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**An Existentialist analysis of J.D .Salinger's
*The Catcher in the Rye***

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Dedication

FOR

Boubakker and Hayat

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ABSTRACT

The study under investigation aims at analyzing Salinger's controversial novel *The Catcher* from an existentialist point of view through exploring the existential themes that may characterize Holden as an existentialist hero and the novel as whole as an existential literary work thereby expanding the meanings readers can find in this prominent American novel. We use Existentialism as a theoretical framework because it is foremost an attitude of revolt and it is chiefly in man's perception that he is living in irrational universe. Kierkegaard's, Heidegger's and Sartre's concepts of death, alienation and authenticity will be utilized. Therefore, it is multi-dimensional analysis of Salinger's *The Catcher*. The results reveal that Holden Caulfield is perceiving death subjectively, his preoccupation with death is the utmost cause of his alienated from the phonies and that was the first step towards his quest of authentic self. As result of finding other prominent existential themes namely myth and confined situation, *The Catcher* is an existential novel.

Keywords: *death, alienation, authenticity, Existentialism,*

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة وتحليل رواية الحارس في حقل الشوفان للكاتب الأمريكي جبروم ديفيد سالنجر من وجهة نظر الفلسفة الوجودية و ذلك من خلال استكشاف المواضيع الوجودية التي باستطاعتها ان تعطي هولدن صبغة البطل الوجودي وللعمل ككل صفة الادب الوجودي و بذلك نكون قد وسعنا نطاق المعاني التي يستطيع القراء توليدها في هذا العمل الأمريكي الفذ. استعملنا الفلسفة الوجودية كدعامة نظرية للدراسة نظرا لأنها الاعمق التي تعبر عن المواقف الثورية و كذلك الوحيدة التي تعبر على ان الانسان يعيش في كون عشوائي لا يوفر مطلقا كيفية للعيش. ستستعمل كل من مفاهيم كيركيغارد و هبيدغر وسارتر حول الموت والاعتراب والمصادقية في تحليلنا للرواية مما يعطي هذه الأخيرة أبعادا تحليلية متعددة. أظهرت النتائج ان لهولدن فهم ذاتي للموت وهذا قد يعتبر السبب الاساسي لاغترابه من المجتمع الذي يعيش فيه. كيفية فهمه للموت و اغترابه بشكل كبير من مجتمعه يدلان على بحثه عن ذاته الحقيقية وسط مجتمع زائف. و نظرا لأن المواضيع الوجودية : الموت والاعتراب و المصادقية ترافقت بمواضيع وجودية اخرى وهي الاسطورة و المواقف المحددة ،فإن رواية " الحارس في حقل الشوفان" وجدت مكانها بين الادب الوجودي.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الموت ، الاعتراب ، المصادقية ، الفلسفة الوجودية .

Abbreviation

The Catcher : *The Catcher in the Rye*

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study
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6. Methodology

1. Background of the Study

The 20th century was remarkably the age of anxiety and uncertainties because of the repercussions of the World Wars. The smell of death and the sense of alienation were hanging everywhere. Americans perceived the world as an absurd place that indicates the meaninglessness of life. They were despairing, lost and unable to define the meaning of their existence. They rebelled against any system rules that make them just conformists in order to achieve their individuality and authentic-self within the mass of society. By the intervening of Existentialism, the philosophy that tries to answer what does it mean to exist in the world, the nature of existence to the individuals became less blurred more complicated to comprehend.

The feeling of despair, alienation and the intense consciousness of death helped American of being characteristically have existential thoughts. These existential thoughts, which were prominent only after 1940s, entered to United States through the translations of the existentialists' works and their lectures.

The era of 1950s was the era in which new literature was born in America ; the literature of Existentialism. The Post-war authors like Richard Wright and Saul Bellow show, through their marginalized and alienated characters, the uncertainty and the vulnerability of individuals and their attempts to define their sense of belonging to a community and therefore to reach self-realization. They created new stream of thought and helped much to make the philosophy of Existentialism became more comprehensive through the eyes of the protagonists of the literature of Existentialism.

J.D. Salinger, one of the representative authors in this epoch, depicts the spiritual dilemma of the American individuals when he wrote his only novel " *The Catcher*" (1951).The protagonist, Holden Caulfield, remains alienated and obsessed with death. The reasons behind his alienation and preoccupation with death have extensively been explained in respect of social and religious perspectives. As the novel has profound insights of existentialist philosophy, Holden Caulfield's alienation and obsession with death, in this regard, can be accounted from an existentialist point of view and the novel can be considered as an existential novel.

2. Aim of the Study

The study under investigation aims at examining Salinger's controversial literary work *The Catcher*, from the existentialist perspective, based on the philosophies of the existentialist thinkers namely: Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre .

This paper tries to prove, on one hand, and to certain degree, that the protagonist Holden Caulfield is an existentialist hero, and on the other hand, that *The Catcher* is an existential literary work through exploring the existential themes in it.

The purpose of this study is an attempt to provide a satisfactory interpretation to *The Catcher* from the existentialist point of view which may expand the range of meanings readers can find in Salinger's work.

3. Significance of the Study

Salinger's *The Catcher* receives many interpretations and critiques. It is often described as a perplexed novel that causes controversy between literary writers and critics. As many researchers have devoted intensively their readings of the novel psychologically, socially, or religiously, novelty studies have revealed that the novel has profound existential insights in it. That is why the present study tends to analyze the corpus from the existentialist point of view

4. Statement of the Problem

The modern heroes, without excluding Holden, are often alienated, obsessed with death and sought to achieve their individuality in their societies. Holden Caulfield's feelings and behaviors are the essential to the understanding of the characters' attitude; yet it is almost impossible to agree upon one's conceptions of human feelings and connotation of behaviors. His alienation from almost everyone in the course of the novel , his obsession with death and his striving to find his true self within the phonies have intensively been analyzed psychoanalytically , socially or religiously .Little attention was giving to Existentialism to explain Holden's feelings and behaviour although death, alienation and authenticity are the essential themes in the philosophy . This novel not only contains these three essential existential themes but also it has more existential insights that can characterize the novel as an existential literary work. To prove that Holden's feelings can be interpreted from the existentialist point of view and the novel as a whole can be placed within the existential literature certain questions are raised:

1. To what extent Holden Caulfield is an existentialist hero?

To get a sufficient answer to this question, sub-questions must be answered:

- How does Holden Caulfield perceive death?
- Why does Holden Caulfield feel alienated?
- To what extent Holden Caulfield is an authentic hero?

2. Is *The Catcher* an existential literary work?

5. Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

1. Holden Caulfield has a subjective perception of death. His preoccupation with death is the ultimate cause of his alienation from the phonies. His feeling of alienation and the way he perceives death are signs of his striving for his individuality and authenticity. All of which may place Holden to great extent as an existentialist hero.
2. *The Catcher* is an existential novel because of the major existential themes which, typically characterize the literature of Existentialism, are myth and basic situations.

6. Methodology

The present study stands principally on existentialist and thematic analysis of Salinger's *The Catcher*, based on the philosophies of the existentialist thinkers namely: Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre

This paper divided into three chapters. The first one discusses the existentialist theories of the three existentialists mentioned above. The chapter is devoted to give an account to each of them on death, alienation and authenticity. Then, it gives an account of how America received the philosophy of Existentialism. The second chapter deals with the Existentialism and literature: overview and characteristics in which the origins of literature of Existentialism and specifically the American existential literary works are expounded. Then, the characteristics and the themes of the literary of Existentialism is explained. The third chapter is taking into the analysis of the corpus in which the exploring of the existential themes is taking place. In this chapter the period and the description of the novel will be detailed. Then, it will work on the analysis of the themes in respect of existentialist perspective.

Chapter One

Existential Philosophy and Existentialism

Introduction

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Chapter One: Existential Philosophy and Existentialism

Introduction

Existentialism, as Milne (2009) defines it, is a philosophy of existence. Its central principal is that the universe does not give any clear nor certain keys of how human race should live. It asserts the idea that the existence proceeds essence. This school appears as reaction to both rationalism and idealism. The modern Existentialism of the ninetieth and twentieth centuries divided into two direction followed by two godfathers who are Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The former developed the Christian and theistic Existentialism and the latter developed the anti-Christian and atheistic Existentialism which followed later by Heidegger and Sartre.

It must be noticed that the term Existentialism coined in 1925 and become used only in 1945. We will use the term existentialist person, novel or thought when we talk about those whom label themselves as existentialists. Philosophers who lived before coining the term or refused to be called existentialists will refer to them as existential philosophers. Their works and novels will be described as existential.

Existentialism reaches its top after the two World Wars. These two wars left the world in despair, fragmentation and loneliness. The chaotic world and its pointless give the Existentialism the power to flourish. For Existentialism the world is absurd and futile. Also it questions the traditional ideas, values and morals that humans convert whether these values are related to religion or morals. In addition, Existentialism appears in the period that people loss their faith in god. Al these problems enter the entire world to some sort of serious anxiety. In the current chapter, existential theories, namely of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre, will be accounted. It will focus on the ideas of these philosophers on death and authenticity along with alienation that is believed to be the core themes of the existential and existentialist philosophy. Then, the reception of Existentialism in America will be accounted as well.

1.1 Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

Soren Kierkegaard is a Danish philosopher who argued against the rationalist approach to reality, existence and religious faith. He emphasizes the importance of the subjective truth. He is considered as the father of Existentialism as Robert Solomon (2006) says " not only the first Western philosopher to attack the cosmic idealism of Hegel but, more importantly, he laid down the basic principles of the Existential movement which guided the writings of Heidegger, Jaspers, and Sartre" (p.69). He analyzes the concept of the individual from the

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religious perspective; therefore he identifies three stages through which man can reach his individuality. These stages are: aesthetic, ethical and religious.

1.1.1 Kierkegaard's stages towards authenticity

For Kierkegaard, going towards authenticity means passing these three stages which he characterizes people according to it.

1.1.1.1 Aesthetic stage

Kierkegaard makes Existentialism personal. He focuses on the idea that by establishing a personal relationship with God we can inhabit both religious and authentic sphere of existence. He said that when one fails in making this relationship, he becomes aesthetic person. The Aesthetic person is the one who does not believe in God and he lives each moment to the fullest without any religious or divine context. He is just materialistically and sensually oriented towards life. The aesthetic person has no ethical system to guide his behaviors because he lives for himself only. Kierkegaard (1987) says that " The aesthetical is a man is that by which he is immediately what he is " (Either/Or, Vol 2, p.150) . In this stage man cannot reach to create his essence, he cannot attain the level of authenticity and he is living for pleasure.

1.1.1.2 Ethical stage

Kierkegaard defines the person who is ethical as " that whereby he becomes what he becomes". The ethical person is that one who believes in god and has responsibilities. The problem is that he cannot understand the difference between faith and reason. Kierkegaard maintains that the two are different entities. The ethical person does not really believe in Christ or God. He just superficially believes in them because they define his existence as the family and the community does. Kierkegaard observes that the ethical person is never really comes to understand himself because he cannot never make an important decision about what he believes in, so that he never really finds himself. (Flynn,2006,p.31)

1.1.1.3 Religious stage

When one cannot recognize that he cannot reason himself in believing of Christ ,it is a mark that he is in the religious stage. Ethical person moves into religious sphere when he commits to Christ without any logical reason of why he is doing so. Kierkegaard has the concept of " leap of faith" which means that individuals have no ability to reason himself into the believe in Christ although he must believe in Christ even though this belief is absurd. The

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ethical person must appreciate a belief in Christ without actually believing. The everyday life of the ethical person is guided by the model of Christ and to what extent he is reflecting that model. Kierkegaard asserts that faith comes to you and one must earn his faith in Christ. (Flynn,2006,p.34)

Kierkegaard defines an individual as the one who has inwardness, earnestness, and responsibility. Inwardness means that one must spend some time contemplating the universe. It describes the one who is meditating about his behaviour and relationship. With the act of inwardness becomes the realization of earnestness which means that one has to be concerned about the quality of his living. Concerning responsibility, Kierkegaard believes that individual is aware for the quality of his life. Responsibility means that we have the choice that we are no longer victim of social psychological or economic condition in which we find ourselves. Responsibility means that we are responsible of developing our own unique individuality and being ourselves. (Flynn,2006,p.09)

1.2 Kierkegaard's concept of death

Kierkegaard sees death as a motivator to individuals to consider their responsibility of their ethical decision in their everyday life. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1992) , Kierkegaard differentiates between what he labels the external view of death and the subjective view of death: " Before I pass over to universal history, it seems to me I had better think about this, lest existence mock me, because I had to become so learned and high-fluting that I had forgotten to understand what will sometime happen to me as to every human being – sometime, nay, what I am saying: suppose death were so treacherous as to come tomorrow." (p.149). The quote indicates that Kierkegaard sees death as an omnipresent phenomenon. For him, death is a continuous threat to his own existence that can happen any moment in everyday life. In our study, we will focus on his subjective view of death.

1.3 Kierkegaard's concept of alienation

Kierkegaard is, as it has been introduced earlier, a religious existentialist. He discussed the idea of alienation through his word estrangement. The concept of alienation appeared in Kierkegaard's work through the dialectic of despair. Kierkegaard's understanding of alienation is that the individuals are alienated from themselves and from the world. He argues that the alienation take the form of being " inauthentic " (Sayers,2001, p.05) . Still he believes that the humans are alienated by nature. Being alienated in the modern society is sign of that human tries to search for authenticity in the modern society where the social appearance is more

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valuable than God, as he explains " Yet it is true; in our day it is indeed a crime to have spirit, so the fact that such people, the lovers of solitude, are put into the same category as criminals [who are punished with imprisonment in solitude] is just as it should be." (Kierkegaard, 2008, p. 78)

We have seen so far the existential philosophy by Kierkegaard. In our study and in the analysis of the corpus, we will not find all the stages towards authenticity proposed by him. We are going to use his subjective way of death and we will use his concept of authenticity to prove that Holden is not in his authentic self in the eye of Kierkegaard philosophy.

1.2 Martin Heidegger (1889- 1976)

While Kierkegaard analyzes the concept of individual from the religious perspective Martin Heidegger analyzes from the psychological perspective. After publishing *Being and time* in 1926, Heidegger gains the reputation in Europe as the major philosopher in the 20th century. Heidegger's book marks the beginning of Existentialism as a mainstream philosophical movement. In his *Being and Time* , he creates the concept of Dasein. Da means here and Sein means being, so the word literally means being here. It is interpreted as what does for me to be in the world or what does it mean for me to exist therefore the word Dasein mean existence. (Michelman,2008,p.111)

All individuals ask the question what it means for me to be in the world, but most of them facing the question by accepting a given way of life which Heidegger calls inauthentic existence. However, the authentic person is who ask himself about the existence he strives to find the answer but he recognizes the extent of the choices that his existence offers him. According to Heidegger, the answer of this question lies in the analysis of specific psychological stages that will indicate the authenticity of the existence. The psychological stage of death will be analyzed briefly because of its relevance to the Salinger's protagonist, Holden Caulfield.

In "*Being and Time*" (1962), Heidegger wrote a whole chapter about death. The first sentence in it was that " as soon as human being is born, he is old enough to die right away" (136) . Heidegger emphasized the idea that death is not supposed to be in the far future instead the idea of death should be thought of in every moment and that death could happen in any moment of everyday life.

The concept of death is important in Heidegger philosophy because it determines the meaning of each moment of our existence. Before becoming of death, individual has the

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choice and possibility to change his existence. It is only at the moment of death that the past, present and future come one. At that moment the meaning of existence is fixed. In the next paragraphs we will account for the existential interpretation of death by Heidegger which will be used in the analysis of Holden's perception of death, along with the concept of authenticity.

1.2.1 Heidegger's concept of authenticity

Taylor (2006) says that "the idea of authenticity belongs to a cluster of ethical and psychological conceptions of individuality that stand in an uneasy relation to traditional norms of justice and the demands of morality" (p.229). Heidegger in "*Being and Time*" explains that an individual may exist authentic or inauthentic.

For Heidegger, to be inauthentic means to be controlled by the they-self, by their rules and social norms which he describes as "other-directed" (ibid, p.233). Inauthentic mode is "...routine and desensitized conformity to the average of understanding that happens to prevail in society" (ibid, p.233). As Heidegger explains, inauthenticity indicates conformity and blindly going with crowd that leads only to be a copy as they are. Heidegger continues to characterize the they-self existence (Dasein) as "makes no choice, gets carried along by nobody, and thus trap itself in inauthenticity. This process can be reversed only if Dasein specifically brings itself back to its looseness in the they" (ibid,p.312). It is worth mentioning that Heidegger observes that the authentic self does not completely alien itself from society.

However, to be authentic means to be true to yourself and to be "self-directed" (ibid,p.233). Heidegger said that "Authenticity, understood as resisting conformism and coming into one's own, as we might say, in turn comprises two distinct elements: "resoluteness" (Entschlossenheit) and "forerunning" (Vorlaufen)" (ibid,p.234). To be resolute is "... remain sensitive to the unique demands of the concrete "situation" (Situation)" (ibid,p.243). Forerunning is "...running up against or even into death, which means not literally expiring in the biological sense, but being continually exposed to the essential instability and vulnerability of my world and my identity." (ibid,p.234). That was the account of what means to be authentic in Heideggerian existential theory.

1.2.2 Heidegger's concept of death

As a result of the repercussions of the World Wars, the idea of death becomes a crucial topic discussed by the philosophers of the 20th century. Martin Heidegger, as Sartre classified him as atheist existentialist, provokes a fascination with death that continues to be central preoccupation of Existentialism.

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Heidegger said that death can be seen into two different perspectives: subjective and objective. Subjective perception of death means " that every single day of your life you realize that death can occur at any moment and there is no necessary reason why we should live another day. Heidegger opts for the subjective view because it makes us conscious of the fact that time is going to run out which will make it impossible for us to change the meaning of our lives." (Killici, 2008 ,p.67) . Heidegger emphasizes the idea that "Dasein's death is always impending" (Taylor, 2006 ,p. 283) , he said that human existence may ,at any moment , face death . Death is not phenomenon that can happen only in the future, but it has the possibility of occurring at any moment.

However, the objective perception of death means " that you do not think about death and, frequently, get caught up in the goals and problems of your own existence. Death is going to happen to you someday but not now." (Killici ,2008 ,p.67) . Heidegger said that the objectives perception of death prevents people from taking life seriously; consequently they cannot be a decision-maker.

Heidegger suggests that an individual is " ... trying to control death by "brooding" over it all the time or by "expecting" it at any moment " ((Heidegger, 1962, p.305). The idea of death should not be thought of as a not-yet phenomenon, but it should thought of it successively by brooding over it ,which means that one always is thinking of death whether his own death or the death of others , or by expecting it at any moment by , for example , imagining one's own death or considering that death can be a result of any sickness or accident . Heidegger's point is that " being-toward-death is not just a matter of "thinking about death," but that it pervades a much broader spectrum of everyday comportment " (Taylor, 2006, p.283).

1.2.3Death and authenticity

There are a relationship between death and authenticity. As it has been explained in the earlier paragraphs, death should be understood by humans as a ever-present phenomenon. It means that human being should not put the idea of death aside and become indifferent with it , instead the authentic relation to death " involves not being in denial, but instead, recognizing the certainty of death" (ibid,p.283) . To be certain that death is inevitable, it means that one should anticipate death. Heidegger (1992) says that " ... anticipatory being-toward-death "individualizes" Dasein" (p.310) . He explained that anticipation of death " ... frees up Dasein from inauthentic everydayness and from the anonymous other (das Man) so that it can act "of

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its own accord" (Heidegger, 1962,p. 308) . The relation between death and authenticity will be used in the analysis of the corpus.

1.2.4 Heidegger's concept of alienation

As Heidegger differs between what is authentic and what is inauthentic, he also discusses the term alienation. Heidegger speaks of alienation to refer to the case in which one's " ownmost potentiality for being is hidden from him " . He uses the term to refer to those who do not exist authentically. Alienation implies the idea that one is caught off or separated from his potential authentic existence. Indeed "one of the modes of falling and inauthenticity is precisely 'alienation'"(Heidegger,1996,p. 178)

However, In attempt to achieve some sort of authenticity, man firstly exists inauthentically . We are all thrown into the world with the crowd. Then by time, the individuals tries to search for their true self and authentic-self . So, man should pass over the state of being inauthentic to begin gaining some sort of authenticity. It has been proved that there is a relationship between alienation and authenticity.

Rae (2010) says that " The constitutive link between authenticity and alienation also means that each conception of the authentic self provides the means to identify forms of alienation." (p.27). It means that, in striving to reach authenticity, man should experience some kind of alienation whether from his /herself, society or God. Rae argued that " alienation relates to authenticity " (ibid, p.24). It is necessary for man to feel anxious about his relations towards himself or toward others that is shaped in the feeling of alienation. He said that " the fundamental defining feature of the concept 'alienation' is its relation to a conception of authentic, self " (ibid,p. 25) .It is clearly that there is a relation between authenticity and alienation. Alienation is one step by which the individual is separated from; others and he starts to question his surroundings. The term alienation is implicitly related to authenticity as Rae indentifies that alienation is " implicitly tied to a notion of an authentic self." (ibid, p. 25).

We notice that there are common points between Heidegger and Kierkegaard on level of their understanding of death. Further, we are going to use their concept of death. We exceed to use Heidegger concept of death because he accounted of the relationship between it and authenticity which at most importance to confirm the first hypothesis of this study.

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1.3 Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980)

He is the founder of the French Existentialism. Jean-Paul Sartre gives the movement its definitive expression and its name. He was influenced by Heidegger and wrote on his book "*Being and Time*". He is known of his masterpiece "*Being and Nothingness*". Sartre wrote both fiction and philosophy. In the respective paragraphs we will account for his philosophy.

His motto "existence precedes essence" is the core to understand his philosophy. Sartre believes that there is no inherent essence in humans instead what comes first is the existence. All meanings, he asserts, within this existence are invented by man. Life is meaningless, and the only way to make it meaningful is by man's choices.

As life is meaningless for Sartre, he asserts that people are anxious of the idea of death "anxiety and alienation rooted in the realization that life is inevitable moving towards death" (Cohn, 1997, p.70). Sartre also considers anguish to be the outcome of man's uncertainty. Anguish of death and the notion of nothingness suggest his loneliness¹.

As the earlier philosophers, Sartre maintains that human either can be authentic or inauthentic. The theory of subjectivity and authenticity in *Being and Nothingness* is summarized on the chapter of bad faith (mauvaise foi) . Sartre expresses his conception of authenticity by "advocating a constant effort to avoid self-deception and bad faith." (Hubert, 2006,p. 217)

1.3.1Bad faith and authenticity

Sartre's popular slogan "existence precedes essence" implies the idea that humans individual firstly exist then by their actions they create their essence. Sartre emphasizes the idea that "Man creates himself". In the process of his self creation or authenticity, he tackled the concept of freedom and responsibility. Sartre claims that "... we are condemned to be free" (Flynn, 2006,p.77). The Individuals should choose to be free, with their repercussion of their choices , anxiety and anguish emerge . They try to make what they do meaningful through their actions and with conscious awareness about their limitation or freedom. Sartre, as the aforementioned philosophers, maintains the idea that an individual may exist authentically or inauthentically. To discuss what does it mean for Sartre to be an authentic being , the notion of bad faith should be pointed to

¹M, P. (2006). The Internal Landscape and the Existential Agony of Women in Anjana Appachana's Novel LISTENING NOW (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Deemed.

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According to Sartre "...bad faith occurs when someone tries to rationalize our existence or actions through religion, science, or some other belief system which imposes meaning or coherence on human existence."². Bad faith is a way by which the individuals avoid anguish and anxiety about the coherence of our existence. Humans, in Sartre's eyes, should believe that the world is meaningless and became meaningful only by the action of humans that they choose to be done. Bad faith in itself is a choice by which people ignore to take responsibility towards their freedom and thus they prefer to live as others do.

For Sartre, the individuals who refuse to take responsibility, they refuse to be free. They have a strong desire to believe in facticity, which means that they believe that they are conditioned by factors on which they have no control. To have a bad faith or self-deception, for Sartre, means to exist inauthentically. The individuals should accept their existential situation, which consist of recognizing their finitude and their freedom. To live authentically for Sartre means "we live according to our own beliefs, that we insert meaning into the acts that we do, not finding meaning from what other people say. We should not live in regard to what other people think or say, because this would also push us into bad faith."³.

Sartre emphasizes the idea that what we want to be as individuals is personal choice. In many occasions, we end up having a bad faith by which we live in the crowd and we believe in the ready-made rules by different systems. Living in bad faith is also a choice by many for not getting anxious towards life and it is sort of self-deception that offer to human kind some sort of peace. However, remaining living in bad faith is a judgment of being inauthentic and thus no individuality will take place.

1.3.2 Sartre's concept of alienation

In "*Being and Time*", Sartre uses the term alienation when he speaks of the way we look at the other. He said that by recognizing that the other in another I, the individual experiences the alienation of oneself "... in the shock which seizes me when I apprehend the Other's look ... Suddenly I experience a subtle alienation of all my possibilities, which are now associated with objects of the world, far from me in the midst of the world" (Sartre,1992, p.55)

Sartre's argues as well that when human beings refuse or ignore to take responsibility of his freedom, alienation occurs. He says that:

² <http://atheism.about.com/od/existentialistthemes/a/badfaith.htm>

³ <http://www.123helpme.com/view.asp?id=107067>

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one aspect of alienation is ignorance. It is a mode of inter-human relations. Its type is that of refusal in the sense that to be judged ignorant by others acts as a cause does on my freedom. When I am ignorant in solitude, either I'm unaware that I am ignorant or I know it, it must be mentioned that in the first case, to be unaware of my ignorance clearly is not equivalent to knowing what I am doing, but the double negative lifts from ignorance its limiting exteriority. My knowledge is limited by nothing, since my unawareness of it is nothing. There is no outside to consciousness or to knowledge. There is just an impulse toward the project, toward understanding, toward truth which is positive. There are affirmations but no consciousness comes along and puts them between parentheses. There is a finite but not limited positively, my freedom is still completely there (Ibid,p. 294).

1.4 Forms of Alienation

Alienation has two forms: sick and healthy. According to Sinari (1970) " sick forms of alienation occur when the individual is simply alienated from what is considered to be constitutive of the authentic self. He or she does not experience any positive aspects from his or her alienation. The consequences of this form of alienation are somewhat familiar: crime, mental illness, suicide, social isolation, anomie and a general subjective disenchantment with the world." (p.129)

Healthy form of alienation as Sinari defines it is " contributed to the individual's self-perception and/ or perception of the world . It allows her or him to gain new experiences and insights and use these in a manner that allows her or him to become authentic " (ibid.p.129) .

1.5 The reception of Existentialism in America

As the corpus of the study was written in the 20th century, specifically in 1951, the reception of Existentialism in America must be confined to this era. It is of much importance to account how America conceived this wave of new school in order to recognize the root of Existentialism in American consciousness. The matter will be all narrowed to the reception of this philosophy in 20th century. Still, without mentioning the two nineteenth century existentialists, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, who profoundly entered America before the Sartre's and his colleagues' arrival, the matter would not be completely accounted, neither, fully understood.

Soren Kierkegaard , the father of modern Existentialism ,entered to America by the effort of the translation of his works, however, this existentialist of the 19th century had not much interest by Americans till David Swenson's and Walter Laowrie's translations of all his books published. By their efforts, and by much of the help of the circumstances in America after the WW2 : despair, loss of faith, and alienation, Kierkegaard's works become

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popular known and to the extension that " by 1940s, everyone, from soldier to statesman, seemed to be reading and talking about Soren Kierkegaard" (Cotkin,2003,p.54).

Nietzsche was not far from Kierkegaard in the sense of not being well known. Before the WW2, specially in 1856, Nietzsche's works entered to America but the problem with them was that the inability of people to understand them. Although the name of him was known, his works rang much questions mark in Americans' minds about what he is really philosophizing or writing. In 1941, George Allen Morgan solved the problem of the understanding of Nietzsche by publishing his article of what Nietzsche means.

In addition to Nietzsche, Heidegger and Jasper introduced to America in the first half of the century. The former's work, *Being and Time*, the work which Sartre owes much to it when he wrote "*Being and Nothingness*", was popular as a philosophy of Existentialism.

French Existentialism is the media by which, with the indebt to Sartre, the world becomes, without exception of America, familiar with the philosophy. America , specifically, was influenced by Sartre's behind-scene philosophy of his literary works , namely *No Exist* , *The Flies*, *Nausea*, more than his philosophic books as "*L'être et Le Neat*". In the 1940, the French Existentialism introduced to America consciousness through Sartre's, De Beauvoir's, and Camus' theories and personal visits. They were, after their arrival to America, welcomed by the New York press with little reservation on Sartre and de Beauvoir whom underestimate American literature, by being too realistic and not good in style.

As it has been mentioned, Sartre's literary works were more popular than his *Being and Nothingness*, nevertheless, his "*Existentialisme est un Humanisme*" (1946) was nearly in everywhere in America. The article by which Sartre was affirming that Existentialism has nothing to do with pessimism and it is entirely suits Americans in that period . The idea that was criticized by many critics of being totally the opposite and America in that time was indulgent in pessimism.

In contrast to Sartre, Camus was more preferred by Americans in terms of his philosophy and literature. Their admiration of "*L'étrangé*" and "*Le Pest*" enable him to win a Nobel Prize. Camus was always at home everywhere, unlike Sartre as Cotkin (2003) argues was " much too typically a Frenchman, much too literary, in a way too talented, too ambitious " (p.117).

Finally, two American scholars helped much in dissemination of Existentialism in America. Kaufmann and Banes have done rather great effort to spread French Existentialism

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to the extent that by the end of 1960s every student in university or college became familiar with the philosophy, let alone their teachers and intellectuals. In Kaufmann's words he summarized the impact of France philosophy in the way " that Existentialism elicits greater interest in the United States than any previous philosophic to the 1940s circumstances, Existentialism became, whether the philosophy of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, or others, independent and popular in America." (1956,p.42)

Conclusion

The existential theories by Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre are explained in terms of their ideas on death, authenticity and alienation. Although they were different in their definitions and analysis the aforementioned existential themes, they gave an account to define the nature of human beings. In the chapter we spoke also about the forms of alienation and exceeded to how America perceived Existentialism in 20th century.

Chapter Two

Existentialism and literature: Overview and Characteristics

Introduction

2.1 Essential works of literature of Existentialism

2.1.1 Literature of Existentialism written by existentialists

2.1.2 Literature of Existentialism written by non-existentialists

2.2 Essential works of Existential American literature in 20th century

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Conclusion

Chapter Two: Existentialism and Literature: Overview and Characteristics

Introduction:

In the realm of literature, readers encounter miscellaneous artistic works. They are conducted to read different pieces of literature that can be classified into different categories. To identify the literature of Existentialism, as it is our focus of the study, is not easy task to do since its themes overlap with other themes in other kind of literature. The existential themes that considered as core themes in the text are the ones which characterize the text as an existential literary work. Still it is not necessary to draw a distinction between them as the scope of literature is open to several meanings and interpretations and it is not confined itself to merely one stylistic or thematic analysis. This chapter is devoted to give an account of the essential existential literary works beginning by French literary works, because it was the pioneer of this kind of literature, and going to discuss the American literary work of Existentialism in 20th century.

2.1 Essential works of literature of Existentialism

Humans' productions mirror, in one way or in another, their nature and socio-economic situations. Their pieces of literature have, in this light, always been the witness to their existence; everything related to it and everything problematic about it. Therefore, and without a question, human's condition is always omnipresent. Hence, it is impossible to produce any literary work without having certain necessary schema for the writer. It is highly important to the author to have a socio-political background that indicates his/her full-awareness of whatever the matter he/she is conducted to. So it is logical that the author is going to reflect his awareness of the human existence.

When we need to discuss the existential literature, we have to shed light, at first, on its two types. Firstly, literature which is written by existentialists like Sartre, Camus, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in which their main objective was to bring this kind of philosophy out of its abstraction and show brightly, in a concrete and tangible sense, their own ideas . Therefore, these kinds of literary texts, which are presented in different genres, contain the basic concepts of existential thoughts and demonstrate the major representative themes of Existentialism in a particular narrative. Clearly, Sartre in his artistic works shows all about responsibility; Camus tells about his notion of absurd; without forgetting Kierkegaard and his stress on subjectivity, ending by Nietzsche and his nihilistic view to the world.

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2.1.1 Literature of Existentialism written by existentialists

According to Flynn (2006) "Existentialism has always been closely associated with the fine art .In fact both Camus and Sartre were offered the Nobel Prize for literature (which Sartre decline" (p16). Jean-Paul Sartre distinguished himself as novelist when he published his impressive novel "*La Nausée*" (1938, Nausea) . The story is about Anton Roquentin who strives to detect any sense or meaningfulness of the world. The protagonist has neither a job nor friends. He dislikes his town and history .In addition, his ex-girlfriend wants to do nothing with him. Always, he is just brooding about the meaninglessness of life. In fact, life makes him nauseous. In his attempts to make his life meaningful, he begins to write a novel by which he wants to make sense of the world but the matter turns in reverse and he knows that he is a loser and he will never have a girlfriend. Sartre's hero is deemed to be existential character. Through him, Sartre reflects the absurdity of existence.

Bloom (2000,p.261) claims that in Camus' *The Stranger* " we find the theory of the novel of absurdity" (161) .Camus presented his own philosophic ideas and applied them to the novel. "*L'Étranger*" (1942, The Stranger or The Outsider) is the story of Meursault , the protagonist whose first name was not mentioned in the novel, who returned back to Algiers because of his mother's death. He did not behave occasionally towards the matter: he did not cry his mother and never dressed in black which both indicate his lack of emotions. Furthermore, he smokes and drinks the coffee at the wake. Obviously, he does not care about anything or anyone. The day after his mother's death, he went swimming and had an affair with Marie, the girl with whom he had no passion. She wanted to marry him but he told her that he never loved her. However, he will accept her request if she wishes. For him the matter will make no difference. Then, Meursault gets involved in his neighbor Raymond's, who was violent pimp, problems. He witnesses Raymond's breakup with his girlfriend and a fight with her brother. Later, Meursault meets girlfriend's friend Arab on the beach, Because of the knife in Arab's hand and because the sun blazing, Marsault shoots Arab although he did not plan or intend the murder.

After that, Meursault put in prison where he waits his verdict. His lack of emotional display continues, and that used by the jury to state that he had no sign of remorse, maybe no emotions at all . His behavior towards his mother's death serves as proof of his lack of emotions .Eventually, Meursault was sentenced to death by the guillotine the next morning. He refuses the priest's attempts to convert him to god before passing away. He did not want to be a believer. Finally he accepted the death sentence and indifference of the universe .He

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claimed on the day of his execution that " he had been happy and still was" and he wished that there are a lot of spectators at the scaffold" to welcome him with cries of hate". Bloom (2008) states that " Everything has been all the same to Meursault ... Meursault's life has been absurdity, but to take away his life is even more absurd " (08-09).

2.1.2 Literature of Existentialism written by non-existentialists

Another type of existential literature is shining elsewhere. These literary works is merely written by two different kinds of non-philosophic writers. Ones who are either rapport to this philosophy or to existential ideas, for example, the Jewish American writers such as Ralf Ellison and Richard Wright. And others whose art deals with existential topics without necessary having a philosophic knowledge or personal background concerning Existentialism. In this wide sense, existential literature may be written by non-philosophers concerning Existentialism and rank their works on shelves as the most important and representative of existential written art .

As the account of existentialist who became novelists has been stated above, other novelists, whom are not existentialist, equally introduced literary works which considered as utmost representative of existential Literature. Firstly, André Malraux (1901-1976) the writer whose " works " as Borsman (2000) characterizes it " provide a bridge between Pascal, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche...and..he is slightly younger contemporaries who became existentialist". In his novel "*La condition Humaine*" (1933, Man's fate), he presented and treated many of existential themes such as absurdity and anguish .Secondly, Jean Anouilh (1910-1987) the author of the classical play "*Antigone*" (1942). Although there was no complete agreement about classifying him as a literary existential still his play has to do much with existential concern suchlike free will and political responsibility. The play is about a titular heroine's disobedience to the king Creon's orders; she followed the superior authority of her own consciousness at the price of her own life. Thirdly, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) is the best known of his novel "*Le Petit Prince*" (1943, The Little Prince). Almost of his stories are about aviation like "*Terre des Homme*" (1939, Wind, Sand and Stars) in which Sartre "recognized existential theme" (Brosman (2000),,p.72): " Freedom, will , action, and responsibility" (ibid,p.74).

At the end, these are the examples of representative existential literary works which share almost the same themes and ways to see the so-called **reality**. In the expected paragraphs the essential existential American literature in 20th century.

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2.2 Essential existential American literature in 20th century

The existential literary writings and themes found their ways in America before the arrival of the existential thoughts and philosophy. It was not the 20th century the era in which existential literature aroused, in parallel, with Existentialism's dissemination in America. The fact was that the existential literature has been found a century earlier. Therefore, the representative writers, in the 19th century, whom their works labeled as existential literature, will be, briefly, pointed to. Then, this section will be, unequally, dedicated to the existential American literature in the 20th century.

Melville's and Whitman's literary works have been ranked as representatives of existential American literature in 19th century. The former's *Moby Dick* (1851) has much of existential themes and typical existential style of writing. In Whitman's "*Leaves of Grass*" addresses also existential themes and provided clear pictures of existential style.

In the 20th century, existential literature has been much found especially as the consequence of the feeling of alienation which was dominated in that time. Faulkner's "*The Sound and the Fury*"(1929) addressed the dichotomy between humanization and alienation . Hemmingway is considered as representative of Existentialism in America. His two novels , "*The Sun also Rises*" and "*The Old Man and The Sea*" , tackled open existential concerns as death and responsibility and provided typical existential style.

Loneliness and alienation were common feelings in America in the 20th century . The African American writer Richard Wright tackled the themes of alienation openly in his novel "*The Outsider*" (1953) . For getting rid of the racial oppression in America ,he traveled to France in. The Outsider's protagonist, Cross Damon, is alienated from his society and from himself. Wright "sought to bring [Existentialism and black life] together to speak to the universal problems of human existence and to the specific realities of African American oppression" (Cotkin, 2003,p.167).

The list of the writers whom rank their works in existential literature are many in number, the aforementioned writers were the most famous among others. Still , there are others in much importance of being mentioned but their concerns are similar regarding Existentialism and existential themes despite of the different motives behind their writings . One of these writers is D.J Slinger whose work "*The Catcher*" is dedicated for the analysis in the third chapter of this paper.

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2.3 Themes of existential literature

As all kinds of literature have its own themes and motifs that specify them, existential literature, in this regard, must have specificities. This section will summarize the almost themes and motifs that are shared between existential literary works.

2.3.1 Barnes' existential themes in literature of Existentialism

Taking into consideration that the themes of existential literature can be seen also in many other non-existential literary works, the narrative in which the existential concerns or individual experience are the central motifs of it give the qualification of a certain literary work to be existential. In the connection with Sartre's œuvre, Hazel Barnes (as cited in Backer,1993,p.79) states that:" There are three distinctive characteristics that illuminate the literature of humanistic Existentialism. First, this literature must work with myth ;second, it must concern itself with the basic situations in which human freedom affirms itself; third, it must have keen sense of social responsibility" (Baker,1993,p.79).

2.3.1.1Myth

According to Barnes, the use of myth should be a distinctive feature of this kind of literature. Myth is a story from ancient times, especially one that was told to explain natural events or to describe the early history of people. In this regard, there are only two existential literary works that use myth which are Anouilh's *Antigone* and Camus' *Le mythe de Sisyphe*. The word myth does not strict only to this meaning, it goes beyond the classical mythology to describe the contemporary legends, for instance; Richard.E Baker observes that Wright's *Native Son* (1940) "explodes the myth of America is a classless society" (ibid,p.79).

2.3.1.2 Basic situations

The second typical theme in existential literature is as Barnes states" basic situations in which human freedom affirms itself" '(ibid,p79) . These situations are merely the times in the hero's life in which he accepts or rejects responsibility whether towards himself or others. Also, these situations that the hero finds himself in is distinguished by clearly definite limits. These limits can be, spacial, temporal or social nature⁴. In Sartre's "*Huis Clos*", the prison cell in hell serves as spacial limit, similarly, the second part of "*L'Étranger*" is taking place in prison in which the course of the plot continues. Whereas the former and the later the situation is spacial. The confined situation can also be the consequences of the social

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circumstances for example in Ellison's *"Invisible Man"* (1952). The protagonist's freedom in this novel is restricted by the external social situation of the U.S.

2.3.1.3 Social responsibility

The third theme that should be present in the existential literature is social responsibility. Social responsibility is clear in Sartre's, Camus', Beauvoir's, or Malraux's works. But for non-philosophic writers, they tackle this theme in less direct way or it does not appear at all in their works; like Hemmingway and others. Barnes confined the characteristics of existential literature as aforementioned to only three distinctive themes and motifs.

In contrast to literature of absurd, existential literature does not address absurdity openly even though absurdism is one of the main themes in it. For example, absurdism has not exposed openly in Camus' *L'Étranger* but it is developed in the course of the plot. The reaction to absurdity is, most of times, despair. That is why existential angst and death are frequent themes in existential literature that presented differently as it will be explained in the following chapter.

2.3.2 Guilt and journey as themes in literature of Existentialism

Albert Camus, in addition to freedom and responsibility, adds that: "the recurring themes of Existentialism.... such themes as freedom, decision, and responsibility; and, even more, finitude, alienation, guilt, death; and perhaps not least, that peculiar and indefinable intensity of feeling that is apparent in most of the existentialists from Kierkegaard on." (Kaufman, 1956,p314).

Another theme of existential literature is guilt. Guilt is observed as frequent theme in existential fiction and it comes as result of having a responsibility. The responsibility that allows individual to be free and take actions as he/she wants. These actions are totally acted according to individual's free will separated from divine or social rules or psychological traumas. That is why in existential literature the characters follow their own rules as Hemingway's heroes and they are responsible of their fate. Accepting guilt by the characters in certain fiction is a way by which these characters are responsible of their own choices whatever these choices are just like Sartre's *Dirty Hands* in which the protagonist accept guilt for killing "an obviously dangerous opponent during the wartime" (Milne,2009,230)

Another theme which is not perhaps restricted only to existential literature but it repeated frequently in it will be included to this section. This theme is journey. By the 20th century, life

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became absurd and meaningless. This meaningfulness is reflected, in a piece of literature, in directionlessness of travel. As there are no goals or purposes to achieve, travelling became a solution by which people kill time and get rid of any kind of responsibility that might enhance their existence. In Pascal's terminology, travel has become another important diversion to avoid considering one's misery. However, Journey can symbolize also the quest for meaning.

2.3.3 Panza and Gale's themes of literature of Existentialism

In addition to what Barnes and Camus characterize as existential themes, Panza and Gale (2008) expanded the list.. The themes that has been added by these scholars are :

Absurdity: For the existentialists, life is absurd; it makes no sense and has no meaning or ultimate purpose, but human beings need it to make sense, to have meaning and purpose.

Alienation: This is the feeling that you're a stranger in your own life, a stranger in the world.

Rejection of meaning-giving narratives: It isn't enough to say that life is absurd; the existentialists repeatedly make the point that when philosophy, religion, or science tries to make sense of it, the attempts always fail

Anxiety: This is the feeling of unease you get when you start to recognize that life is absurd..

Responsibility: Everyone bears responsibility. If no one is going to give you a guidebook to life, you have to bear responsibility for making your way through it and creating some kind of meaning for it.

Authenticity: People want authenticity — to live in a way that's in tune with the truth of who they are as human beings and the world they live in.

Individuality: An important part of developing an authentic and satisfying life is individuality.

Reason, science, and systems that try to cover up the absurdity of life often take individuality from you. (p12)

Conclusion

Clearly, there is a consensus upon some themes and disagreement upon others. While Barnes considers myth as a distinctive theme of existential literature, the others do not mentioned it at all. As human nature is in changing all times and this changing shapes the existence in continues ways, the themes of existential literature will continue to be various and changeable. In this chapter, we expound the major existential literary works from which we can see the themes of literature of Existentialism. Then, we gave a general account on the possible themes that characterize the existential literature.

Chapter Three

Investigation of the Existential themes in *The Catcher*

Introduction

3.1 *The Catcher* and the counterculture movement

3.2 The plot of the novel

3.3 Existential themes in *The Catcher*

3.3.1 Death

3.3.1.1 Interpretation and discussion of the theme of death

3.3.2 Alienation

3.3.2.1 Interpretation and discussion of the theme of alienation

3.3.3 Authenticity

3.3.3.1 Holden as an existentialist hero

3.3.4 Myth

3.3.5 Basic situations

Conclusion

Introduction

Adam Moss observes in his article (1981) "*Catcher comes of an age*" that *The Catcher* becomes one of those rare books that influence more generation after another, causing each to claim it as its own" (p.56). *The Catcher* is one of the bestselling books in America. It is J.D Salinger's only novel that was published in 1951. It is considered as the most popular novels of the 20th century. Each year, millions of its copies sold worldwide, besides, it has been translated into more than 30 languages. A survey by the Board of the Modern Library in 1998 places *The Catcher*" 64 in 100 best novels in English. In 2003 BBC's Big Read campaign ranked *The Catcher* at number 15 in worldwide poll of favorite novels. It was ranked by American Library Association at number 13 in its list of 100 frequent challenged books of 1990-2000.

In this chapter, we will give the description of the novel by tackling the period and general account about the corpus. Then , by using the philosophy of Existentialism, *The Catcher*, despite all the criticism received it, will be taken into thematic analysis . The themes will be analyzed from the existential point of view namely: death , alienation and authenticity

.3.1 *The Catcher* and the counterculture movement

Before the publication of Salinger's *The Catcher* in 1951, the cultural climate in America have witnessed various changes notably relating to the literary themes such as distrust, alienation, lack of identity, looking for authenticity, and fear of death and loss. Henriksen (1997) explains how Salinger's novel occurred during the beginning of an age of fear in America: "In his 1951 novel *The Catcher* J.D. Salinger introduced Americans to the cultural and psychological landscape of the age of anxiety. Through his trouble adolescent protagonist, Holden Caulfield, Salinger illustrated the depressing insecurity that ate away at many of the young in postwar America" (p.83).

From describing Holden's relationship with himself on one hand and with his society on the other, it can be seen obviously his effect on youth through the notion of a childlike innocence and an adult encroachment upon this innocence, the later remarks the countercultural movement. Since it characterized by international instability, war, and technological development, youth in the countercultural era tend to see the world as an aggressive area. Accordingly, they have been questioning the desire of their society and taking themselves away from their own societies as a sign of their refuse to the societies' conventions. Several countercultural youth were affected by Holden life as Mark Hamilton explains: "First published in 1951 and popular ever after, it was among the baby boomers one

Chapter Three: Corpus Analysis

of the most widely read novels. As poignantly as any author of the era, Salinger defined the landscape of psychological discontent. Who could have been more profoundly alienated than preppy Holden Caulfield? *The Catcher in the Rye* caught the insecurities of those born in the atomic age” (1988,p.45).

The countercultural movement represents the beginning of postmodernism in America. It began as a youthful question regarding identity, age and purpose. The common themes found in *The Catcher* reflect this response and provide a historical context for the novel's postmodern ideology. Holden's identity problem linked to youth counterculture, since young people develop gradually the perception of rebellious teenager which represents the advent of postmodern America. Many youth see themselves in *The Catcher* as they feel confused, distant, and disconnected adolescence instead of viewing the age adolescence as an era of development and time of opportunity. That feeling was becoming very common in post-war America: "...In the post-war period, however, recognition of the increasing dissonance between American ideals and the realities of social experience has become unavoidable, and it is precisely this cultural dissonance that is highlighted by Salinger's novel" (Edsforth and Bennett ,1991,p.131).

Furthermore, what makes Holden a postmodern character and countercultural movement representative was his rejection of phoniness and his call for sincerity, originality, something was not affected by adult standards and rules, and his realization that sincerity is impossible.

The counterculture movement has no clear definition which is the clearest sign of the postmodern beginnings of the countercultural movement. Postmodernism characterized by the resistance to definition, Heidegger(1962) emphasize this notion by claiming that “[I]t resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and thus indefinable concept need any definition”, and Jameson explains how postmodernism requires no definition: “definition no longer exists: the definition of the question is in fact that of postmodernism itself” (p.387).

This resistance to definition is clearly seen in the counterculture. The conventional ideologies related to religion, politics, and personal choices presented to countercultural youth by their parents were commonly rejected. The only definition that countercultural youth could identify with was their opposition to their conventional standards created by their society. The countercultural movement resistance to definition affected the youth sense of identity. They were struggling with identity just the same like Holden's personal struggle and lack of

guidance. The journey of Holden lost goal and direction. This lack links *The Catcher* with the postmodern life .

3.2 The plot of the novel

The Catcher is a novel written by Salinger. It was published in 1951. As soon as it was published it received many critics and interpretations. " A poll conducted among American literature instructors in Southern California by Henry Dan Piper placed both Salinger and *The Catcher in the Rye* at the head of the lists of those authors and book published since 1941 that have achieved the stature of modern classics. 39 Eve William Faulkner hailed *The Catcher in the Rye* as the "best" work of "the present generation of writing," because it "expresses so completely" what Faulkner himself tried to say and because Holden exemplifies the tragedy of youth in that, "when he attempted to enter the human race, there was no human race there." (French,1963,p.31)

The plot of the novel is simple. It tells about the three-days journey of Holden in New York after his expulsion from school at Premsy Prep. It was narrated from the first-person narrator describing Holden's attitudes towards everybody and everything. He was telling about each character or thing separately. This narration is reflection of Holden's state of mind and how does he perceive reality . It ends with Holden sitting in the rain watching his beloved sister, Phoebe, ride a carrousel. Its language is simple, more accurately, it is colloquial. Many themes have been found in the text and they will be analyzed in the current chapter.

3.3 Existential themes in *The Catcher*

As soon as it was published, *The Catcher* receives both praise and criticism. A part from that it was excluded from the academic reading list in a period in America; many critics took the novel more seriously. Ones severely criticized it as being too immoral as portraying a child drinking and smoking while others praised it for being more direct to depict American individuals in the post-war era.

Through the narration, we notice that Holden sees the world as threatening place were death is everywhere. Holden observes, all over the novel, the superficiality of humans' values so that he remained condemning most of them as phonies. Only two scholars connected the novel with Existentialism: While Elizabeth Kurian and Willam Wiegand. Both of them noted the influenced of Kierkegaard on Salinger's thinking. This chapter will prove that *The Catcher* deals with Existentialism through detecting the existential themes namely death alienation,

and authenticity which can characterize Holden Caulfield as an existentialist hero, then we will see the novel as whole as an existential literary work.

3.3.1 Death

Death as has been mentioned earlier is one of the essential themes and preoccupation of Existentialism. In our corpus, the theme of death is presented through Holden's thoughts about it. David Burrows (1974) observes that the work profoundly deals with death:

The profoundest level of the book's power lies [. . .] at the level where we sense that there is little of significance in life except the necessity of death, and that the motivation of most religion, philosophy, and art – literature especially – in some way related to man's attempt to understand the fact of death. The death by leukemia of his brother Allie, three years earlier, is Holden's obsessive concern in this book; his fear of growth and change, expressed throughout the novel, is the result of his realization that **one grows towards death**, and that death is the ultimate change. (p.107)

The idea of death is mentioned in the novel more than twenty times. The theme of death is consistently presented in the corpus. Holden does not only think about the death of his brother but as well any situation that may end up with death such as illness. Also, he imagines his own disappearing and death. Holden extensively thinking in his brother's Allie's death :

*He's **dead** now. He got leukaemia and **died** when we were up in Maine, on July 18, 1946. You'd have liked him. He was two years younger than I was, but he was about fifty times as intelligent. He was terrifically intelligent. His teachers were always writing letters to my mother, telling her what a pleasure it was having a boy like Allie in their class. And they weren't just shooting the crap. They really meant it. But it wasn't just that he was the most intelligent member in the family. He was also the nicest, in lots of ways. He never got mad at anybody*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 5, p33)

Holden is still thinking about his brother's death, even after two years of Allie's funeral as Graham (2007) said " Allie's death dominates Holden's thoughts" (p.39). He tells us that the death of Allie was a result of his Leukemia. Implicitly, he is wondering why a good person

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such Allie who is intelligent, praised by his teachers, nice and never been angry at anyone would die. Clearly Holden knows that everybody is going to die whether they were good persons or not.

The theme of death is presented differently in the novel ; it takes the form of disappearing, aging and illness .Holden keeps thinking about the idea of death even in his daily life activities such as when he crosses the road:

*as soon as I got my breath back I ran across Route 204. It was icy as hell and I damn near fell down. I don't even know what I was running for--I guess I just felt like it. After I got across the road, I felt like I was sort of **disappearing**. It was that kind of a crazy afternoon, terrifically cold, and no sun out or anything, and you felt like you were **disappearing** every time you crossed a road.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 1, p04)

Holden is obsessed with death to the degree that he thinks he may die whenever he gets to across the road. This matter is repeated twice in the novel. When Holden was taking a walk in New York City, out of sudden, he remembers his dead brother Allie saying that:

*Anyway, I kept walking and walking up Fifth Avenue, without any tie on or anything. Then all of a sudden, something very spooky started happening. Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again... I started sweating... --my whole shirt and underwear and everything. Then I started doing something else. Every time I'd get to the end of a block I'd make believe I was talking to my brother **Allie**. I'd say to him, "Allie, don't let **me disappear**. Allie, don't let **me disappear**. Allie, don't let **me disappear**. Please, Allie." And then when I'd reach the other side of the street without **disappearing**, I'd thank him.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher* ,CH 25, p178)

Holden in this passage is asking his dead brother to protect him from death. He thought that death is running after him. He thought that death can occur anytime even between passing from one block to another.

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Holden also thinks about death whenever he sees old guys or ill persons. He connected the death with illness as his brothers died as result of Leukemia. When he got an ex from Pency Prep his fourth school , he wants to say good bye for his history teacher Mr.Spencer .When he get to his home , he finds his teacher ill :

*The minute I went in, I was sort of sorry I'd come. He was reading the Atlantic Monthly, and there were **pills and medicine** all over the place, and everything smelled like Vicks Nose Drops. It was pretty depressing. I'm not too crazy about **sick people**, anyway. What made it even more depressing, **old** Spencer had on this very sad, ratty old bathrobe that he was probably born in or something? I don't much like to see **old** guys in their pajamas and bathrobes anyway. Their bumpy old chests are always showing. And their legs. **Old** guys' legs, at beaches and places, always look so white.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 02, p06)

Holden does not like pills and medicine, it indicates illness and illness for Holden means the threatening of death. Not only illness Holden connects it with death but also the old age of humans because when he introduces his teacher old Mr. Spencer he said:

*They were both around **seventy years old, and even more than that**. They got a bang out of things, though--in a haif-assed way, of course. I know that sounds mean to say, but I don't mean it mean. I just mean that I used to think about **old Spencer** quite a lot, and if you thought about him too much, **you wondered what the heck he was still living for. I mean he was all stooped over**, and he had very terrible posture, and in class, whenever he dropped a piece of chalk at the blackboard, some guy in the first row always had to get up and pick it up and hand it to him. That's awful, in my opinion .*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 02, p06)

Holden wonders why still an seventy-years old man alive in the time he has nothing still to do as Graham (2007)notes that " For Holden, Spencer's physical decline suggests not just **ageing** but **death** " (p.21) . Holden wonders why Mr. Spencer who had a terrible posture and can't move any more still alive in the way his innocent young brother died.

Holden during his conversation with his teacher, he thinks about what would happen to the ducks in Central Park :

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*I was sort of thinking of something else while I shot the bull. I live in New York, and I was thinking about the lagoon in Central Park, down near Central Park South. I was wondering if it would be **frozen over** when I got home, and if it was, where did the ducks go. I was wondering where the ducks went when the lagoon got **all icy** and frozen over. I wondered if some guy came in a truck and took them away to a zoo or something. Or if they just flew away.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 02, p11)

Holden in the middle of his conversation with the old Spencer, he thinks of the ducks if they would die when the water freezes over or they will go somewhere else. But he looks like he is sure that they are going to die because he wishes that some guy in a truck would come and save them. Holden does not think of the fate of ducks because he felt bored of his teacher's lecture instead he differed to this subject because he thought that he is leaving Mr.Spencer to die because the duck symbolized as Graham (2007) said " leaving and loss" (p,21).

Holden again thinks about the ducks when he was with the cap:

*The driver was sort of a wise guy. "I can't turn around here, Mac. This here's a one-way. I'll have to go all the way to Ninetieth Street now." I didn't want to start an argument. "Okay," I said. Then I thought of something, all of a sudden. "Hey, listen," I said. "You know those ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South? That little lake? By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all **frozen** over? Do you happen to know, by any chance?" I realized it was only one chance in a million.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 09, p54)

Holden believes that all what is cold causes death. He thinks that when the water is frozen the ducks would die. He again thinks about death. Holden out of sudden and in normal situation he kept thinking about death. What would even to happen to the ducks if they kept being in frozen water. He is wondering if all living beings would die after all as Graham notes" but Holden does not have the same certainty: in his experience, some living things (like Allie) are simply allowed to die. Equally, some questions (about the ducks, about death) remain unanswered" (2007, p24)

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Mr. Spencer blames Holden for not revising his history lectures and Holden turns out knowing nothing about Egyptians and only he wrote about how they are skillful in wrapping up dead bodies:

*The Egyptians are extremely interesting to us today for various reasons. Modern science would still like to know what the secret ingredients were that the Egyptians used when they wrapped up **dead** people so that their faces would not rot for innumerable centuries. This interesting riddle is still quite a challenge to modern science in the twentieth century.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 02, p10)

Even in exams, Holden thinks of death as well. He could not remember or even know anything about the Egyptians culture but of their ability to wrapping up their dead bodies so that they can remain saved from being fading away.

Still, in the novel, we can detect other occasion of death when he speaks of the death of his friend James Castle in Holden's previous school , Elkton Hills :

*There was this one boy at Elkton Hills, named James Castle, that wouldn't take back something he said about this very conceited boy, Phil Stabile. James Castle called him a very conceited guy, and one of Stabile's lousy friends went and squealed on him to Stabile. So Stabile, with about six other dirty bastards, went down to James Castle's room and went in and locked the goddam door and tried to make him take back what he said, but he wouldn't do it. So they started in on him. I won't even tell you what they did to him--it's too repulsive--but he still wouldn't take it back, old James Castle. And you should've seen him. He was a skinny little weak-looking guy, with wrists about as big as pencils. Finally, what he did, instead of taking back what he said, he **jumped out the window**. I was in the shower and all, and even I could hear him land outside. But I just thought something fell out the window, a radio or a desk or something, not a boy or anything. Then I heard everybody running through the corridor and down the stairs, so I put on my bathrobe and I ran downstairs too, and there was old James Castle laying right on the stone steps and all. He was **dead**, and his teeth, and blood, were all over the place*

(Highlighting mine, *TheCatcher*, CH 22, p153)

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Holden again cannot get rid of thinking about death. He out of sudden remembered his friend from Elkton Hills who suicides because of the problems he has. Holden sees that good people will die eventually. He recognize that death is something inevitable as Graham would argue " Allie is linked to both Castle and Christ, since he is figured as saint-like and was not saved from death" (ibid, 25) .

Like Emily Dickinson whom poem was inscribed in Allie's baseball mitt " a poem whose dominant subject was death " (James and Miler, 1965,p14),. Holden does not only thinking about other's death but also about his own :

*What I really felt like, though, was committing **suicide**. I felt like jumping out the window. I probably would've done it, too, if I'd been sure somebody'd cover me up as soon as I landed. I didn't want a bunch of stupid rubbernecks looking at me when I was all gory*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*,CH14, p94)

After Holden's under-evaluating incident with the hotel pimp and the prostitute, He thinks about his death. The tone of levity betrays just how deep the suicidal impulse is lodged to surge again on later occasions dangerously near to the surface.

The occasions of his expectation of his own death are repeatedly occurs in the novel:

*Then I read this other article about how you can tell if you have cancer or not. It said if you had any sores in your mouth that didn't heal pretty quickly, it was a sign that you probably had cancer. I'd had this sore on the inside of my lip for about two weeks. So figured I was getting cancer. That magazine was some little cheerer upper. I finally quit reading it and went outside for a walk. I figured I'd **be dead** in a couple of months because I had cancer.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*,CH 25, p176)

When Holden reads that magazine, he thinks also about death. He thought if he gets a cancer he would die soon just in matter of two months ahead. Holden does not only thought about he would die if he got a cancer, but also he imagined his own funeral :

*I thought probably I'd get pneumonia and **die**. I started picturing millions of jerks coming to my funeral and all. My grandfather from Detroit, that keeps calling out the numbers of the streets when you ride on a goddam bus with him, and my aunts--I have about fifty*

aunts--and all my lousy cousins. What a mob'd be there. They all came when Allie died, the whole goddam stupid bunch of them. I have this one stupid aunt with halitosis that kept saying how peaceful he looked lying there, D.B. told me. I wasn't there. I was still in the hospital. I had to go to the hospital and all after I hurt my hand. Anyway, I kept worrying that I was getting pneumonia, with all those hunks of ice in my hair, and that I was going to die. I felt sorry as hell for my mother and father. Especially my mother, because she still isn't over my brother Allie yet. I kept picturing her not knowing what to do with all my suits and athletic equipment and all. The only good thing, I knew she wouldn't let old Phoebe come to my goddam funeral because she was only a little kid. That was the only good part. Then I thought about the whole bunch of them sticking me in a goddam cemetery and all, with my name on this tombstone and all. Surrounded by dead guys.

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 20, p.139)

Holden imagines his own death how it is going to be. He knows that is going to die, but he does not want to be buried as all people. He feels sorry about his parents because he knows that death is fact that can occur any time.

3.3.1.1 Interpretation and discussion of the theme of death

In the so far selected quotes, we notice the intensive representation of the theme of death in all over the novel. *The Catcher* is rich of this theme which is presented through Holden's thoughts. Holden seems to be affected by his younger brother's death. He kept imagining death in his daily life situations: When he is at school, crossing the road, reading magazine, remembering his friend James' death. Even he thinks about death when he was passing his history exams, when he discusses with his teacher: Mr.Spencer about life. Holden relates all what is cold to death. He ponders about the fate of the ducks in the frozen water. Further, Holden's preoccupation with death does not only urge him to thing about the other's death but also about his own. In many occasions in the novel, he imagines his own finitude to the extent he imagines his own funeral and situations where he would die as he said " I think, even, if I ever die, and they stick me in a cemetery, and I have a tombstone and all". His thinking about death makes him as Graham observes "In a novel so concerned with death, it is interesting to see Holden use the word 'if' in relation to his own, much-anticipated death; perhaps a tragic end is not inevitable after all "(ibid,33)

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The Catcher is profoundly deal with death in the way that the protagonist Holden Caufield knows that death can occur any moment as James and Miller (1965) claims "The Catcher in the Rye may be read as a story of death" (p15). Death can be a result of illness, aging or even as fact that life is projecting towards death. People whether they are good or not will eventually die. He recognizes that death as Kierkegaard's view it is a threatening phenomenon that can occur any moment. Also, Holden knows that life is a journey towards death. Humans and non-humans will at the end die so that death of no matter what will happen now or even after years. Holden preoccupation with death make him ponders about it every moment .Expecting that his death will occur in any time which prove that Holden perceive death subjectively. The subjective perception of death implies Holden thinking about it in any moment and here lies the answer of the first sub question of this study where the subjective perception of death, as Kierkegaard and Heidegger define it, is typical with Holden perception of death and thus the first hypothesis is confirmed.

3.3.2 Alienation

The playing according to the tradition and to the social norms or any system rules is a way in which humans will be all like each other, nothing more than conformists. Being not a conformist in the mass of society was undoubtedly one of the central existential and existentialist thoughts. America seems to be the country where the individuals are free. The fact is that the individuals are free within the frame and conditions that the society put.

Holden was questioning the values of society, norms and instructions. He seems to reject all of these norms and traditions from the very beginning. Holden cannot make a relationship with society. He keeps being alone almost in all over the novel. From the very beginning he didn't like to write his story in old style:

*If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, an what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that **David Copperfield** kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all--I'm not saying that--but they're also touchy as*

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hell. Besides, I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything. .

(Highlighting mine *The Catcher, CH 01, p01*)

From the very beginning, Holden does not like to write in old style. It indicates that he hates tradition in writing. He does not want to tell everything in details, his life, his parents or even his autobiography like the way the novel of David Copperfield was written.

The sense of alienation was quiet clear from the very beginning of the text. Holden did not attend the final game of the football where all of his mates were there:

*Anyway, it was the Saturday of the football game with Saxon Hall. The game with Saxon Hall was supposed to be a very big deal around Pencey. It was the last game of the year, and you were supposed to commit suicide or something if old Pencey didn't win. I remember around three o'clock that afternoon I was standing way the hell up on top of Thomsen Hill, right next to this crazy cannon that was in the Revolutionary War and all. You could see the whole field from there, and you could see the two teams bashing each other all over the place. You couldn't see the grandstand too hot, but you could hear them all yelling, deep and terrific on the Pencey side, **because practically the whole school except me was there. .***

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher, CH 01, p02*)

Holden sense of alienation in this quote was clear in the way Holden is watching the game from the Top of Thomsen Hill. He seems to be distanced from others. He does not want to attend a traditional game which all people do because he does not feel that he belongs to these people or even to his school which he recently expelled from. His detachment from the game indicates his rejection of the environment in Pencey and his alienation from the people around him.

Holden does not have any close friends, he remains alone almost all along the novel, when he was having a walk in New York Street, he decides to call someone to get fun with him or her:

*The first thing I did when I got off at Penn Station, I went into this phone booth. I felt like giving somebody a buzz [...] but as soon as I was inside, I couldn't **think of anybody to call up.** My brother D.B.*

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was in Hollywood. My kid sister Phoebe [...] was out. Then I thought of giving Jane Gallagher's mother a buzz [...]. Then I thought of calling this girl [...] Sally Hayes. [...] I thought of calling [...] Carl Luce. [...] So I ended up not calling anybody. I came out of the booth, after about twenty minutes or so

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 09, p53)

Holden cannot connect with anybody, neither with his family nor with his friends. The sense of his alienation is clear in this quote in which he feels that he is estranged from the society he lives in as Brucoli states "Holden's inability to communicate with the adult world adds distance to his separation and emphasizes his ever-growing conviction that he does not want to join it. Loneliness is always a component of alienation, and Holden is lonely" (p.149)

Holden almost cannot connect with anybody he is alone and this feeling makes him depressed and anxious as he confesses:

*When I finally got down off the radiator and went out to the hat-check room, I was crying and all. I don't know why, but I was. I guess it was because I was feeling so damn depressed and **lonesome**. Then, when I went out to the checkroom [...] the hat-check girl was very nice. [...] I sort of tried to make a date with her. [...] She said she was old enough to be my mother and all*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH20,p138)

Holden clearly cannot make a relationship with anyone, neither with his friends nor with strangers. Holden remains alone almost in the entire novel as Blooms (2007) argues "Holden seems alienated from most of his teachers and schoolmates, much of his family, and much of society at large " (p.41).

Taking the analysis from the Kierkegaardian perspective, the protagonist of the novel is estranged from God:

*I felt like praying or something, when I was in bed, but I couldn't do it. I can't always pray when I feel like it. In the first place, I'm sort of an **atheist**.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 14,p.89)

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As we accounted in the first chapter, Kierkegaard tells that everybody who does not believe in God is estranged or alienated. In the quote above, Holden states clearly that he is an atheist so that he can be considered as a sign of his alienation as Blooms(2009) describes the people in 1950s " alienated from God" (p.46)

Holden distances himself from the society even from his family. He is distanced from them because of their behaviors:

*Among other things, you'll find that you're not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even **sickened by human behavior**. You're by no means alone on that score you'll be excited and stimulated to know. Many, many men have been just as **troubled morally and spiritually** as you are right now*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH24, p.170)

Holden asserts that the person who does not accept human's behaviors and cannot tolerate with them he will end up alienated from society. The men who are troubled morally and spiritually are those who sickened by human's behaviors that they can no longer tolerate with. Consequently the sense of alienation happens.

Further, humans behaviours is not the only cause Holden feel alienated but also he cannot find someone like his dead brother Allie and cannot love or make relationship with others:

"You can't even think of one thing."

"Yes, I can. Yes, I can."

"Well, do it, then."

"I like Allie," I said. "And I like doing what I'm doing right now. Sitting here with you, and talking, and thinking about stuff, and--"

*"Allie's **dead**--You always say that! If somebody's **dead** and everything, and in Heaven, then it isn't really--"*

*"I know he's **dead**! Don't you think I know that? I can still like him, though, can't I? Just because somebody's dead, you don't just stop*

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liking them, for God's sake-- especially if they were about a thousand times nicer than the people you know that're alive and all.

(Highlighting mine. The Catcher,CH22,p.124)

When Holden was speaking to his sister Phoebe, he cannot remember someone who likes except his dead brother Allie. He likes his dead brother because he is nicer than others even nicer than his brother D.B. He is anxious of death to the extent that he cannot love someone but his dead brother.

Also Holden does not only cannot make relationship because of his dead brother but also he generalized it to the extent that he wishes a dead author to be his friend:

*What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though. I wouldn't mind calling this Isak Dinesen up. And Ring Lardner, except that D.B. told me he's **dead***

(Highlighting mine, The Catcher ,CH 03,p16)

Again, Holden wants to belong to his society through persons like his brother Allie or like these great writers who he admired. The fact that they are both dead left Holden alienated from others. The dominant theme which recurs, in richly varied thematic contexts, is alienation. " The causes of the alienation are frequently obscure but always complex. Sometimes society seems at fault, in the horrors of racial prejudice or the horrors of war. But sometimes the fault seems to lie in a failure of personal relationships, the utmost cause of alienation is the anxiety of death" (James and Miler, 1965,p20)

3.3.2.1 Interpretation and discussion of the theme of alienation

Thiruvalluvan says that "Salinger's most ambitious presentation of aspects of contemporary alienation, and his most successful capture of an American Audience, is in his only novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. "Holden's sense of alienation from almost everyone in the novel is clearly seen in the quotes above. Holden cannot make any relationship with his friends or with society as whole. Telgen (1979) said that " the main theme that runs through this book is alienation" (p.123). Clearly Holden does not like the behaviors of the society on which he lives. The detest of their behaviors was the cause of his alienation from society. Holden was searching for a model to integrate with like his brother Allie with is in fact dead and his death make Holden anxious and alienated from others as James and Miller (1965)

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says " Holden drives him forward in his painful quest for some responsive relationship with people, in spite of the terror of the physical, another and deeper part urges his withdrawal and flight, and even the ultimate disengagement of death" (p.14). Here lies the answer the second question of our study in which Holden's preoccupation with the death of his brother makes him judging other people who he did not like their behavior and end up in distance from them. Sartre asserts the idea that anxiety of death causes alienation and lonesome and this was typical to Holden's alienation we so far analyzed. *The Catcher* ,in which " the sense of alienation experienced by sensitive individuals in the midst of an oppressive mass culture " (Tindall and Shi., p.1348) , is a representative novel of the theme of alienation.

3.3.3 Authenticity

As we have discussed in the analyzing the theme of death, we come up with the conclusion that Holden perceives death subjectively. As we have explained in the Chapter 1 the relationship between death and authenticity we said that humans should know that death is ever-present phenomenon. Also , being authentic with death means that even we brood over it or we anticipate it and both are seen with Holden and his conception of death. Holden has an authentic perception with death in which kept thinking of it and ending up perceiving that live is projected towards death and it is an inevitable phenomenon.

Gill and Sherman says that "an authentic individual constantly strives to attain self awareness and, rather than keeping to safe and customary paths inherently alien to him, chooses to realize his own true self" (p.20). Holden tries to search for his authentic self within the society he lives in . For Holden he has his own conception about life:

"What'd he say to you?"

*"Oh. . . well, about Life being a game and all. And how you should **play it according to the rules**. He was pretty nice about it. I mean he didn't hit the ceiling or anything. He just kept talking about Life being a game and all. You know.*

*"Life is a game, boy. **Life is a game that one plays according to the rules.**"*

"Yes, sir. I know it is. I know it."

Game, ... Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right--I'll admit that. But if you get on the

*other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? **Nothing**,*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 02,p08)

Holden refuses to see life as a game that he should play with it according to the rules. He has his own conception about life that it is not game and especially there are no exact rules that he should follow.

Holden knows what he want to be in future, he does not need to be educated and graduate from college he just want to be :

*Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around – nobody big, I mean – except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff – I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. **I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all.** I know it's crazy, but that's **the only thing I'd really like to be.***

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH22, p125)

Holden Knows exactly what he wants to be in future. He wants just to be a catcher in a rye in which he would save little children from falling off the cliff. This act shows his individuality and responsibility towards his being. No one at that time would think of being a catcher in the rye but Holden does to ensure his searching for what he really is.

Holden remains most of the novel alienated from society. Heidegger and Sartre maintain that remaining alienated means living inauthentically. However, experiencing inauthenticity means that someone is striving towards his authentic self. Holden remains alienated almost from anyone but his sister, nuns, and Morrow's mother :

While I was changing my shirt, I damn near gave my kid sister Phoebe a buzz, though. I certainly felt like talking to her on the phone. Somebody with sense and all. But I couldn't take a chance on giving her a buzz, because she was only a little kid and she wouldn't have been up, let alone anywhere near the phone. I thought of may be

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hanging up if my parents answered, but that wouldn't've worked, either. They'd know it was me. My mother always knows it's me. She's psychic. But I certainly wouldn't.

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*, CH 10,p60)

Holden remains alienated from others even from his family, but not with his sister Phoebe. It means that Holden is alienating himself from those who deceive him and themselves and only he wants to create a relationship with persons like Phoebe.

As we discussed the theme of alienation above, we conclude that Holden cannot match with others. In fact Holden rarely he does feel belonging when he speaks with a nun:

What didn't you like about it? Can you remember?" To tell you the truth, it was sort of embarrassing, in a way, to be talking about Romeo and Juliet with her. I mean that play gets pretty sexy in some parts, and she was a nun and all, but she asked me, so I discussed it with her for a while. "Well, I'm not too crazy about Romeo and Juliet," I said. "I mean I like them, but--I don't know. They get pretty annoying sometimes. I mean I felt much sorrier when old Mercutio got killed than when Romeo and Juliet did. The think is, I never liked Romeo too much after Mercutio gets stabbed by that other man--Juliet's cousin--what's his name?".... She certainly was nice. She reminded me a little bit of old Ernest Morrow's mother, the one I met on the train. When she smiled, mostly. "We've enjoyed talking to you so much," she said.

*I said I'd enjoyed talking to them a lot, too. **I meant it**, too. I'd have enjoyed it even more though, I think, if I hadn't been sort of afraid, the whole time I was talking to them.*

(Highlighting mine, *The Catcher*,ch15,p100)

This is the second occasion Holden likes to talk to someone one. Not just liking but he admitted that openly to the readers that he enjoys talking to them just like when he was once with Morrow's mother.

Holden was accusing what is inauthentic as a phony. He accused Pency's headmaster as a "phony slob" (*The Catcher* , CH01 ,p2-3) because of that headmaster was strives for giving the school certain high level reputation by utilizing respective, untruthful advertising:

They advertise in about a thousand magazines, always showing some hotshot guy on a horse jumping over a fence. Like as if all you ever did at Pencey was play polo all the time. I never even once saw a horse anywhere near the place.

(The Catcher, CH 01,p1- 2)

Again, when Holden eagerly wanted to say hi to his D B brother's ex-girlfriend, he ends up describing her as dishonest person: Lilian Semmons said "*How marvelous to see you*" (*The Catcher*,CH12,p.78)and directly adds "*How was your big brother?*" . Holden said "*that's all she wants to know*" (ibid). Even the guy who was with her was judge severely by Holden: "*He was one of those guys that think they're being a pansy if they don't break around forty of your fingers when they shake hands with you. God, I hate that stuff*" (ibid)

Phonies are , therefore, for Holden, people insincere and play certain rules in order to get what they want regardless his freedom. Just like Sartre's notion of the bad faith which focus on neglecting once freedom and responsibility to please others. Holden sees not pleasing people at his expense.

Holden does not want to be a phony. His desire suggests the non-conformity of him. He wants only to side by honest and morally upright people automatically means belonging to a minority and hauling oneself to the margin of society, something for which Holden is not completely ready yet. As it is, all there is for him to do is stick to his own principles and act them out to the extent of which he is capable. His integrity and loyalty to honesty go so far that he does not want to make promises which he does not know for sure he can keep:

A lot of people, especially this one psychoanalyst guy they have here, keeps asking me if I'm going to apply myself when I go back to school next September. It's such a stupid question, in my opinion. I mean how do you know what you're going to do till you do it? The answer is, you don't. I think I am, but how do I know? I swear it's a stupid question.

(The Catcher,CH26,p192)

Holden wants just to be true to himself, say what is true and promise what he can do. Holden is still all over the novel accusing people for being phonies which remain him to exist inauthentically despite the fact that he accepts some people in the society.

3.3.3.1 Holden as an existentialist

The selected quotes show that Holden's has a authentic relationship with death which causes him to be partly an authentic individual. The theme of authenticity however is seen through Holden's rejection of being a conformist and act like society. Although he could not be totally an outsider but he strives many times for being so. Holden's has a clear goal to reach out which stresses his responsibility and he does not deceive himself to accept the rules of society which place him out of having bad faith conception of life. Holden admits that he is an atheist who confirms the notion of Kierkegaard's alienation but he turns out to be integrated with the nuns. In despite of his alienation from others, Kierkegaard's, Heidegger's and Sartre's conception of death, alienation and authenticity was well presented and well documented in the novel. These three themes were detected in the novel through Holden's thoughts and behaviors which place him as an existentialist hero. Here the first question is answered and the first hypothesis is confirmed.

3.3.4 Myth

As has been mentioned in the second chapter , three characteristic features of existential literature, according to Barnes (1961), are the use of myth, the expression of human freedom in specific situations, and a sense of social responsibility. All these features can be found in *The Catcher* , even if they may not be evident at first sight

Myth as has been explained earlier does nor only mean the old Greek legend but it means also the contemporary legends and events. Usually myth is presented as something good, but in the sense of myth we are going to analyze is that people have a good idea about it in times it is genuinely not.

In *The Catcher*, Hollywood can be considered as myth. Hollywood at that time was seen as a happy place, the actors who perform their works there are respectable and irreplaceable. Unlike others, Holden hates that place and consider who work there as less respectable as he describes his brother D.B:

"Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute. If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me"

(The Catcher,CH01, p.2).

As we analyzed the existential themes earlier and specifically authenticity, it is not weird that Holden is not excited by Hollywood in times everybody goes crazy about it.

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However, Holden's antipathy of Hollywood cannot prevent him from being influenced by it himself, despite being aware of its negative impact:

But I'm crazy. I swear to God I am. About halfway to the bathroom, I sort of started pretending I had a bullet in my guts. [...] I'd hold on to the banister and all, with the blood trickling out of the side of my mouth a little at a time. [...] Then I'd crawl back to my room and call up Jane and have her come over and bandage up my guts. I pictured her holding a cigarette for me to smoke while I was bleeding and all. The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding.

(The Catcher, CH14, p93)

From these two quotes, we state clearly that Hollywood represents a myth in our corpus. In the analysis we overlapped with the other themes analyzed earlier. As humans' psychology cannot be broken into pieces, the overlap between the themes become inevitable.

3.3.5 Basic situations

As it has been explained earlier, the basic situation theme, proposed by Barnes (2006), is separated to limits. These limits are spacial, temporal, and social. These all are found in *The Catcher*.

As in many other works of existential literature, the limited setting of the novel provides a situation in which the protagonist is forced to confront his problems and finally draw certain conclusions or consequences.

The limits in Holden's situation are temporal as well as spatial, but even social. The time is presented within two days, from Monday to Wednesday, here the temporal limits is explained. Concerning the special limits, the most of the actions occur in Holden's home town, New York.

As Holden is a son of a lawyer and from a wealthy family, he is subject to certain expectations from his family and society. Holden cannot tell his parents easily that he wants to become a catcher in a rye because it underestimates his social status. The social force upon Holden is clear when his little sister seems to be aware of the pressure and authority emanating from their parents, because her sole reaction to Holden's confession that he was expelled from school again is: "*Daddy's going to kill you. He's going to kill you*" (*The Catcher*, CH22, p.172). After Holden's elaborate verbalization of his idea of being a "catcher

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in the rye," to which Phoebe listens attentively, she simply repeats: "*Daddy's going to kill you*" (ibid,p173).

The basic situation theme proposed by Barnes is stated above. The temporal, special and social limits are all found in *The Catcher*, thus the basic situation theme is well-documented and confirmed.

Along with the themes analyzed above, the theme of myth and basic situations is clearly presented in the novel which places it within the existential literary works. Here lies the answer of the second question and the second hypothesis is ensured.

Conclusion

In the final chapter, we concerned with the analysis of the existential themes all over the novel. The themes were analyzed with regard to the philosophy of Existentialism. The existential themes were intensive and well documented in the corpus. Through the analysis of such kind of themes we proved our hypotheses in this study.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General conclusion

As we conducted this paper, we set, accordingly, certain objectives that we are going to reach out. We aimed at analyzing Salinger's "*The Catcher*" through the eyes of Existentialism. Specifically, the existential themes of the novel are at the utmost target this paper seeks to explore. These themes are a proof to judge that the protagonist is an existentialist hero and "*The Catcher*" is an existential novel.

We expounded in our theoretical part, and in the first chapter, the existential philosophy and Existentialism. Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre are chosen for their theories about death, alienation and authenticity.

Then, in the second chapter, we gave a detailed account on the existential literature and its themes. The major themes in the literature of Existentialism are coined by different scholars whom we will use to explore the existential themes in our corpus.

As per the first question, we have come to the conclusion that Holden Caulfield is an existentialist hero through proving that he perceived death subjectively. This perception fits to the account we have set about death by Kierkegaard and Heidegger.

Successively, We analyzed the themes of alienation in our corpus intensively. After we took Sartre's conception of death and its repercussions, we have come to a conclusion that the Holden's feeling of alienation is, mostly, because of his preoccupation of death.

As a result of the account we set about authenticity in the first chapter, we end believing that Holden in different ways, and after the analysis, is going towards his authenticity by deciding that his perception of death and his alienation are signs of his search of authentic-self.

We pondered in the second question of his dissertation whether or not this novel is an existential literary work. After we relied on the account of the themes set by the scholars in the second chapter, we have found that "*The Catcher*" is an existential literary work through, in addition to death, alienation and authenticity, exploring the themes of myth and basic situations. Consequently, the hypotheses put to this paper are confirmed through the answering to the set of questions we have already asked. Through analyzing the corpus in our hand, we set the existential themes in very organized and well-documented way.

Thinking ahead about the future researchers who may use this dissertation to their studies, we want to set a piece of recommendation to them. For enhancing the idea that *The*

General conclusion

Catcher deals with Existentialism, researchers can have a look to it through the existential psychotherapy perspective.

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Glossary

Alienation " For existentialists, to be alienated is to be divorced from one's true nature as a human being. In general terms, this means lacking a clear sense of oneself as a "being of possibility," that is, a being who is essentially finite, free, and responsible. Gaining such a sense of oneself is tantamount to attaining authenticity, while remaining alienated is synonymous with existing "inauthentically," in a manner that is "not one's own." Alienation is thus a central problem of Existentialism, and it receives diverse treatment from different existentialists. Generally, the accounts of human existence proposed by existentialist philosophers can be understood as attempts to identify the deep sources of alienation and to sketch a vision of authenticity through which it is overcome." (Michelman,2008,p.31)

Anxiety: A central concept of existentialist philosophy, alternately rendered as "dread," as "anguish" (a translation of the French term *angoisse*), or left in the original German as *Angst*. The concept of anxiety receives a range of distinct treatments by different existentialists. Nonetheless, there is general agreement that anxiety is not merely a psychological state that reflects the personality of the individual but an **ontological or metaphysical phenomenon** that reveals a deep truth about the nature of human beings. The core of the idea is that anxiety is a reckoning of the self with its essential **freedom** to choose what it shall be, and in the face of its radical **responsibility** for that **choice**. The idea is expressed well by **Jean-Paul Sartre**: "In anxiety I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself" (BN, 40). (Michelman,2008,p.35)

Authenticity " The term "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) was introduced by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time*, though the idea derives from Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard was the first in the existentialist tradition to insist that authentic selfhood must be wrested away from the average anonymity of social life and from "aesthetic" diversions and distractions. Kierkegaard thus speaks of the process of "becoming a self" rather than "being a self." One becomes "singular" and "particular" (in contrast to remaining generic and universal) through deliberate ethical and religious choice and commitment. Selfhood emerges in the act of commitment and increases with the intensity or "inwardness" of that commitment. The highest level of commitment is occasioned by religious faith, for faith is intensely subjective and yet objectively uncertain; thus, the self that emerges in faith cannot fall back into complacency, nor can it attain self-satisfaction and self-certainty" (Michelman,2008,p.43)

ESSENCE (Lat. *essentia*, Gk *eidos*): The concept of essence in traditional philosophy derives in large measure from the Platonic notion of unchanging, intelligible "forms" or "ideas" that underlie and bring unity and permanence to perceptual objects. The essence of a

thing defines what the thing is, the properties it must exhibit in order to be a thing of that type. Mathematical concepts provide classical examples of essences in this sense. The essence of a triangle, “a three sided figure the sum of whose angles equals 180 degrees,” is instantiated by any perceived or constructed triangle; moreover, essences may be known intellectually, independent of empirical observation. (ibid,p.127)

Existentialism Existentialism is a philosophical approach that rejects the idea that the universe offers any clues about how humanity should live. A simplified understanding of this though t system m can be found in Jean-Paul Sartre’s often- repeated dictum, “Existence precedes essence. ” What this mean s is that the identity of any one person—their essence—cannot be found by examining what other people are like, but only in what that particular person has done . Because no one can claim that his or her actions are “caused ”by anyone else, existentialist literature focuses on freedom and responsibility.(Milne,2009 p222) b.

Death The subject of death receives scant attention in the history of philosophy. In certain respects, existentialists are the first philosophers in modern times to recognize its importance and propose a philosophical treatment. For existentialists, death is not a physical event or biological process but the awareness that one is going to die. Varying interpretations of this awareness are offered by different writers; it is generally agreed, however, that awareness of death is constitutive of **existence**, not merely a psychological state that may or may not be present, and that it is linked to an awareness of **freedom**, and thus to the exercise of **authenticity** (Michelman,2008,p.112)

Existenz (Ger. “existence”): In the philosophy of **Karl Jaspers**, Existenz refers to the spiritual dimension of a human being in contrast to sensorial and physical existence (**Dasein**) and to **consciousness** in general (Bewusstsein überhaupt), the dimension of abstract and rational **understanding**. Existenz for Jaspers is the most **authentic** dimension of the person, and as such it is not simply given but must be achieved through transformative acts of thinking, decision, and selfreflection. Through these “inward actions,” that is, through a personal struggle with the **ciphers** of the divine and with the limits of human knowledge, but also through feelings of identification with humanity and participation in the history of thought and reason, I discover that my true being emerges in relationship to nonempirical reality or **transcendence**.“Existenz is the self-being that relates to itself and thereby also to transcendence from which it knows that it has been given to itself and upon which it is grounded” (PE, 21). Jaspers emphasizes that Existenz is not intended as a precise, objective concept. Rather, the term is meant to function as a “reminder” of the potential for

spiritual self-realization present in each person, and of the transformative experience under which this self-realization takes place. (ibid,p.145)

FACTICITY (Ger. Faktizität): Technical term introduced by **Martin Heidegger** in **Being and Time** to refer to the manner in which human beings apprehend the concrete social, historical, and physical givenness of their **situation**. The term is employed by subsequent existentialists in a sense close to Heidegger's. Heidegger contrasts facticity with objective "factuality," the manner in which facts about ourselves and the world are ostensibly true independent of how we experience them. In Heidegger's account, **Dasein**'s facticity stands in tension with its essential **freedom**—its capacity to determine itself according to its own **choices** and possibilities. Facticity is, further, closely inked to what Heidegger calls "**thrownness**," the manner in which the individual is thrust into a given family, culture, nationality, and time period, which it has not chosen yet which constitute part of its being. The language of thrownness and facticity is meant to point up the way such relationships are from a human perspective never simply neutral facts but aspects of **existence** that matter deeply to us and about which we must take a stand. (ibid,p.146)

FREEDOM: For existentialists, freedom is the defining characteristic of human **existence**, and a distinctive conception of freedom stands at the heart of existentialist philosophy. In general terms, existential freedom refers to the capacity to shape one's life according to one's chosen **projects** and **commitments** rather than being determined by external factors such as heredity, society, family, or fate. Freedom is thus not limited to a specific "faculty" of the will; rather, it is a general power of **choice** and self-determination, evident in a range of behaviors and **actions**, that lends existence its human character. Existentialists tend to accept the truth of metaphysical freedom or "freedom of the will" prima facie as a given of human self-experience; they are not generally concerned with traditional arguments in favor of free will versus determinism. Their main objective is to understand why human beings tend to avoid acknowledging their freedom, and, correlatively, what it means to live in full acknowledgment that one is free. Fleeing from one's freedom rather than owning up to it is referred to as the basic strategy of inauthenticity. Facing up to and taking **responsibility** for one's freedom is the normative goal of existence. A life lived in awareness of existential freedom is an **authentic** life, one that realizes the most genuine possibilities of human existence. (ibid,p.156)

INDIVIDUALIZE: The process by which a person becomes an **authentic** self is described by existentialists as a process of becoming individualized, removed from the impersonal anonymity of **everyday existence**, where one acts and thinks in conformity with others, and is

placed before one's essential **responsibility** for oneself. For **Martin Heidegger**, individualization occurs through an awareness of one's own **death** as a "non-relational possibility" that cannot be shared with others, thus that must be confronted alone, as an individual. **Søren Kierkegaard** speaks in similar fashion of the process of "becoming an individual" as the process of assuming a truly first-person perspective. For Kierkegaard, such a perspective is not simply given but must be achieved through acts of **ethical commitment** and religious decision. (*ibid.*p.188)

RESPONSIBILITY : Existentialists generally approach responsibility as primarily a matter of responsibility for the self: In becoming aware that I am a **free** and self-determining being, I also become aware that I am fundamentally responsible for the person I have chosen to be. The insight that one is ultimately responsible for oneself is thus the core of existential responsibility. In this sense, it may be distinguished from various forms of legal and moral responsibility that may be determined externally—for example, the judgment of a police officer that I have rolled through a red light and so am legally obligated to pay a fine, or the judgment of my children that I have not spent enough time with them over the weekend and so am morally obligated to make it up to them. Existentialists portray coming to grips with responsibility as a momentous event, not an everyday occurrence; it is the **moment** in which one accepts one's life as the product of one's own **choices** and **actions** and not the result of environmental circumstances or the decisions of others. In this way, responsibility is linked to the realization that human life is without foundation, that it is "nothingness" or "pure possibility" rather than the unfolding of a predetermined content or **essence** (*ibid.*,p.285)