

Moreover, Daru's decision in refusing to hand the Arab over is a strong symbol of resistance against the French colonial authorities. While Balducci expects Daru to follow orders without hesitation, Daru's outright rejection of this duty challenges the very system that seeks to impose control. His refusal to participate in the colonial administration's justice system demonstrates his unwillingness to be an instrument of oppression. His rejection of colonial authority highlights the tension between personal freedom and systemic control. Though he tries to remain neutral, his act of refusing to comply is a form of defiance. By choosing not to be an agent of the colonial regime, Daru stands as a figure of resistance, even if he does not actively seek to oppose the French occupation.

As the story unfolds, Daru's treatment of the Arab in *The Guest* serves as a

profound reflection of the concept of being condemned to be free. From the moment Balducci hands over the Arab and orders Daru to deliver him to the authorities, Daru is forced into a position where he must act. Even if he rejects responsibility, he cannot escape the necessity of choosing. His decision to care for the Arab—offering him food, shelter, and dignity—demonstrates how he grapples with this unavoidable freedom.

When he came back to the room, night was falling. He put on the light and served the Arab. "Eat," he said. The Arab took a piece of the cake, lifted it eagerly to his mouth, and stopped short (Camus, 1957, p. 34)

Rather than immediately seeing the Arab as a criminal, Daru treats him with basic humanity. He serves him tea, gives him food, and allows him to sleep comfortably in the same room instead of locking him up. This is not a passive act but a deliberate moral choice, highlighting Sartre's belief that our existence is shaped by the choices we make rather than external labels or expectations. Daru, as a French-Algerian schoolteacher, could have easily followed colonial law and viewed the Arab as an enemy, yet he chose to act outside of that framework. However, this choice does not free him from responsibility—it only reinforces the burden of his radical freedom.

Daru's actions also illustrate the inescapability of responsibility in freedom. Even though he does not personally want to be involved in the colonial conflict, he cannot detach himself from the situation. His refusal to treat the Arab as merely a prisoner is an assertion of his moral autonomy, but it also means he must confront the consequences of his actions. By offering hospitality instead of blind obedience to authority, Daru implicitly acknowledges his role in shaping the Arab's fate, even as he tries to avoid making a final decision.

Furthermore, Daru's choice to treat the Arab with hospitality serves as a quiet but powerful act of resistance against the French colonial authorities. Instead of seeing the Arab as merely a criminal to be handed over, as Balducci expects, Daru treats him with dignity, offering him food, shelter, and even the freedom to choose his fate. This decision directly opposes the rigid colonial system, which seeks to strip individuals—especially the colonized—of their autonomy and humanity. By refusing to blindly follow orders, Daru rejects the role imposed on him by the colonial regime. Balducci assumes that Daru, as a French-Algerian, will comply without question, yet Daru's actions suggest his unwillingness to participate in the machinery of colonial rule. His hospitality toward the Arab symbolizes his refusal to dehumanize him, highlighting his internal moral struggle. This aligns with Sartre's claim that individuals are not only free to choose but are also entirely responsible for the outcomes of their choices.

The idea of Condemned to be free is also deeply reflected through *The Arab*. When Daru granted him total freedom of his own fate—whether to hand himself to the authorities or escape, the Arab chose to walk slowly to prison.

And in that slight haze Daru with heavy heart made out the Arab walking slowly on the road to prison. (Camus, 1957, p. 38)

Even if Daru had not set him free, the Arab still possessed agency; he could have resisted, even killed Daru, and fled toward what might seem like physical freedom. However, he does not take that path. His decision to surrender suggests that his freedom is shaped not only by external conditions but also by his internal sense of morality. Despite any political agenda the government may have had against his people, the Arab acknowledges that he did commit murder. Turning himself in aligns with what he perceives as the morally right course of action.

This is precisely why his freedom is condemned. Though he has the power to

choose, he cannot escape the weight of responsibility and the guilt that would come from evading justice. Sartre argues that human beings are not only responsible for themselves but for all of humanity. "I am thus responsible for myself and for all men, and I am creating a certain image of man as I would have him to be. In fashioning myself I fashion man" (Sartre, 2010). The Arab, in choosing to accept the consequences of his crime, is burdened by this responsibility. His decision is not merely personal—it reflects his understanding of justice as a universal principle. Thus, while freedom may appear to be an open path, it is inescapably bound by moral obligation. The Arab's choice to surrender is not just a submission to the law but a recognition of his accountability to mankind.

However, his decision to surrender does not come without contemplation. His slow walks toward the prison can be interpreted as a symbol of resistance. His hesitant steps suggest that, even though he ultimately moves toward imprisonment, he does so at his own pace, asserting a degree of agency in a situation where he has little control. Rather than running toward freedom or surrendering immediately, his slow movement becomes an act of quiet defiance—a refusal to fully conform to the expectations placed upon him. By walking slowly, he resists the inevitability of his fate, prolonging the moment of decision and demonstrating that, even in submission, there is room for resistance. His actions challenge the assumption that he is simply yielding to authority; instead, his slow pace suggests contemplation, reluctance, and perhaps an unwillingness to accept the role imposed upon him. This aligns with the broader existential themes in Camus' work, where resistance is not always loud or aggressive but can exist in small, subtle gestures such as walking slowly toward an unwanted destiny.

c. Anguish

In existentialism, anguish refers to the deep anxiety that arises from the realization that we are entirely responsible for our choices, with no external authority to guide us. Jean-Paul Sartre argues that because humans are radically free, we bear the weight of shaping our own existence, and this freedom brings an overwhelming sense of responsibility. Existentialism asserts that there are no predefined values—only the ones we create. This leads to anguish, as individuals must make decisions knowing that their choices define not only themselves but also what they believe all of humanity should do. Anguish arises from the awareness that among countless possibilities, the chosen one holds significance only because it was selected over the rest (Aminzadeh et al., 2022). Sartre illustrates this with the example of a military leader who must send soldiers into battle, knowing that his decision affects countless lives, yet having no absolute moral rule to rely on. "In making the decision, he cannot but feel a certain anguish." (Sartre, 2010).

This existential anguish is not fear of a specific event but rather a deep, internal anxiety about the nature of human freedom itself. It is the realization that we cannot escape responsibility, even if we try to act passively or avoid making choices. Every action—or inaction—still carries consequences, and we must own them. In this sense, existentialism presents anguish as an unavoidable part of the human condition—one that burdens and defines us.

The idea of anguish is profoundly presented in Camus' *The Guest*. This anxiety that arises from the responsibility of our choices were explained through Daru's perspective. At the beginning of the story, Daru rejected Balducci's order in delivering the Arab to

the authorities.

"It's an order, son, and I repeat it."

"That's right. Repeat to them what I've said to you: I won't hand him over."

(Camus, 1957, p. 33)

However, once Balducci leaves, Daru realizes he cannot remain neutral. He is now inescapably responsible for the Arab's fate, whether he hands him over or sets him free. This realization brings anguish, as he knows that no external authority—neither Balducci nor the government—can relieve him of this responsibility. If he turns the Arab in, he betrays his personal values of fairness. If he lets him escape, he risks being seen as a traitor to the French, possibly endangering himself. His anguish comes from knowing that his choice defines his moral stance and that there is no clear "right" answer.

Even when he seemingly avoids making a decision by leaving the Arab to choose his own fate, he still cannot escape responsibility. The Arab's choice to go to prison does not absolve Daru—it only reinforces that, despite his attempt at neutrality, he was still part of the prisoner's fate. In the final scene, when Daru sees the message on his chalkboard—*"You handed over our brother. You will pay for this."* (Camus, 1957, p. 38)—his anguish is complete. He tried to avoid taking a side, yet he is still condemned by both parties. This moment perfectly illustrates Sartre's idea that freedom comes with unavoidable responsibility, and no one can escape the weight of their choices.

Moreover, the notion of Anguish also deeply resonates through Balducci's point of view. Taking the Arab to the police is just one of his duties as a gendarme. He may not always feel comfortable with his job, but he follows orders because he believes he has a bigger responsibility to the French colonial authority and its control over Algeria that he is protecting.

I was told to hand this guy over to you and return without delay.

"Listen, Balducci," Daru said suddenly, "every bit of this disgusts me, and first of all your fellow here. But I won't hand him over. Fight, yes, if I have to. But not that."

"You're being a fool," he said slowly. "I don't like it either. You don't get used to putting a rope on a man even after years of it, and you're even ashamed—yes, ashamed. But you can't let them have their way." (Camus, 1957, pp. 31–32)

Balducci understands Daru's hesitation to mistreat the Arab, but as a colonial officer, he feels obligated to enforce the law and maintain order among the rebelling Arabs. He faces a difficult choice: releasing the Arab himself would undermine French authority, while handing him over to Daru ensures the prisoner's likely imprisonment. He chooses the latter, prioritizing the stability of his nation over fairness. This decision reflects anguish—the deep awareness that his actions have significant consequences, yet he cannot escape responsibility. Though unpleasant, he believes his duty to his government outweighs personal moral concerns.

However, Balducci's decision is not as simple as it seems. By leaving the Arab with Daru, he avoids forcing compliance and distances himself from the final outcome. This suggests despair, as he must act without knowing if his choice is truly right. While he

follows orders, he also creates the possibility of a different resolution. Yet, this does not free him from responsibility. Whether Daru releases or hand the Arab over to the authorities, Balducci remains tied to the consequences, reinforcing the existentialist idea that responsibility is unavoidable, even when one tries to shift it onto others.

Moreover, the passage presented above illustrates Balducci's subtle resistance against the oppressive colonial government. Although he outwardly follows orders by delivering the Arab to Daru, his actions and words reveal inner conflict and dissatisfaction with his role. Balducci admits feeling ashamed of treating a man like a criminal and expresses clear discomfort with the colonial system's demands. By choosing to leave the Arab with Daru rather than personally escorting him to the authorities, Balducci distances himself from fully enforcing the government's oppressive will. This decision reflects an existential resistance: while he does not openly rebel, he quietly refuses complete complicity. Instead of directly participating in the Arab's punishment, Balducci creates a space for uncertainty and alternative outcomes, suggesting a silent opposition to blind obedience.

d. Forlornness

In existentialist thought, forlornness refers to the feeling of abandonment that arises when one realizes there is no higher authority such as the colonial authorities to dictate what is right or wrong. Forlornness means that man is forsaken by the absence of a being higher than him (Sartre, 2010). Sartre (2010) argues that "That is what "abandonment" implies, that we ourselves decide our being". Since there is no higher authority to dictate what we should do, we are entirely responsible for shaping our own lives. In other words, this means that our identity, values, and purpose are not given to us—we must create them through our choices and actions. This is both liberating and terrifying because it means there is no external guide to tell us what is right or wrong. We are abandoned in the sense that we cannot rely on any higher power to justify our decisions—we alone bear the weight of our freedom and responsibility.

In *The Guest* by Albert Camus, the idea of forlornness is reflected through Daru's experience as he is left to make a moral decision without any clear guidance. When Balducci leaves, Daru is completely alone with the Arab, left to decide his fate without support from the law, his country, or his personal beliefs. He cannot appeal to a higher moral code—turning the Arab in feels like a betrayal of his ethics, but freeing him might be seen as disloyalty to his country. There is no external force to tell him what is right. He must create meaning and take full responsibility for his choice. His forlornness is heightened at the end when, despite his attempt to remain neutral, he is still condemned—he is neither accepted by the French nor by the Arab's people. Daru finds himself in a position where his values are only justified by himself, leaving him disconnected from both sides. His commitment to neutrality sets him apart from others. As a result, he is left to face the consequences of his solitude, standing alone in the vast landscape he once cherished.

"In this vast landscape he had loved so much, he was alone."

(Camus, 1957, p. 38)

This sentence reflects the emotional and existential essence of forlornness in Camus' *The Guest*. The "vast landscape" symbolizes not just physical isolation but a world without guidance or meaning. Though Daru once "loved" this land, his attachment no longer offers him comfort or belonging. Instead, the beauty of the setting emphasizes how completely alone he is after making a difficult moral choice, one he had no desire to make. In existentialist terms, forlornness means we are left alone in a godless world, with no external moral compass, forced to bear the full weight of our choices. Daru's loneliness is not just physical; it is ontological. He is left to face the consequences of a decision he did not want to make, judged despite trying to remain neutral, and cut off from any community or certainty. The line implies that even love—for the land, for peace, or for neutrality—cannot save one from the isolation that freedom and responsibility bring in an absurd world.

CONCLUSION

The act of existential resistance against colonialism in Camus' *The Guest* is profoundly embodied in Daru. His perception of the Arab strongly reflects Sartre's concept of existence precedes essence. This highlights how identity is shaped by individual choices rather than imposed definitions. Daru's refusal to follow orders deeply reflected the concept of condemned to freedom and responsibility. His refusal is not only a personal struggle with his own moral values but the act of resistance against the authority. He resists being forced into a role he does not agree with. Similarly, the Arab's slow walk toward imprisonment shows that resistance is not always about rebellion but can exist in small and subtle gestures. Sartre's concept of anguish is evident in Daru's internal turmoil as he grapples with the weight of his choices. Knowing that his actions shape not only his own existence but also influence the fate of another, Daru experiences the existential anxiety of absolute freedom—an awareness that no external authority can dictate what is right or wrong. His distress is reflecting forlornness, as he realizes that he is ultimately alone without guidance from colonial law in making a decision. He is abandoned to his own judgment. Therefore, *The Guest* presents resistance as an existential condition, where individuals assert their autonomy not only against the burden of their own freedom but also against colonial rule.

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