

REPRESENTATION OF DISEASE IN LITERATURE: A STUDY OF ALBERT CAMUS' *LA PESTE (THE PLAGUE)*

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ABSTRACT

*Over the centuries, European, American, French and African writers have been representing disease in literary works. But not all creative works featuring disease can be ranked as disease literature according to Disease Literary Theory promulgated by Ifeoma Onyemelukwe. This disease literary theory is used in combination with historical, descriptive and sociological methods to study representation of disease in literature. Albert Camus' *La peste (1947)/The Plague* is used as the study text. The main objective of the research is to examine thoroughly the way Camus represents disease in *La peste/The Plague* and establish if the novel meets or not the criteria to be classed as disease literature. It is found that Camus, in *La peste*, describes in great details the various stages of development of the plague in Oran, a coastal city of Algeria; its signs and symptoms, its prevalence, its negative and positive consequences, the preventive measures adopted by the government to check the spread of the disease like social distancing, isolation and complete lockdown. It is discovered that after roughly a year of quarantine of the city of Oran, the plague comes to an end. It is also established that the plague reflects the cholera epidemic that ravaged Oran in 1949 as well as past and present plagues/human suffering and pains like World War II and COVID-19. The study concludes that Camus' *La peste* qualifies to be classed as disease literature and is vividly relevant to the present-day world especially Nigeria stricken with corona virus pandemic among other "plagues.*

KEYWORDS: *Disease Literary*