Race, Exile and the Absurd: Reinterpreting Camus and Francophone African Writers through Global South Theorizing

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Abstract

Dominant socio-philosophical debates on Albert Camus's notion of the absurd have long been anchored in Northern epistemologies that universalize alienation while neglecting its racial and colonial dimensions. This paper fills this lacuna in existing scholarship by reinterpreting Camus and Francophone African writers through Global South theorizing to examine how race, exile and the absurd operate as sociological frameworks of postcolonial alienation. It argues that while Camus conceptualizes absurdity as an existential condition of meaninglessness that reveal the absurd as a lived social reality produced by racial displacement and epistemic marginalization. The study adopts a qualitative, comparative approach that merges literary hermeneutics with sociological theorizing. It is anchored in Global South sociology and critical race theory to evaluate how literary discourse functions as a site of sociological knowledge. Findings indicate that Francophone African narratives displace Camus's universalist abstraction by foregrounding the historical and racial structures that generate absurdity and exile.

Keywords: Global South theorizing; sociological imagination; Albert Camus; race and exile; postcolonial alienation

1. Introduction

No doubt, extant scholarly expository on Albert Camus's notion of the absurd have in the past decades been anchored in Northern epistemologies that universalize alienation. His account of the absurd, most famously elaborated in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) identifies a fundamental disjunction between human beings' demand for meaning and the world's indifference. For Camus the recognition of this tension does not lead to despair but to a stance of perpetual revolt, in which one affirms life despite its lack of metaphysical justification; this formulation solidified absurdism as a central current within mid-twentieth-century European existential thought (Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*; see primary text). University of Hawaii. Camus's philosophical construction of the absurd and its ethical corollaries has traditionally been read and taught as a universal diagnosis of modern subjectivity. In much of the canonical reception, absurdity is treated as an individual, philosophical condition, a predicament of consciousness that arises from existential reflection and the confrontation with death and meaninglessness (summary accounts and standard readings of Camus). Wikipedia+1

However, recent scholarship has begun to problematize the universal claim in Camus's formulation by historicizing his texts within colonial and settler contexts. Scholars argue that readings which treat the absurd as neutral or purely ontological risk occluding the social and political matrices that produce forms of alienation in colonial settings, notably race, settler positionality and institutionalized dispossession in French Algeria Tabensky (2022); Dalley (2024). These studies show that situating Camus in his Algerian settler context complicates the move from an abstract existential diagnosis to a politically inert universalism. Taylor & Francis+1. Moreover, a line of interdisciplinary critique that draws on postcolonial and decolonial perspectives contends that traditional absurdist interpretation has systematically under-theorized or ignored the racialized and colonial dimensions of alienation. Where Camus and others invoked humanist universals, critics have pointed out that experiences of colonized peoples (racialized poverty, juridical exclusion, forced displacement) shape a different register of "absurdity" grounded in structural violently enacted social realities rather than in purely philosophical reflection. Sajed (2013); Visone (2023). These critics maintain that literary and philosophical texts produced within

or about colonial contexts demand sociological reading frames that attend to race, empire and epistemic marginality. Taylor & Francis Online+1

Furthermore, in the wake of decolonization and the collapse of formal empires, Francophone African literatures emerged not merely as aesthetic responses but as sociological interventions articulating the lived realities of colonial legacies, racialization and structural alienation. Scholarship on francophone literatures in sub-Saharan Africa emphasizes that African authors writing in French carved out intellectual spaces to contest, resist and reformulate the terms of modernity and identity imposed by colonial rule. For example, the critical survey by Dione shows how Francophone African texts from colonial to post-independence periods evolved into a literary aesthetic of resistance and affirmation of Black identities. Taylor & Francis. This positioning of literature as social commentary aligns with what critics describe as a discourse of empowerment in which formerly silenced voices deploy literary form to expose colonial and neo-colonial power structures. As Awung notes, Francophone African literature has been conceived explicitly "as a discourse of resistance, of empowerment and representation of the multiple voices that had been silenced or marginalized for far too long by colonialist or imperialist practices" Awung FN, (2022) pp (9). scholar.ufs.ac.za

Albert Camus's philosophy of the absurd has long dominated existential and sociological interpretations of alienation, yet it remains deeply entrenched in Eurocentric paradigms that abstract human experience from its racial and colonial realities. According to O'Brien (2020), Camus's treatment of absurdity "universalizes despair while overlooking the structures of privilege that enable its articulation," particularly within the colonial context of Algeria (This Eurocentric abstraction reduces alienation to a psychological state, thereby obscuring its sociological dimensions as lived and institutionalized forms of exclusion in the Global South. As stated by Diala (2023), African literary discourse often renders visible what Northern theories suppress namely, the collective dimensions of exile, displacement, and existential estrangement rooted in racial capitalism and postcolonial marginality. He argues that African writers articulate "a social absurdity born from the collision between colonial history and modern disillusionment," which challenges Camus's metaphysical interpretation of the absurd Despite these emerging insights, limited efforts have been made to

integrate African and Global South perspectives into broader sociological theorizing about alienation. As Adebanwi (2017) observes, African writers have long acted as social theorists whose literary interventions "extend beyond aesthetics to diagnose the conditions of collective existence under inequality and displacement". However, such contributions remain marginal in mainstream sociological discourse. Consequently, the central problem this study addresses is the epistemic gap between Eurocentric interpretations of absurdity and its lived manifestations in the Global South, alongside the paucity of sociological theorizing from African perspectives that reframe alienation and exile as collective, historically situated experiences rather than abstract existential conditions.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The central aim of this study is to reinterpret Albert Camus's notion of the absurd through the lens of Global South sociological theorizing, situate existential alienation in the historical realities of race, colonialism and exile. Accordingly, the study pursues the following specific objectives:

1. To reinterpret Camus's notion of the absurd through Global South theorizing that accounts for the colonial and racial dimensions of alienation.
2. To examine how race, exile, and alienation function as sociological constructs in selected Francophone African literary texts.
3. To develop a Global South model of the absurd that redefines alienation as a collective, socially produced experience rather than an individual existential predicament.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions, which seek to operationalize its theoretical and analytical aims:

1. How does Camus's notion of absurdity universalize human experience while excluding colonial subjectivities and racialized histories?
2. In what ways do Francophone African writers reinterpret or redefine the absurd through the lived realities of race, exile, and postcolonial marginality?

3. How can Global South theorizing rooted in postcolonial and critical race perspectives reshape sociological understandings of alienation, belonging, and identity?

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is guided primarily by two theoretical orientations: the first is the sociology of the Global South (also referred to as "Southern Theory") and the second is Critical Race Theory (CRT). Together, they provide the conceptual architecture necessary to reinterpret the notion of the absurd via the experiences of postcolonial alienation, race and exile. Raewyn Connell's *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (2007/2020) argues that social science has been dominated by Northern theorists and epistemologies, treating the majority world simply as a data source rather than a locus of theory generation. Taylor & Francis+2Research Gateway+2 Connell contends that "the world periphery" produces its own theories, often neglected or marginalized by the dominant northern canon. In her words, the "global South does produce knowledge and understanding of society" and thus challenges the North's claim to universality. Taylor & Francis+1 Through this perspective, the study uses Global South sociology to re-position the literary texts of Francophone African writers as epistemic sites of sociological theorizing, and to challenge the canonical construction of alienation and the absurd as purely existential themes located in European thought. The framework invites a shift from theory exported from the North to theory emerging from and centered in the South.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)**.** CRT offers the second dimension of the framework which permits a focused interrogation of how race, structural exclusion and institutional power shape experience and knowledge. Foundational figures such as Derrick Bell argued that racism is "permanent" in the sense that legal and institutional reforms frequently align with the interests of dominant groups rather than subordinated ones. Harvard Law Review+1 Contemporary scholarship in CRT reaffirms that race is not simply an individual prejudice but deeply embedded in institutions and power structures. digitalcommons.law.mercer.edu. In this study, CRT is applied to examine how literary representations of exile, displacement and alienation are tied to structural racial hierarchies, colonial legacies of exclusion and the epistemic marginalization of the Global South.

By integrating both frameworks, the study advances a conceptual model in which race, exile and absurdity are understood as inter-linked concepts describing collective, socially produced forms of alienation rather than only individual metaphysical conditions. Global South sociology provides the overarching epistemic orientation that challenges the North's dominance in knowledge production. The CRT provides the substantive tools to analyse how racial and colonial structures generate conditions of exile and absurdity. Thus, the absurd is reconceived not as the isolated torment of the individual contemplating meaninglessness, but as a sociological condition emerging in postcolonial, racialized and displaced contexts. This theoretical scaffold supports the argument that alienation and the absurd in Global South contexts are not purely existential but embedded in historical, structural and racial processes.

3. Rethinking the Absurd: Recent Directions in Camusian Literary Canon

In recent years, publications on Albert Camus have taken innovative turns, expanding beyond traditional existential and philosophical paradigms to incorporate interdisciplinary and contextual analyses. While much of the earlier discourse was confined win Eurocentric frameworks that universalized the human condition, recent critics have begun evaluating how spatiality, gender and social structures mediate Camus's representation of the absurd. The following review examines three key contributions that illustrate both the vitality and the epistemic limits of contemporary Camusian studies. These works reveal how even recent innovations often remain situated within Northern intellectual traditions, thereby underscoring the need for a Global South sociological re-interpretation of alienation and exile.

Agwu et al. (2025) make an inventive contribution to Camus literary craftmanship by bringing an architectural and spatial lens to *L'Étranger*. Their close readings of Meursault's apartment, the courtroom and the prison recast minimalist setting-details as charged symbolic sites that instantiate existential alienation, detachment and the absurd. Methodologically, the study is rigorous in its textual attention: it traces how spatial minimalism and enclosure operate rhetorically to stage Meursault's inner life and it persuasively argues that architectural motifs function as metaphors for the protagonist's emotional insulation and the social processes of judgement and confinement. By foregrounding interiority and built space, the

study expands the interpretive toolkit available for reading Camus that move beyond dominant ethical or strictly philosophical readings to consider the material and spatial modalities through which the absurd is experienced and represented. This spatial turn is an important recent innovation: it opens new avenues for interdisciplinary dialogue between literary studies, architectural theory and phenomenological accounts of space and subjectivity. However, the study's analytical frame reveals limitations that are relevant to a sociological re-theorization of the absurd as it tends to treat Meursault's isolation as ontological, an individual condition insulated from broader systems of exclusion thereby reproducing the very Eurocentric abstraction that many contemporary critics seek to problematize.

Agwu and Abutu (2022) provide a critical intervention in Camusian scholarship by interrogating the philosophical and cultural blind spots of Eurocentric interpretations of the absurd. While most Western readings center on themes of revolt, death and existential isolation, the authors reveal an underlying ambivalence and exclusion, particularly in Camus's portrayal of women. Using Freud's psychoanalytic theory, they show how characters like Meursault in *L'Étranger* (1942) and Jan in *Le Malentendu* (1943) embody emotional detachment and societal estrangement to reflect the limitations of a universalist philosophy divorced from concrete human relations. Their findings underscore that Camus's absurdism, often framed as neutral and universal, in fact bears the marks of its European context and cultural exclusions. Thus, the study helps to expose the philosophical limitations of Eurocentric interpretations of absurdity, paving the way for decolonial and Global South readings that foreground race, history and relationality.

In this monograph, Sharpe (2015) argues that Albert Camus should be read not simply as a novelist or essayist with philosophical leanings, but as a *philosophe* in the classical and Enlightenment sense that draws on Greek, neo-Hellenic and 18th-century French traditions. The author places Camus within a broader European intellectual genealogy and emphasizes his investments in "measure" (mesure), limit and natural beauty as ethical-philosophical categories. Specifically, Sharpe contends that Camus's thought emerges in the cultural aftermath of the Second World War (and particularly within the Mediterranean/Algerian frame) as a

response to nihilism, totalitarianism and the collapse of moral certainties. However, the limitation of Sharpe's work is that his focus remains firmly in the Northern philosophical tradition: he treats Camus's universalism and humanism largely as internal European phenomena and he does not excavate how coloniality, race, or postcolonial exile might complicate the notion of the absurd. Thus, his account contributes significantly to thinking about Camus philosophically but less so to the sociological analysis of alienation in postcolonial contexts.

The works of Agwu et al. (2025), Agwu and Abutu (2022) and Sharpe (2015) illustrate the ongoing dynamism and diversification in Camusian scholarship. Each study contributes distinct methodological and interpretive innovations. These interventions mark a notable shift from purely existential or ethical readings toward more interdisciplinary engagements. Yet, a persistent limitation cuts across them, their continued anchoring in Eurocentric paradigms that privilege individual alienation over structural or sociological dimensions of estrangement. This reveals the need for a Global South sociological reinterpretation of the absurd.

4. Francophone African Revisions of Alienation and Exile

Contemporary studies shows that Francophone African writers rework the vocabulary of alienation and exile away from European existential abstraction toward historically situated, socially produced conditions rooted in colonialism, racial hierarchies and migratory displacements. David Chioni Moore's study of Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* demonstrates how Oyono's text stages colonial power as a structural force that produces psychological trauma, identity rupture, and social alienation. Moore argues that Oyono's diaristic mode and ironic register make visible the colonial production of subjectivity: Toundi's experiences are not merely individual tragedy but indices of systemic dispossession and institutional violence; in short, alienation in Oyono is social and political rather than simply existential. This reading reframes *Une vie de boy* as social critique and supports the claim that Francophone African fiction theorizes structural forms of estrangement Moore, (2013). Cambridge University Press & Assessment

Bernard B. Dadié's engagement with travel, migration and metropolitan fantasy similarly recasts displacement as a historically mediated condition. Scholarship on

Dadié's *Un nègre à Paris* and related writings treats the metropolitan journey as both aspirational and disillusioning: Paris is imagined as a site of recognition but often delivers alienation, cultural dislocation, and the collapse of the promised "public" for the African subject. Recent mobility studies place Dadié's narratives within longer trajectories of African itinerancy, arguing that the literary mobilities of mid-twentieth-century Francophone authors register early experiences of migratory alienation that prefigure later diasporic configurations (Toivanen; mobility literature). These studies show that Dadié reframes alienation through the complex optics of movement, expectation, and metropolitan disappointment rather than through individualized existential solitude. Dialnet+1

Alain Mabanckou's fiction and essays explicitly theorize exile, hybridity, and diasporic subjectivity in ways that make alienation legible as a by-product of postcolonial migration and cultural circulation. Work on contemporary Francophone mobilities shows how authors such as Mabanckou narrate the fragmented identities of migrants and the everyday humiliations and comic-tragic dislocations that mark diasporic life (Mobilities scholarship). Mabanckou's texts (for example *Bleu-blanc-rouge*, *Black Bazar*, *Broken Glass*) frequently stage Paris or other metropoles as assemblages of racialized marginality and cultural negotiation; his narratives register alienation as relational, social, and often mediated by humor and mimicry rather than only inward despair (Toivanen; UNESCO essayistic readings). Such treatments reinforce the argument that African writing supplies sociological models of exile ones attentive to infrastructure, networks and power rather than abstract existential malaise. Brill+1

Collectively, the secondary literature indicates three interconnected moves in Francophone African revisions of the absurd, exile and alienation. First, these writers historicize alienation: estrangement is traced to colonial dispossession, migratory regimes, and racialized labour markets rather than being merely a metaphysical condition. Second, they materialize exile: exile appears as physical displacement, bureaucratic precarity, and social marginalization, not just inner solitude. Third, narrative strategies satire, irony, episodic mobility and dialogic voice are employed to convert individual feeling into social diagnosis. These moves provide methodological and conceptual resources for developing a Global South sociological model of the absurd: one that understands absurdity as

emergent from racial capitalism, colonial legacies and the lived infrastructures of migration.

5. Existing Studies on Global South Theorizing in Literature

Contemporary debates about Global South theorizing have evolved from mere descriptions of geographic peripheries to rigorous interventions about epistemic justice that is, who produces knowledge, what counts as theory, and how literary texts themselves can serve as sources of sociological insight rather than passive objects of Northern interpretation. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018), in *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*, contends that centuries of Eurocentric epistemic dominance have marginalized other knowledge systems and calls for the legitimization of "epistemologies of the South." His argument positions Global South intellectual traditions as theoretical sources capable of reorienting the humanities and social sciences.

Raewyn Connell (2007/2020), in *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*, similarly traces how mainstream social theory emerged from the historical experiences of the Global North while excluding Southern perspectives. Connell's work insists that theoretical production from the Global South must be recognized as equally rigorous and foundational to global knowledge. Her framework provides a methodological rationale for reading Francophone African literature not only as a reflection of colonial experience but also as a site of theoretical and sociological insight on alienation, exile, and moral agency.

Recent developments have also shown how Southern Theory and decolonial thought can be concretely operationalized within the humanities. Deumert and Makoni's (2023) edited volume, *From Southern Theory to Decolonizing Sociolinguistics: Voices, Questions and Alternatives*, demonstrates how linguistic and literary studies can adopt Southern epistemologies to challenge Eurocentric disciplinary norms. Their contributors foreground standpoint methodologies, oral traditions, and indigenous epistemic systems as theoretical resources that reposition Global South texts as active producers of knowledge.

Parallel conversations have emerged around pedagogy and curriculum reform. Kessi (2021), in her special issue "Decolonizing Knowledge Within and Beyond

the Classroom," emphasizes the necessity of institutional transformation and inclusive pedagogical practices that validate non-Western epistemologies. Similarly, Quayson (2023), in *Decolonizing the English Literary Curriculum*, proposes methodological alternatives such as centering orality, transnational mobility, and comparative pluralism to dismantle inherited hierarchies of literary value and theory.

In another study, Váňa (2020) argues for a new approach that treats literary fiction as a site of social theorizing, proposing methods that attend to how novels produce social meanings through narrative devices and reader-text interaction. Similarly, Yazell (2021) surveys how literary fiction can facilitate social-scientific inquiry by supplying rich, situated accounts of social worlds that complement empirical research and theoretical reflection. Thumala Olave (2021) develops the cultural-sociological importance of reading practices that show how the act of reading and the affective experience of literature enact social relations and thereby become data for sociological interpretation. Sapiro (2023) in *The Sociology of Literature* synthesizes these debates and defends an approach that treats texts as central to sociological analysis which argue that literature can reveal structures of feeling, social imaginaries and social figures that conventional methods may miss. These studies provide both conceptual justification and practical methods for treating Francophone African literary texts as sources of sociological theory: they show how close reading, attention to aesthetic form, and the sociology of reading can be combined to extract social categories (for example, exile, alienation, and racialized everyday life) from literary representation and thus to build theory from the Global South rather than merely about it.

6. Research Methodology and Interpretive Strategy

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and comparative research design aimed at uncovering the sociological dimensions of absurdity, alienation and exile across selected literary texts. The qualitative orientation helps to give a holistic discussing of meanings embedded in narrative structures and character experiences, while the comparative approach facilitates a cross-cultural dialogue between Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* and *La Peste* and Francophone African works by Bernard Dadié, Ferdinand Oyono and Alain Mabanckou. Data collection is based on textual analysis, with primary sources selected for their thematic and

philosophical relevance to the concepts of absurdity and displacement. These texts serve as social documents through which broader existential and postcolonial realities are interpreted. The analytical procedure involves a thematic analysis that integrates literary hermeneutics with sociological theorizing, identifying how textual motifs such as isolation, exile and revolt function as social metaphors for structural alienation and racialized experience. To ensure validity and reliability, the study employs triangulation through intertextual and theoretical cross-validation, comparing interpretations across diverse literary and sociological frameworks. This methodological structure maintains analytical rigor and ensures that interpretations are grounded in both textual evidence and established sociological perspectives, enabling a balanced and contextually sensitive understanding of the absurd within Global South imaginaries.

7. Camus and the Universalization of the Absurd: Existential Individualism and the Erasure of Colonial Context

Albert Camus himself frames the absurd first and foremost as an existential predicament experienced by the individual confronting a world stripped of rational sense. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus describes the absurd as born of the "fundamental divorce" between man's search for meaning and the silence of the universe; his response is to advocate for an attitude of lucid revolt rather than suicide, a personal ethics grounded in bearing the absurd with consciousness and dignity (Camus, 1942/1955). Similarly, in *The Rebel* Camus extends the moral reasoning that follows from the recognition of the absurd by insisting on limits to rebellion and the maintenance of human values even in revolt, again reinforcing a philosophical focus on individual integrity and moral choice amid absurd conditions (Camus, 1951/1961). Scholars who read Camus within the European existential tradition emphasize this individualistic, phenomenological register: Sharpe (2015), for instance, situates Camus within a Mediterranean and postwar European intellectual lineage that foregrounds measure, limit, and personal moral autonomy, a vantage that helps explain why Camus's account of alienation has been often received as a universal, human condition rooted in subjectivity rather than in social history.

Acheraiou (2020) develops this point by diagnosing a form of "postcolonial amnesia" in Camusian discourse: Camus's humanist rhetoric, Acheraiou

contends, frequently effaces settler positionality and the structural realities of empire, so that the philosophical category of the absurd remains insulated from colonial violence and dispossession. Tabensky (2022) likewise places Camus in direct conversation with Frantz Fanon to show that Camus's humanism and emphasis on individual revolt can obscure the collective, politically violent dimensions of colonial rule; Tabensky's comparative treatment demonstrates how Camus's ethical universalism risks underplaying systemic injustice in Algeria. Tommaso Visone (2023) also argues that decolonial readings must confront the tendency in Camus studies to treat the absurd as neutral: according to Visone, a "decolonial rereading" reveals how Camus's texts participate in, and sometimes reproduce, epistemic structures that marginalize colonial subjects. More recently, Dalley (2024) has traced a settler-colonial genealogy in modernist registers, showing that the figure of the "absurd hero" in *L'Étranger* gains particular shape when situated within settler colonial formations, a context that standard existential readings often elide (Dalley 2024).

These interventions problematize the neat philosophical picture of the absurd as purely individualistic. They suggest that Camus's protagonists Meursault's indifference, the unnamed Arab victim, the courtroom scene cannot be read solely as psychological types without acknowledging how colonial social structures produce and frame those psychological states. For a Global South sociological rereading, the crucial move is to relocate the absurd from the interior of an isolated subject to the social field: to read Meursault's detachment as both a narrative device and an index of colonial social relations that render certain lives legible and others invisible. This reorientation allows the absurd to be theorized as a socially mediated condition, one shaped by racialization, power asymmetries, and historical dispossession rather than as a universal existential constant. Such a move thus reframes Camus without discarding the philosophical insights of absurdism; instead, it pluralizes them by embedding them in social history and by opening space for Francophone African alternatives that conceptualize alienation as collective and structural.

7.1. The Absurd as Racial and Social Condition in Francophone African Writing

Bernard Dadié's *Un nègre à Paris* repeatedly frames metropolitan experience as a mise-en-scène in which the Black visitor becomes an object of spectacle, mockery,

and normative re-inscription. Dadié stages Paris as a theatre of expectation in which the African traveler arrives with aspirations only to encounter the metropolitan gaze that both exoticizes and diminishes him. The novel's satirical ironies frequently convert what might be read as individual disappointment into a social diagnosis: the African subject becomes a site on which metropolitan norms are projected and policed. Dadié's voice captures this dynamic with aphoristic bluntness; for example, one memorable line registers the epistemic violence of the encounter: "Les Blancs ont réussi cette merveilleuse prouesse d'être parvenus à habituer la Mort à la chair noire." This formulation literalizes how White power normalizes Black disposability and frames racialized life as already compromised by metropolitan systems of meaning and value. Critical scholarship situates Dadié within a tradition of travel and mobility writing that exposes the symbolic economies of the metropolis: Toivanen (2021) reads Dadié's itinerarial narratives as moments in which "aeromobilities" reveal the friction between diasporic expectation and metropolitan reality, showing how travel narratives externalize structural humiliation. Jahn's lexicographic account likewise underscores how Dadié's epistolary and satirical modes cultivate an ethics of exposure they make visible the humiliations and identity-labor that Paris imposes on African visitors. Read sociologically, Dadié's satire does not simply depict private despair; it theorizes a public mechanism that produces the "burden of identity" by staging metropolitan ridicule as a structural device that manufactures alienation rather than merely reflecting it.

Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* relocates the absurd from the interiority of a single subject to the bureaucratic architecture of empire. The narrator, Toundi, repeatedly expresses aspirations that reveal how colonial institutions author and deform subjectivity; early in his journal he declares his youthful aim: "J'allais connaître la ville et les Blancs, et vivre comme eux." The line is elegiac and revealing, it stages mimicry and aspiration as a route to self-effacement under colonial modernity. Yet the narrative irony is surgical: Oyono shows how administrative practice, missionary pedagogy, and quotidian humiliation together produce a social absurdity in which dignity, meaning and identity are administratively negated. David Chioni Moore's world-literary reading demonstrates how Oyono's novel maps colonial institutions as translators and transmuters of subjectivity, converting ordinary bureaucracy into a theatrical

apparatus for dispossession. Secondary scholarship emphasizes the novel's method: the apparent naïveté and diaristic voice of Toundi make institutional violence legible precisely because the reader sees the systemic logic through naïve commentary. Robinson and other critics have long argued that *Une vie de boy* presents alienation not as an existential mood but as an institutional product, the absurd is embedded in the "rules, files, and forms" of empire rather than in metaphysical contingency. Thus, Oyono transforms the absurd into a sociological category: alienation emerges from juridical, missionary, and administrative routines that render persons absurdly invisible and socially null.

Alain Mabanckou's fiction reconstructs exile and absurdity within diasporic urban economies where humor, mimicry and performative identity are resources for survival and critique. Mabanckou frequently stages Paris as both magnet and trap: the migrant arrives seeking recognition but encounters a racialized market of visibility that produces paradoxical forms of belonging and exclusion. His novels articulate this by mixing register and voice, oral rhythms, satirical bravado, and self-deprecating irony and by turning personal dislocation into a public ethnography of metropolitan marginality. A representative line from his work registers the paradoxical pride and displacement of the diasporic subject: "Tous les hommes sont donc des immigrés, sauf les Africains qui sont chez eux ici-bas." Read this way, the sentence is both comic provocation and sociological claim: it exposes the contingency of belonging and the historical inversion through which colonial subjects are simultaneously native and made migrants. Recent mobility and diaspora studies (Toivanen 2021) situate Mabanckou in a broader aeromobile and transnational horizon in which migration infrastructures, precarious labor markets, and everyday racial microaggressions together configure a diasporic absurdity. Walsh and others argue that Mabanckou's aesthetics, his use of trickster performance, pastiche, and urban slang register how exile becomes a terrain of negotiation rather than only of loss (Walsh 2014). Sociologically, Mabanckou therefore reframes absurdity as the everyday, collective effect of racialized metropolitan economies: exile is not merely an interior feeling, but a mediated, relational condition produced by migration regimes and cultural economies of visibility.

8. Discourse Analysis on Emerging Global South Theoretical Model

This study proposes a Global South theoretical model that reconceives the absurd as collective alienation, a social condition produced and reproduced by racialized power relations, colonial legacies, and displacement regimes rather than as primarily an individual existential predicament. Boaventura de Sousa Santos's call for epistemologies of the South supplies the epistemic starting point: Santos insists that knowledge-producing practices from historically marginalized peoples are not merely descriptive but generative of alternative categories and theoretical constructs; his intervention legitimizes the project of drawing sociological theory from literary texts composed in and about the Global South. read.dukeupress.edu. Raewyn Connell's Southern Theory complements this move by showing how mainstream social theory emerged from Northern institutional histories and by arguing that theorizing from the South requires recovering intellectual practices that have been suppressed by epistemic centralization. Connell's argument provides methodological warrant for treating Francophone African literature as a source of social theory about alienation, exile, and racialized modernity. raewynconnell.net+1.

Building on these epistemic foundations, the model advances three analytical propositions. First, absurdity is structurally produced: colonial and postcolonial institutions law, bureaucracy, policing, and the imperial economy systematically generate conditions in which human actions appear meaningless or void because social life is organized around dispossession and precarious subjecthood. This is exemplified in Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy*, where institutional routines (missionary discipline, administrative humiliation) produce alienation as an externally imposed social state rather than a private existential mood (Moore). Cambridge University Press & Assessment. Second, race mediates the experience of the absurd. Drawing on postcolonial and decolonial critiques (including Fanon's analyses of colonial subjectivity and Achille Mbembe's necropolitical diagnosis of sovereignty over life and death), the Global South model foregrounds racialized hierarchies as central to how absurdity is distributed across populations: some lives become structurally devalued and rendered "absurd" in the sense of being socially disposable. Mbembe's concept of necropolitics helps explain how sovereign racial power shapes the range of possible human futures, producing

contexts in which meaning and dignity are systematically denied. monoskop.org+1

Third, displacement and diasporic mobility reconfigure absurdity into relational and performative forms. Contemporary Francophone African writers (e.g., Mabanckou, Dadié) show that exile and metropolitan migration do not only produce nostalgia or trauma but create new modes of social absurdity, comic, ironic and negotiated born out of the encounter between migrant subjectivities and metropolitan racial economies (Toivanen; Walsh). These texts make visible how mobility regimes, border controls, and precarious labor markets instantiate a collective experience of meaninglessness that is nevertheless politically intelligible and contestable. tandfonline.com+1

Methodologically, the Global South model treats literature as sociological theorizing: novels, travel narratives, and diasporic memoirs are read not merely as cultural artifacts but as arguments about the social world—dense qualitative data that articulate causal claims, schematic social relations, and heuristic categories (Váňa; Sapiro; Yazell). This approach uses close reading combined with sociological abstraction to extract regularities (how institutions produce alienation), mechanisms (how racialization and bureaucracy generate dispossession), and analytical categories (collective absurdity, institutionalized exile) that can inform broader sociological theorizing. journals.sagepub.com+2De Gruyter Brill+2. No doubt, the Emerging Global South Theoretical Model reconceptualizes the absurd as a collective racialized and institutional condition. It legitimates literature from the margins as a source of theory, supplies an analytic vocabulary for linking aesthetic form to social mechanism, and opens pathways for a sociology that is empirically anchored in Global South histories of domination and resistance. This model thereby both challenges and extends Camus's existential legacy by relocating meaninglessness from the solitary subject to historically situated social fields.

9. Conclusion

This study has sought to reconceptualize Albert Camus's philosophy of the absurd through a comparative and sociological lens that foregrounds the perspectives of Francophone African writers such as Bernard Dadié, Ferdinand Oyono, and Alain

Mabanckou. The central finding is that the absurd, long defined by Camus as an existential and metaphysical condition of the isolated individual, must also be understood as a socially produced phenomenon. In contrast to Camus's universalist framing, the absurd emerges in African contexts as an outcome of concrete historical forces colonial domination, racial hierarchies, institutional violence, and diasporic displacement. This redefinition reorients the absurd from the realm of private consciousness to that of collective experience, where alienation is not merely philosophical but political and sociological. Through close readings of *L'Étranger* and *La Peste*, alongside *Un Nègre à Paris*, *Une vie de boy*, and *Black Bazar*, the study has identified race and exile as key sociological determinants of alienation. These works reveal that absurdity manifests not in metaphysical isolation but in the lived contradictions of postcolonial existence, where identity is continually negotiated under systems of exclusion, and meaninglessness is imposed by structures of domination. The African texts transform Camus's tragic detachment into a site of social critique: alienation becomes institutional rather than introspective, absurdity political rather than personal.

By reading them not merely as cultural reflections but as acts of theorizing from the margins, the study affirms the epistemic power of Global South literatures to generate sociological concepts what Santos (2018) and Connell (2020) describe as *epistemologies of the South*. These narratives expand the theoretical vocabulary of alienation, exile and absurdity, positioning African experience as central to global philosophical discourse rather than peripheral to it. Comparatively, the study shows that while Camus's absurd is rooted in existential individualism, African reinterpretations shift toward a collective, socially embedded understanding. The convergence lies in their shared recognition of life's contradictions, but divergence arises from their differing historical and racial realities. This comparative insight reveals how the absurd, when refracted through colonial and postcolonial histories, becomes a diagnostic tool for social injustice and resilience. Ultimately, the findings underscore the need to decolonize sociological thought by incorporating literary and philosophical contributions from the Global South. The absurd, reinterpreted through African lenses, ceases to be a symbol of despair and instead becomes a mode of resistance, a call to confront the structures that produce alienation and to recover meaning through collective solidarity and historical awareness.

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