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THE IMAGERY OF THE ABSURD HERO IN WHITMAN'S "A LEGEND OF LIFE AND LOVE" IN LIGHT OF ALBERT CAMUS

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**ABSTRACT**

The current study tries to present a new reading to Whitman's short story "A Legend of Life and Love" as dealing with an absurd theme that can give ethics similar to those one located in Camus' essay "The Myth of Sisyphus." The protagonist of the story will stand as an absurd hero who overwhelms the miseries and ends with relative happiness. The study will use Albert Camus's philosophy of the absurd hero as a touchstone and a guide line to present a new reading to the theme of Whitman's "A Legend of Life and Love." Camus's essay "Myth of Sisyphus" will be used for this purpose. The study will imply Camus's absurd ideas as a lens to explain the theme of the story. The researcher has noted indications of absurdity in Whitman's "A legend of life and love." Although the story is said to deals with autobiographic issue, it can be read as a lucid invitation to live in an area of happiness within the very heart of the desert. As such it can be used to deal with an existential issue. Nathan, the protagonist, represents the absurd hero whose picaresque life continues regardless of the meaninglessness of the universe. Presenting the protagonist as an absurd hero in light of Camus's philosophy, the reader will be enriched with hope of life and leave away the idea of the plain and philosophical suicide. It will help the researcher to read Whitman from an absurd point of view. While the rare earlier studies on this story have focused on the theme of separation between brothers and read the story as an autobiographic one, the current study reads the theme as an absurd one. The protagonist of the story can be read as Sisyphian one. Moreover, absurdity finds its hints in Whitman early writings.

**Introduction**

Although Walt Whitman is famous for his book of free verse poetry *Leaves of Grass*, he also wrote several short stories and novellas. One of these short stories is "A Legend of Life and Love" which was published first in 1841 in the *Democratic Review Magazine*. Numerous commenters have rounded up Whitman's "A Legend of Life and Love" by way of presenting it as an autobiographic tale of Whitman's father's relationship with his sons in a highly respected moral lesson of leading the proper way of life.

Gay Wilson Allen (1955) remarks that "A Legend of Life and Love" is a variation of the cruel father theme presented also in Whitman's other short stories. It also reflects the theme of separation between brothers. Both subjects appeared in "Bervance: or, Father and Son" in 1841 and "Wild Frank's Return 1841" (p.56). Allen's description stands as the base for other writers who deal with this short story. Wilson C. McWilliams (1974) reads Whitman's story autobiographically. He remarks that the story was a rebel against Whitman's father's sadistic lack of love feeling where the father teaches his children "to be competitive individualists. As a result, his obedient children are lonely and miserable, while only the rebellious son finds love and happiness" (p. 409). In his autobiographic book *Walt Whitman: A Gay Life*, Gary Schmidgall (1997) also considers the story as a reaction against Whitman's father's schoolmaster control over the family (p. 169). In addition, Zachary Turpin (2017), in his "Introduction to Walt Whitman's 'Life and Adventures of Jack Engle'," conjures up "A Legend of Life and Love" as an example of Whitman's tales in which the straightforwardness of the moral lesson is complicated because Whitman sets pain as an essential factor to pleasure in life, and evil cannot be separated from good. Turpin (2017) concludes that "Whitman's fiction in general, and Jack Engle in particular, directly address the complexities of evil" (p. 248). However, the researcher finds out that no writer reads Whitman's "A Legend of Life and Love" through Albert Camus' absurd philosophy. The current study tries to fill the lacuna through presenting a new reading of the main theme of "A Legend of Life and Love" as absurd one that can give ethics similar to those located in Camus' essay "The Myth of Sisyphus." The protagonist of the story will stand as an absurd hero who overwhelms the miseries and ends with happiness. Special emphasis is given to the human alienation from the real and skeptical feeling and emotions. Relating to the concept of the absurd hero, two important themes, namely love and alienation, will be discussed in relation to Albert Camus's philosophy.

Camus (1942) starts his essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" with a daring statement: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (p. 11), assuring that the taking of one's own life is a "confessing that life is too much for you or that you do not understand it" (p. 13), his aim was rejecting the idea of suicide as a way of escaping the absurd of life. Camus (1942) further writes, "in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger" (p. 13). He claims that this world is absurd because "in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said," he further explains the absurd world that "is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (1942, p. 26). The absurdity and clarity of the world does not depend only on the

world itself, rather “[t]he absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together” (Camus, 1942, p. 26). Camus looks at the ways by which this confrontation between world and man been mediated and mended. He observes, “[a]t this point of his effort man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason” (Camus, 1942, p. 31). It appears that absurdity in Camus’s philosophy is the confrontation between the way a man wants the world to be and the actual reality of that world. Camus (1942) believes that a struggle takes place between the “mind that desires and the world that disappoints” (p. 50). This confrontation happens in the metaphysical level where the human mind confronts the meaninglessness and indifference of the world. Camus (1942) defines this confrontation as the central human problem where “[t]he absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world” (p. 31). To impose his view about the best way of confronting the world, Camus first refutes the views of the existential philosophers whose philosophies suggest escaping from this irrational confrontation. Camus (1942) claims that “they deify what crushes them and find reason to hope in what impoverishes them. That forced hope is religious in all of them” (p. 35). Camus (1942) thinks that all the existentialist thinkers were wrong when they propose to solve the absurd because proposing a solution to the absurd of life implies that life is not absurd; their solution is a “leap is an escape” (p.38). Rejecting the escapism through religious or suicide leap, Camus proposes a clear awareness of the absurd in a form of a “human revolt against the irremediable. Thus, Camus neither believes of religion as a suitable way of amending such confrontation nor in the plain suicide. According to Camus (1942), the absurd world is dominated by "chaos", "chance" and "equivalence" (p. 51). Camus rejects the view of the existential philosophers who give great significance to the quality of life on the expense of the quantity of life. They believe that because man is going to die, man should not concern about an early death; they do not give an importance to how long man’s duration of life but to things presented by man in his life. Camus (1942) writes, the “belief in the absurd is tantamount to substituting the quantity of experiences for the quality” (p.59). Camus grants more significance to the quantity of life than to the quality; the experience of life is itself more important than quality of life, “What counts is not the best living but the most living” (Camus 1942. P. 59). As such, Camus shapes out the character of the absurd hero. Relating the absurd hero, Camus writes, “His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing” (p.110). A man who comprehends the absurdity of the human condition is reinforced by it. When the absurd man burdens his torment, silences all the idols. In the universe suddenly restored to its silence, the myriad wondering little voices of the earth rise up. Unconscious, secret calls, invitations from all the faces, they are the necessary reverse and price of victory. Jennifer Michael Hecht (2013) remarks, “[t]he absurd man is the master of his days. When he gazes backward over his life, he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by him, and like Sisyphus and his rock, the whole seemingly unreasonable effort turns out to have meaning, just because it constituted his life” (p. 205). When a man looks back at these successive actions in his absurd past life, man’s life turns

up to have meaning. In this point the absurd hero in Camus's philosophy is different from all preceding existential philosophers.

### **The Absurd Hero**

Albert Camus brings out the Myth of Sisyphus as an allegory for the human condition in the world. The challenge in Camus's Sisyphus condition is pushing his rock up the hill, and the falling of that rock down. The repeating of this attempt in a constant times of a struggle reflects the humanity suffer in the scheme of things. Sisyphus becomes the "absurd hero" in Camus's philosophy as an individual who has hopes, and tries to get meaning of life in spite of his indisputable mortality. What is important in the character of Sisyphus is that he doesn't give up to the "default" life; nevertheless, he makes the decision to keep himself in hope of life and shoulder the burdens that come with it. Man has to choose his/her own rock that one should be willing to push constantly up that high hill. This can be unbearable, but it is won't be. When one finds the suitable way to push the "rock", one will always be powered. Camus (1942) writes, "The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (p. 111). According to Camus, Sisyphus is the absurd hero for he chooses to live in the face of meaningless life without being able to change it. He is entirely aware of the fate imposed on him by gods, but his revolt makes him overwhelm the penalty intended to destroy him. Within this struggle in such absurd world, Camus (1942) remarks, "[o]ne must imagine Sisyphus happy". Placing his struggle with the rock as "his thing", Sisyphus enjoys his being. (p. 111). The rock and all things surrounding it belong to his world. In this world, "right and wrong have lost their ancient names, as the ancient order that named them has crumbled; and the task, as he has seen it not to restore but to create anew" (Galloway, 1981 p. 6). Although that he has no hope in changing his world, Sisyphus uses his own rock to cope with that world. Camus assures that man must persist against absurd life without paying attention to hope; man will live better in a meaningless life without finding a way of escaping through plain suicide or through hope and believing in god, which Camus calls it a philosophical suicide, because the point after all is "to live" (Camus, 1942, p. 65). He refutes any kind of suicide, because "in its way, suicide settles the absurd", and this settling by itself is "denying one of the terms of its equation" (Camus, 1942, 50). At the end, although Sisyphus could never succeed, he could never be finally crushed. In the preface to Myth of Sisyphus, Camus (1942) writes: "Although The Myth of Sisyphus poses mortal problems, it sums itself up for me as a lucid invitation to live and to create, in the very midst of the desert" (p.7). Camus assures that Sisyphus is the absurd hero because "He *is*, as much through his passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing" (p.108). Camus (1942) believes that the meaning of life is "the most urgent of questions" which are either "run the risk of leading to death or those that intensify the passion of living" (p.11). Man has two choices either to escape life through suicide, depending on the belief in the religious hope, or coping with life and endlessly roll up his "rock." As such, man's rock will stand for his daily routine. Camus (1942) refutes the idea that as long as a man lives in an absurd

universe, "it is just as natural that he should strive to escape the universe of which he is the creator" (p. 36). Instead he believes that what makes the life of the absurd hero tragic is his conscious of this absurdity (p.109). The absurdity of this universe should not be treated but only that an individual should be conscious about it, because "[h]appiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable. It would be a mistake to say that happiness necessarily springs from the absurd discovery. It happens as well that the feeling of the absurd springs from happiness" (Camus, 1942, p.110), and pain in life is part of it. Camus (1942) writes "There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night" (p. 110), in a sense that, it is important to accept an irrational, even absurd and anguish are part of the human experience because at the end "[o]ne must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, 1942. P.110).

### **Implying Camus's philosophy to Whitman's "A Legend of Life and Love"**

Whitman's appointed short story reads that two grandsons, whose father is dead, receive an advice from their grandfather. The advice is a pessimistic view about the state of the human beings. The "ancient man" instructs his grandsons to "avoid love, avoid trust, avoid getting involved" with other people. As the two brothers go their own way, the older brother follows the advice of his grandsir while the other does not. After a long time, they meet and speak up their stories. Mark alienates himself from the society, and ends with sadness. Nathan copes with life and shoulders the burden of miseries and ends happy. Whitman ends the story with the following words" the world has misery- but it is pleasant world still"(Whitman, 1842, p.86).

Mark, follows the advice and leaves away from "the path of love," and "the confidence in human honor"; and disconnect with other human beings. He believes strongly in his grandfather's instruction to the extent that they were the "axioms" that were "treasured in [his] soul" (p. 85), this leads him to stop his love affairs with the maiden that he loves, the brown-eyed Eva" (p. 85). The character of Mark goes with Camus's concept of escape leap (Camus, 1942, 38) where the individual works according to the philosophy of those existentialists who believe in "philosophical suicide" (Camus, 1942, p.11). As we has mentioned above, the researcher does not regard the example of Mark as an absurd hero because he does not follow the Sisyphian way of life.

Mark finds out that the present events was similar to what the "ancient man" had said before; Mark says, "I went amid the world. Acting upon the wise principles which our aged friend taught us, I looked upon everything with suspicious eyes. Alas! I found it but too true that iniquity and deceit are the ruling spirits of men" (Whitman, 1842, p.85). The "iniquity and deceit" that spot the age of the two brothers were two signs of miseries and meaninglessness of life resemble that of the world of Sisyphus where absurdity domains. Mark chooses to retire from the society because of the unworthiness of his friends which enforces him to change his manner and nature from being "proud, repulsive" to be "cold, calculating, and unamiable" (Whitman, 1842, p.85).This leads Mark to stop his "interweaving his course of life with those that very likely would draw all the advantage of the connexion, and leave [him] no

better than before" (Whitman, 1842, p. 85). Mark's alienation from the society can be signed to be a kind of suicide because he prevents himself from behaving according to the human quality of communication. One of the miseries of the world that challenges Mark is underestimating the ability of individual of success. The character of Mark was greatly affected by the "enemies" of his time. All these miseries lead him to be unhappy at the end of the story; Mark says, "if few glittering pleasures ministered to me on my journey, equally few were the disappointments, the hopes blighted, the trusts betrayed, the faintings of the soul, caused by the defection of those in whom I had laid up treasures"( Whitman, 1842, p. 85). Mark's life ends unhappily and he was pessimistic all the journey of his life which was full of betrayal, disappointment, and hopeless. This journey drives him to declare that "the world is full of misery!"(Whitman, 1842, p. 85).

Nathan also bears the problems of everyday life, "lack of love, lack of trust and lack of value" (Whitman, 1842, p. 83), as described by the grandfather. Such an existential burden contains a continuous condemnation to labor and loss. Nathan was facing his strong life of orphan and loneliness; his grandfather died after his father, and his brother alienates from the society because he regards them enemies. Like Sisyphus, Nathan confronts the absurd world alone. The shortage of pastoral life is described as that "every want of existence was supplied by a few fertile acres" (Whitman, 1842, p. 83). Whitman describes Nathan's appearance which state that he was suffering the hard life; nevertheless, he never escapes or surrenders nor does he follow his ancient grandsire's advices which try to push him to alienation. Camus describes the mission of the absurd hero, where a man faces his own life's agonies with a consistent patience, that the man becomes superior to his fate; Camus (1942) writes: "At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock" (p.109). The absurd hero never escapes or gives up; rather the problems of life fuel him/her with much energy to be stronger than her/his 'rock'. The hardships facing Nathan and his brother can be seen also through the description of Nathan's late grandfather out of his experience of life; the sickened man addresses his grandsons:

"The world, my children, is full of deceit. Evil men swarm in every place; and sorrow and disappointment are the fruits of intercourse with them. So wisdom is wary. "And as the things of life are only shadows, passing like the darkness of a cloud, twine no bands of love about your hearts. For love is the ficklest of the things of life. The object of our affection dies, and we thenceforth languish in agony; or perhaps the love we covet dies, and that is more painful yet. "It is well never to confide in any man. It is well to keep aloof from the follies and impurities of earth. Let there be no links between you and others. Let not any being control you through your dependence upon him for a portion of your happiness. This, my sons, I have learned by bitter experience, is the teaching of truth."(Whitman, 1842, p. 84)

The old man warns his grandsons to expect the miseries in life, and he advises them to leave love, confidence and cooperation with other human being. After fifty years of separation, the two brothers, "withered, and with hair thin and snowy, came wearily up from opposite directions, and stood together at a tomb built on a hill by

the borders of a fair river" (Whitman, 1842, p. 84). The description given to the appearance of Nathan after the long separation has echoed the shape of Sisyphus described by Camus while rolling up the rock, the description reads: "the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the day-covered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands ... a face that toil so close to stone is already stone itself (Camus, 1942, p. 109). Nathan was thin, tired with snowy hair; in addition "the feebleness of age" (Whitman, 1842, p. 85) was clear on him. Astonishingly, Mark has expected his older brother in the following words "there should be a brave and beautiful youth, with black curls upon his head, and not those pale emblems of decay. And my brother should be straight and nimble—not bent and tottering as thou"(Whitman 85). Mark expects his brother to be out of the absurd life; nevertheless, the absurd hero should not escape absurdity. Like Sisyphus, with all this suffering, Nathan returns after each part of his life stronger than before to carry the next 'rock'. This situation of pushing the rock up the hill can be seen in the state of Nathan during his struggle against the agony and mess of everyday life that the grandfather has described and warned of in the beginning of the story. Nathan also describes his brother, Mark with "shriveling limbs."

This change of the brother's appearances is, as Mark dealers, caused by the "wicked and a seductive world ...[and the] snares that should beset our subsequent journeyings" (Whitman, 1842, p.84). During his journey of life, Nathan confronts two main points in his life, love, and confidence and communication with people. First his love was successful although there were miseries in life similar to what his brother has described. Nathan speaks about his love which stood forever without separation, "How it was I know not, but the moment rolled on to hours; and still we stood with our arms around each other" (Whitman, 1842, p.85). He was affected by the sentimentality and feature of his beloved and decided to leaves away the advice of his grandsire relating love. Nathan describes his love story as such: "Ah! how sweetly sped the seasons! We were blessed. True, there came crossings and evils; but we withstood them all, and holding each other by the hand, forgot that such a thing as sorrow remained in the world" (Whitman, 1842, p.84). Although there is sorrow and evil, Nathan goes on and traces his route in life to be happy at the end because. Nathan says, "I forgot his teachings, and married the woman I loved" (Whitman, 1842, p.85) in his life, "there came crossings and evils;" Nathan adds "but we withstood them all, and holding each other by the hand, forgot that such a thing as sorrow remained in the world ... Oh, Mark, that, *that* is a pleasure"(Whitman, 1842, p.85).

The second factor of Nathan's life was confidence and communication with other propels during his career. Although there were some cruel men who were not worthy enough to trust and they were "strong, proved cunning hypocrites, and worthy no man's trust" (Whitman, 1842, p.85), there are others who worth confidence; they are "spotless, as far as humanity may be spotless" (Whitman 85). Nathan then looks at life from different angles. Life for him contains two sides: "dark and fair" (Whitman, 1842, p.85). Man has to go on in his life whatever miseries are there because

“sunshine has been far oftener than the darkness of the clouds” (Whitman, 1842, p.86). Whitman (1842) ends the tale with Nathan’s words, "Dear brother, the world has misery—but it is a pleasant world still, and affords much joy to the dwellers!"(p.86). Hence, Nathan stands for the Sisyphean protagonist who constantly pushes his rock of life up the hills whatever miseries and problems faced him because man should be at the end happy, as Camus (1942) puts it at the end of the “Myth of Sisyphus,” “one must imagine Sisyphus happy” (p.111). This means that, Sisyphus is triumphant merely in his attitude. The Sisyphean protagonist of Whitman’s short story faces the gravity as a twister of random agony forces that constitute a steady resistance to dreams of love and achievement. Through experience and using certain values such as honor, bravery, decency, kindness persistent fortitude; man can manage himself with life within the imposed dark gnosis. The emphasis of constant embodiment in action will establish an area of human dignity in the middle of the cosmic meaninglessness and mess, without neglecting the fact that this area will eventually be overcome. The episode of Nathan’s life here is an endless battle to proclaim his own existential value. This analogy is especially striking when we consider Camus’s concluding section about Sisyphus as “the wisest and most prudent of mortals” (p.88).

Nathan’s story stands for a model of the existential one where he triumphs over the constant possibility of hopelessness. Nathan endures the miseries in his life and decided to cope with life because, at the end, “one must imagine Sisyphus happy” (Camus, 1942, p. 111). The advice of the old man stands for the absurd background to the existence that the universe lacks love and confidence. Although Camus accepts the absurdity of life, he declares that we have to live with the knowledge that our labors will be largely futile, and our species irremediably corrupt and violent, and yet we should endure nevertheless. People should live like Sisyphus, but ultimately, Camus suggest, men should cope as well as they can. Camus describes the world of absurdity as such, “the feeling of absurdity does not spring from the mere scrutiny of a fact or an impression but that it bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it. The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation” (Camus, 1942, p. 33). This description indicates that neither the human nor the universe are necessarily absurd on their own, but rather the relationship is absurd. Being human, men exist with innate desire for meaning, reason, and order, yet men simultaneously exist in a universe that appears to lack all of the above or refuse such unity. Thus, what men want and expect from the universe is fundamentally in contradiction with what they get. In this conflict, absurdity and despair of human experience is found.

Based on this idea, we are in fact without any granted meaning beyond ourselves, we cannot create any utopic order out of this universe and we lack access to any endgame purpose or truth that can give us a sense of finality and consolation. However, despite the realization of our meaninglessness or our inability to find true meaning in life, Camus rejects the nihilistic hopelessness that may sound reasonable. This meaning can be found in the character of Nathan who rejects the advices of his



grandsire that stand for the nihilistic ideas that based on the old man's lack of ability of finding meaning of life which leads him to think in an absurd way; Nathan rejects such nihilistic thinking. On the contrary, the notion of nihilism is reflected in the character of Mark where he find no meaning of life, with the result, Mark abandons his love with Eva and isolated himself from all people and becomes cold, calculating, and unamiable" (Whitman, 1842, p.85), then he isolates himself from the society. For Camus, enduring the absurdity of life demands, a man has to find worthy things and potent experience within the self to become aware of, and accept the absurdity of life. One may live strange life in an indifferent universe (Camus, 1942, p 106). The enemies of Mark and the betrayals of Nathan represents part of the miseries and mess of the world. However, rather than hopelessness, despair or worse of all suicide, man should accept absurdity of life. Coping with the absurdity, Nathan overwhelms it and ends satisfying with his life. However close he was to his wise grandfather, he finds his advices unworkable within such meaningless life. At the end of the story, Whitman writes, "even in the seemingly futile experience of life, one should find worthy happiness" (Whitman, 1842, p.85).

For Camus (1942), there are plenty of tremendous reasons to endure the potential absurdity and pointlessness of rolling the rock up the hill again and again. All the things that exist around the rock are less important than lifting the rock to the top of the hill (p.111). In the same way, Nathan leaves out all the agonies that surround his rock of life; that threaten his love and his confidence with people; he leaves away his grandfather's advices that emerged out of his long experience of life, and focuses his attention on finding a meaning of life within such absurdity. Furthermore, it is not in the absurdity of life that any of these things can have potential for intrigue and wonder, and it is up to an individual to be conscious of this and brings meaning out of them. The two brothers live in the same conditions and face the same problems, but they behave differently; while Nathan copes with the meaninglessness of life, Mark, fails to do that. Nathan represents the Sisyphian hero while Mark stands for the hero who prefer the philosophical suicide, according to Camus. Nathan is a good example of Camus's idea that even in the conflict of absurdity, one can be tolerable and still live happily as long as one accepts absurdity.

In the acceptance of absurdity of the human experience, Nathan realizes that the situation is not to abolish absurdity or find, in defense, some ultimate truth, but rather it is to be conscious and appreciative of the things within the absurdity. Nathan does not "leap" nor does he accept a philosophical suicide, rather he decided to manage with life. Nathan finds "the tender voice of his maiden, and her sentimental treatment, the pleasure of begetting children" (Whitman, 1842, p.85) as appreciative things within the absurdity of love that makes him "forgot that such a thing as sorrow remained in the world"( Whitman, 1842, p.85). In addition, he finds that "spotless" men despite the "strong, proved cunning hypocrites, and worthy no man's trust" (Whitman, 1842, p.85). Within the desert, Nathan looks for the paradise. As referencing the difficulty of Sisyphus's life, Camus (1942) writes, "the struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (p.111).

As Camus ponders the fate to be absurd and related to the structure of gods, he hails the absurd hero who negates his fate and push his role up the hill; Camus writes: "Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks" . The study can regard the advices of the old man as the gods which Nathan refutes and decides to roll up his rock instead. Nathan plans a way out of anguish and confirms the significance of personal existence and the possibility of a man to live with authenticity. In his struggle against reality, Nathan comes unexpectedly into a harmony with the line of life which will be found pleasant at the end of the story, just as Sisyphus is suddenly filled with happiness as he rolls up his heavy stone.

The Sisyphean protagonist of Whitman's short story faces the gravity as a twister of random agony forces that constitute a steady resistance to dreams of love and achievement. Through experience and using certain values such as honor, bravery, decency, kindness persistent fortitude; man can manage himself with life within the imposed dark gnosis. The emphasis of constant embodiment in action will establish an area of human dignity in the middle of the cosmic meaninglessness and mess, without neglecting the fact that this area will eventually be overcome. The episode of Nathan's life here is an endless battle to proclaim his own existential value. This analogy is especially striking when we consider Camus's concluding section about Sisyphus as "the wisest and most prudent of mortals".

### Conclusion

To sum up, the current study is an attempt to deal with the elusive problem of finding meaning in life in Whitman's "A legend of love and life" through the lenses of Albert Camus. The researcher finds indications of the absurd in Whitman's story so much as the absurd vision that Camus has posed in "Myth of Sisyphus." Although "A Legend of Life and Love" deals with moral theme, it can be summed up in this study as a lucid invitation to live and to produce in the very heart of the desert. Nathan represents the absurd hero of the story whose picaresque life continues regardless of the meaninglessness of the universe. The study concludes that Nathan, the protagonist of the short story, appears in this light as an absurd hero when he chooses to cope in life in spite of miseries and worries. The reader of Whitman's short story can say that one must imagine Nathan happy because he stands for the Sisyphean character. The hard option that character of Nathan makes and the happiness that he finally accomplishes have less to do with the simple moral lesson and more to do with the existential interconnection.

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