

Qn: Writers often use a character who is alienated from his or her culture of society in order to explore cultural or social values. Examine this idea in the two works studied.

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Writers often use the characters as observers of the cultural setting of the story and the society around them and sometimes these are reflections of the society the writers lived in, and through the emotions of characters and the plot, offers the writers' critical viewpoint towards the society. In the two novels, The Great Gatsby (1925) and The Outsider (1942), the two writers have alienated their narrators from the other characters in the story and through their eyes presents the writers' viewpoints towards the ugly side of the society.

In The Great Gatsby, the sense of alienation and detachment is immediately established at the beginning of the novel as Fitzgerald delivers the story in the first-person voice of Nick. This gives the readers an insight into Nick's thoughts, perhaps Fitzgerald's own and this creates a relationship in which the readers do not have with the other characters of the story. Nick tries to tell the story from an objective view point as he tells the readers that he is "inclined to reserve all judgement". He then adopts flashback to narrate the story as he recounts his exploration of his "life that "[begin] over again with summer". He comes to meet the people of the society around him, namely the Buchanans, Jordan Baker and Gatsby. It can be seen throughout the story how Nick oscillates between acceptance and disgust he feels towards the characters, like how he admires Gatsby's "extraordinary gift for hope" but he views Gatsby's recreation of the past as a mere "creative passion" and how he is first drawn to Daisy's charm but later feels repulsed by her "carelessness". This shows the dominant conflict in Nick, where he enjoys the charms of the people he meets while feeling repulsed by their cynical & reckless behaviour. This is perhaps a reflection of how Fitzgerald felt about the society in the 1920s how people are lost in the lavishness of the Roaring Twenties to recover from the sorrows and pains of World War I. How is this about alienation?

The sense of alienation is further heightened by the inner conflict within him as he does not fit in any of the groups.

Nick on how his enjoyment was tinged with isolation. This is evident when Nick tells the readers how "[he] felt a haunting loneliness sometimes". He comes to this realization after he had seen the "solemn dumping ground" that is of the Valley of Ashes and the youthful and callow quality of Gatsby's partygoers. This is significant as it presents the root of his loneliness and the inner conflict how he does not want to be among the lost marries in the Valley of Ashes but also did not want the false and cheap magic of Gatsby's partygoers. This can also be a reflection of Fitzgerald's own conflict as he ^{sets} ~~models~~ his story closely with the reality of New York in the 1920s and hence delivering a subtle criticism of the society around him. ^{final para - coherent & detailed}

In Albert Camus's The Outsider, the sense of alienation is different from that in The Great Gatsby. While in Gatsby, Nick's alienation is derived from the disgust he feels towards the characters, ~~while~~ the narrator of The Outsider, Mersault feels alienated as he fails to understand the society around him. Mersault constantly fails to see the meaning of things on how his mother's death "[didn't] mean anything" and when Marie "asked [him] if [he] loved her" he again "told her it didn't mean anything". This shows how Mersault is not only alienated from his society but also the societal norms. This ^{sense of} alienation is further heightened by Mersault's passive voice, and the sterile monotone of the narrative voice which all contributes to his clinical detachment from society. Mersault's inability to see meaning in things reflects Camus's philosophy of absurdism, on how there is no order or meaning in the chaotic universe. Camus points out the flawed idea of justice through Mersault's prosecution on how when people try to attach meaning to everything, it does not turn out right. For instance, just because Mersault did not cry at his mother's funeral, he is viewed as "burying his mother like a heartless criminal". This shows how Camus is critical of the society's quick judgement of people when one fails to keep to the societal norms.

Camus's strong belief in absurdism could be derived from the strong sense of disgust he felt towards the attachment of meaning to the deaths of the soldiers in the context of World War II. Many people have died during the war, and the war was fought for political reasons and the soldiers died fighting for their country and Camus was critical of this, as he believed that in fact the deaths were meaningless. The meaninglessness of death is represented in the novel through Mersault's experience, his mother's death, the death of the Arab and even his own execution. Camus is able to present this idea through Mersault's voice as he is a character not succumbed to societal norms of death being powerful and meaningful, as seen through how he shot the Arab ^{only} because of the "felt the burning sun on [his] forehead", and also how there was no "crowd of spectators at [his] execution". Therefore, through the uneasy sympathy the readers feel towards Mersault, Camus brings out to the readers the value of absurdism.

In conclusion, both Fitzgerald and Camus makes good use of their alienated narrators to explore the cultural or social values. Also, through the character's observations and emotions, the writers successfully hints their criticism towards society. In Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Nick feels repulsed by the rich "retreating back into the wealth and ~~van~~ carelessness", a dominant trait of the rich in the 1920s, and ~~the people~~ how he "disapproved of [Gatsby] from beginning to end", showing Fitzgerald's criticism of the people's pursuit of imperishable hope, the American Dream. In Camus's The Outsider, Mersault fails to provide the rationality behind his actions and fails to display emotions dictated by societal norms and hence bringing out the value of absurdism that Camus believes in. Therefore, the two writers are successful in delivering subtle but strong criticism of the ~~the~~ respective societies around them through their novels.

clear thesis & well supported

A 5

B 5

C 4

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