REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

YUZUNCU YIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

AND LITERATURE

ABSURDITY IN KURT VONNEGUT'S *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* AND *THE SIRENS OF TITAN*, AND ALBERT CAMUS' *THE STRANGER* AND *THE PLAGUE*

(M.A. Thesis)

Prepared by

Soran A. Abdulrahman

Advisor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bulent TANRITANIR

VAN – 2018

T.C.
YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Sosyal Bilimler ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

Bu çalışma, jürimiz tarafından İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı anabilim dalı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı bilim dalı'nda yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Başkan Doç.Dr. Bilent Ceco Canter İmza: .....

ÜYE (Danışman) Doçdr. Bilent Ceco Canter İmza: .....

ÜYE Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Emrullah Şeker İmza: .....

ÜYE Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Leyla Eda İmza: .....

ÜYE : ..... İmza: .....

ONAY: Yukarıdaki imzaların, adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduğunu onaylarım.

Doç.Dr.Bekir KOÇLAR
Sos.Bil.Enst.Müd.
.../.../201...
Enstitü Müdürü

ETİK BEYAN SAYFASI

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü **Tez Yazım Kurallarına uygunolarak hazırladığım bu tez çalışmasında;**

- Tez içinde sunduğum verileri, bilgileri ve dokümanları akademik ve etik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi,
- Tüm bilgi, belge, değerlendirme ve sonuçları bilimsel etik ve ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu,
- Tez çalışmasında yararlandığım eserlerin tümüne uygun atıfta bulunarak kaynak gösterdiğimi,
- Kullanılan verilerde her hangi bir değişiklik yapmadığımı,
- Bu tezde sunduğum çalışmanın özgün olduğunu

Bildirir, aksi bir durumda alehime de doğabilecek tüm hak kayıplarını kabullendiğimi beyan ederim.

Imza Soran Abdulrahman

05.10.2018

(Yüksek Lisans Tezi)

Soran Abdulrahman

VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

Ekim, 2018

KURT VONNEGUT'UN MEZBAHA NO 5, TİTAN'IN SİRENLERİ VE ALBERT CAMUS'UN YABANCI VE VEBA KITAPLARINDAKI ABSÜRD

ÖZET

İnsan depresyonu ve savaşların acımasızlığı, ikinci dünya savaşından sonra yazarlar ve eleştirmenler tarafından en çok tartışılan ve çalışılan temalardan biri haline gelen felsefi ve edebi bir hareket olarak absürtizmin yükselişinin ardındaki başlıca nedenlerdi ve tam olarak son yüzyılın ellileri ve altmışlında önce Avrupa'da daha sonra Amerika'da yayılmıştı.Bu tezin amacı, Amerikan hümanist yazar Kurt Vonnegut ve Fransız-Cezayir yazarlarının absürdizmin kurucusu olduğu düşünülen Albert Camus'un romanlarıdakı absürtu anlatmak ve açıklamaktır.Böylece, her yazarın iki romanı bu konu üzerinde incelenmiştir.Bu çalışma, absürdizme daha fazla ışık tutmak için diğer felsefi akımlarla ilişkisini ortaya koymaktadır. Romanlarında Vonnegut, insan durumunu ve kozmosu mantıksal olarak tanımlar. Kozmosun nasıl çalıştığı, insanın burada olduğu, nereye gittiği vb. Gibi felsefi soruları gündeme getiriyor. Vonnegut, kozmosta amaç, düzen ve sebep bulmaya heveslidir çünkü anlamsız bir dünyayı kabul edemez, bunun yerine, anlamsız, tahmin edilemez ve acımasızşeylerin sadece anlamsız bir şekilde gerçekleştiğini bulur. ve zalim şeyler sadece anlamsız bir şekilde gerçekleşir. Camus ise eserlerinde absürd temalar ortaya koyar ve insanın kalıtsal bir anlamı olmayan bir hayatla cezalandırıldığını iddia eder. Ona göre, bir birey için absürtle yüzleşmenin ilk adımı, gerçek durumun bilincinde olmak ve ona karşı ayaklanmaktır, ve artık kendini yalnız düşünmemeli, başkalarını da düşünmelidir. Her iki yazar da romanlarında insani durumu tanımlarlar ve içsel bir anlam veya amaç bulamazlar, ancak Vonnegut bunu açıkça Camus'un yaptığı gibi açıklamaz. Dahası, absürde karşı farklı yaklaşımları vardır, fakat her ikisi de ateist

olduklarından, dinsel cevabi doğru bir cevap olarak kabul etmezler.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Saçma, umutsuzluk, ölüm, amaç, umut, hümanizm ve yaşam.

(M.A. Thesis)

Soran Abdulrahman

VAN YUZUNCU YIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

October, 2018

ABSURDITY IN KURT VONNEGUT'S SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE AND THE SIRENS OF TITAN, AND ALBERT CAMUS' THE STRANGER AND THE PLAGUE

ABSTRACT

Human depression and the atrocities of wars were major reasons behind the rise of absurdism as a philosophical and literary movement which became one of the most discussed and studied themes among authors and critics after the Second World War, and more precisely in the fifties and sixties of the previous century in Europe and later in America. The object of the present thesis is to describe and explain absurdity in the selected novels of American humanist writer, Kurt Vonnegut and French-Algerian writer who is also considered the founder of absurdism, Albert Camus. Thus, two novels of each writer are studied in terms of absurdity. In order to cast light more on the subject, the study provides the relation between absurdism and the other philosophical movements. In his novels, Vonnegut describes human condition and the cosmologically. He raises philosophical questions like how the cosmos works, why man is here, where he goes, etc. He is eager to find purpose, order, and reason in the cosmos because he cannot accept a senseless world, but instead he finds that pointless, unpredictable, and cruel things just senselessly happen. Camus, on the other hand, raises absurd themes in his works, and claims that human being is punished with a life which has no inherited meaning. According to Camus, the first step to confront the absurd for an individual is being conscious of the real condition and then revolting against it; he should no longer think about himself only, but also of others. Both writers find no intrinsic meaning or purpose in life although Vonnegut does not describe it as explicitly as Camus does. Furthermore, they have

different approaches as for responding to the absurd, but since they are both atheists, they exclude clinging to religion as a correct response.

Key Words: Absurdity, despair, death, purpose, hope, humanism, and life.

DEDICATION

The present study is dedicated:

To my lovely parents

To all my friends who helped me

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Associate. Prof. Dr. Bülent Cercis Tanritanir who guided this study, I would like to express my gratitude for the patient, guidance, encouragement and advice he provided throughout my time as his student. I would also like to thank all friendly members and lecturers of English language and Literature Department at Van Yuzuncu Yil University, among whom Mr. Mehmet Şirin for giving me his precious time to discuss some philosophical beliefs and movements with. I would also like to thank my fellow student, Sirwan Hasan in particular. I am indebted to them for their help.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my university administration for giving me the opportunity to participate in Erasmus Exchange program from which I could obtain dozens of books and sources related to my thesis topic in Ph-Ludwigsburg University Library and Stuttgart public library. I would also like to thank the entire lecturers and friends in PH-Ludwigsburg who helped me during the course of writing my thesis especially my fellow student, Emma who proofread my paper.

Finally, I would like to express my great gratitude to my beloved parents for their prayers and endless love, and my sister and my brothers for their continuous encouragement and support without their help and support this work wouldn't have accomplished.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZET I

ABSTRACT III

DEDICATION V

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS VI

TABLE OF CONTENTS VII

INDEX OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS IX

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I: AN OVERVIEW OF ABSURDISM 4

1.1. Etymology 6

1.2. The Rise of Absurdism 7

1.3. Characteristics and Elements of Absurdism 9

CHAPTER II: ABSURDISM WITH RELATION TO OTHER LITERARY MOVEMENTS 12

2.1. Existentialism 12

2.2. Nihilism 14

2.3. Expressionism 16

2.4. Dadaism 18

2.5. Surrealism 19

CHAPTER III: ABSURDITY IN KURT VONNEGUT'S WORKS 22

3.1. Kurt Vonnegut 22

3.1.1. Vonnegut's Writing Style 23

3.1.2. Kurt Vonnegut's Contribution to Absurdism 27

3.2. Kurt Vonnegut's novels 31

3.2.1. *Slaughterhouse-Five* 34

3.2.2. *The Sirens of Titan* 41

CHAPTER IV: ABSURDITY IN ALBERT CAMUS' WORKS 49

4.1. Albert Camus 49

4.1.1. Albert Camus' Writing Style 51

4.1.2. Albert Camus' Contribution to Absurdism 53

4.2. Albert Camus' Novels 57

4.2.1. *The Stranger* 59

4.2.2. *The Plague* 67

CONCLUSION 75

WORKS CITED 80

INDEX OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

WWI	World War the First
WWII	World War the Second
POW	Prisoner of War
WFG	Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon

INTRODUCTION

Absurdity is one of the most studied themes among writers and critics after WWII, particularly during 1950s and 1960s. Some readers still think that absurdism is only associated with pessimism, and those who accept the notion of the absurd are pessimistic in life. The two terms has even been treated interchangeably sometimes which is a false assumption. So absurd literature is not always pessimistic, but it can be either pessimistic or optimistic. The essential issue is whether man or the absurd situation will come out victorious in the clash between man and his absurd situation. In terms of the individual, the issue is whether humanistic or nihilistic urges will take over or whether after denying social norms and religious comforts, man is capable of producing sufficient spiritual antibodies to resist despair. Thus the absurd literature of the two novelists discussed in this study is not completely pessimistic like the theatre of Beckett and Ionesco, but it rather shares a belief in man's ability to establish a new secular humanism in an absurd world. Additionally, the rise of this school of philosophy traces back to the period of WWII when Camus published his most renowned novel *The Stranger* in 1942, and his philosophical essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* in the same year. The latter one explains the reality of human condition and the problem of committing suicide that brought a great success to the author in terms of reputation.

Camus is considered the founder of absurdism. He is one of the most prominent writers of the twentieth century, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. There were some factors which played great roles in the emergence of absurdism as a school of thought in literature and in philosophy; it was due to the great depression in the thirties and later in the forties during WWII when there was not any progress in the society, but the situation was actually getting more barbaric and destructive. People were psychologically and economically under a brutal condition. The devastation of Europe and France was another significant reason which paved the way to some great philosophers and writers to write about this school of philosophy.

This school of thought didn't just spread in Europe, but it came through American literature as well. Absurdity as a theme is presented in many American novelists' works like Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, John Updike, Kurt

Vonnegut, Ernest Hemingway, William Styron, Saul Bellow, and Jerome David Salinger. Among the above writers, Kurt Vonnegut is one of the prominent postmodern figures in American literature. He is a humanist, pacific, and antiwar novelist. His works deal with human condition even though much of his novels are marked by fatalistic perspective. He is best known for his satirical literary style in which he uses postmodern techniques and elements of fantasy as well as science fiction in most of his novels in order to draw attention to the terrors and ironies of human civilization. His works are marked and studied in the light of absurdism by many critics. He was only known as a science fiction writer at first therefore he didn't get public notice, and was ignored by critics for a long time. He received literary criticism after he published his masterpiece novel *Slaughterhouse-five* in 1969. After critics reread his other works and started studying him, he was marked and realized as a serious writer. His works were viewed as a piece of literature which were beyond a pure science-fiction. Accordingly, his satiric style and the use of comic is only a technique to deliver his humanistic message.

The current study sheds light on absurdism in general and its position in philosophy and literature in particular. In order to clarify the term more, a comparison between absurdism and other related schools of philosophy is offered. This subject in novels is not as widely studied as in dramas. Therefore the novels of two different writers from two different cultures are studied in this thesis: American novelist, Kurt Vonnegut and French-Algerian writer, Albert Camus. For each writer, two novels are studied in terms of absurdism which are Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *The Sirens of Titan*, and Camus' *The Stranger* and *The Plague*. Apart from this introduction, this thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to an overview of absurdism which is consisted of three parts; the first part contains the etymology of the term, and in the second part a brief historical background to the rise of absurdism is given, it also demonstrates the emergence and development of absurdism from the ancient times until now. Part three explains the elements and characteristics of absurdism. Chapter two sheds light on some philosophical and literary movements related to absurdism in which five literary movements are explained with relation to absurdum. Chapter three which is the core of the study is about absurdism in Kurt Vonnegut’s works, and it consists of two sections: The first section deals with Kurt Vonnegut's biography and consists of two other sub-branches,

the first branch casts light on his writing style, and then his contribution to absurdism is explained in the next part. The second section gives a brief introduction to his novels which also consists of two sub-branches in which his novels, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *The Sirens of Titan* are described in terms of absurdity respectively. Chapter four which is also a vital part of the study is dedicated to absurdism in Albert Camus' works. In the first section, a brief biography of the author is given which consists of two sub-branches: in the first part his writing style is discussed while his contribution to absurdism is discussed in the second part. The second section of the last chapter explains two of his novels in terms of absurdity: *The Stranger* and *The plague*. The last part of this study provides a conclusion followed by the list of works cited.

CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF ABSURDISM

Absurdity or absurdism is the belief that there is no purpose in life and human beings live in a pointless and chaotic universe. In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, it is defined as “Completely ridiculous; not logical and sensible” (Hornby 5). The noun 'absurd' is defined in Merriam Webster dictionary as “the state or condition in which man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe and in which man's life has no meaning outside his own existence”, and absurdism is a philosophy which is derived from this, and it is based “on the belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless and that the search for order brings the individual into conflict with the universe” (Meriam Webster).

In literature, the term refers to some works in prose fiction which entirely agree on the notion that mankind’s condition is basically absurd. It is used to refer to the meaninglessness and absurdity of life in drama as well, as Esslin used the term to allude to those playwrights who wrote from 1950s to 1960s. In such works the term carries a pessimistic view of life and characters are often pessimistic in the play, people find themselves bored, alone, worried, remote and without any hope because the idea controls the structure in such plays. Absurdism takes place when human beings endeavor to reach an understanding or meaning in cosmos, but consequently results in failure which means all his attempts are absurd. Here, the word absurd is not meant impossible by reason but rather impossible within human ability. As Camus defines the term “Man's futile search for meaning in meaningless universe”, Harris also in describing human condition states that “we are trapped in a meaningless universe and that neither God nor man, theology nor philosophy, can make sense of the human condition” (Haris 17). Ionesco defines the term in an essay about Frank Kafka, “Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose [. . .] Cut off from his religion, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless” (qtd, in Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* 23).

Nagel has a different opinion and claims that the problem of absurdity is not only due to the collision of our demand from the universe and the inability of universe

to fulfill our demands, but it rather arises from the collisions within human beings themselves as he says:

> Camus maintains in The Myth of Sisyphus that the absurd arises because the world fails to meet our demands for meaning. This suggests that the world might satisfy those demands if it were different. But now we can see that this is not the case. There does not appear to be any conceivable world (containing us) about which unsettle able doubts could not arise. Consequently the absurdity of our situation derives not from a collision between our expectations and the world, but from a collision within ourselves. (Nagel 721-722)

In relation to absurdism, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard examines a type of despair which he calls defiance. He tells how a man would tolerate his defiance and he also identifies three ways to resolve the dilemma of absurdity which are rejecting suicide, having a leap of faith, and not accepting his hopeless condition, as Kierkegaard states:

> In spite of or in defiance of the whole of existence he wills to be himself with it, to take it along, almost defying his torment. For to hope in the possibility of help, not to speak of help by virtue of the absurd, that for God all things are possible – no, that he will not do. And as for seeking help from any other – no, that he will not do for all the world; rather than seek help he would prefer to be himself – with all the tortures of hell, if so it must be. (qtd. in Francis 16)

Yeganer, on the other hand, states that the absurd playwrights are anti-Cartesian which means that they are against the idea which defines the world as coherent. They cancel the structure of consciousness, logic, and language through defamiliarisation and depersonalisation (Yeganeh 596-597). In terms of drama, he mentions that absurdist writers have brought changes into four dramatic elements: The first change is that characters can change gender, personality, and status. Secondly, the plot frequently circular which means it doesn't move forward. The third one is language which is usually downgraded, full of clichés, puns, repetitions, and non sequitur. The last change is that objects can abound to the point of pushing out the characters, or they are reduced to a bare minimum. These modified constituents highlight the themes of void and nothingness (596).

1.1. Etymology

Absurdismis a philosophy which holds that the universe is irrational and chaotic i.e. it is the study of the absurd, and the term absurdity is called to anything which is absurd. The term absurd comes from Middle French absurde which came from Old French absorde that which borrowed from the Latin word absurdus. In Latin, the term meant "'contrary to reason or inharmonious', an intense of *surdus*, 'irrational or death' (hence death to reason). The contemporary common use of absurd still corresponds closely to his original sense and the term is ordinarily employed to identify and describe illogicality or incongruity in everyday life" (Gavins 1).The word absurdus consists of two parts; the prefix ab which means off and away from, and surdus that means dull and deaf. Roth explains the term as the follow,

> The Absurd, then (and we hear much of it in recent French writing), is the latest shape assumed by the ancient Vanitas Vanitatum; and it is perhaps characteristic of the peculiar quality attributed traditionally to the French genius that the new name would seem to derive from the vocabulary of logic. But to say that the world is "absurd" does not mean that an argument about the world leads to a contradiction and is therefore false. It means that the world as such is recognized by us as offering no ground for any argument at all. (Roth 294)

Later in 1961, Martin Esslin coined the term of "Theatre of the Absurd" in his book by the same title. In the book, he explains the plays of Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter in the light of the Absurd. Although he used the term for dramas, but its influence on absurdism in literature shouldn't be overlooked. He explains the terms in the introduction of his later book, Absurd drama as the following,

> The Theatre of the Absurd attacks the comfortable certainties of religious or political orthodoxy. It aims to shock its audience out of complacency, to bring it face to face with the harsh facts of the human situation as these writers see it. But the challenge behind this message is anything but one of despair. It is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is, in all its mystery and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly; precisely *because* there are no easy solutions to the mysteries of existence, because ultimately man is alone in a meaningless world. (Esslin, Absurd Drama 23)

1.2. The Rise of Absurdism

Absurdism started to be studied as a literary movement after WWII, especially after Albert Camus' famous book *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Absurdism as a literary movement is not linked to the Greeks directly, but the its features can be found in the plays of some ancient Greek playwrights as Bennet says, "we can look back and retrace lines of literary influence that appear to have made its way into absurd's literary expression in the twentieth century" (Bennett 11). For instance, Aristophanes (444 BC-385 BC) used the elements of absurdism in his comedies. Moreover, elements of absurdism can be found in tragedian playwrights like Aeschylus (525 BC-456 BC) and Sophocles (496 BC-406 BC) as Kott explains the sense of absurd in ancient and modern plays,

> In the entire history of drama there are only two works in which the hero cannot leave his plays and must remain motionless from the beginning to the end of the play. The first is *Prometheus Bound*. In the second, Beckett's *Happy Days*, the heroine Winnie is buried up to her waist in a mound of earth; later she sinks to her neck… Winnie goes on laughing. She laughs like Camus‟ Sisyphus when the rock at the top of the mountain slips from his hands and falls into the abyss. Winnie in Beckett's *Happy Days* is happy to the very end. (qtd. in Akim 52)

In order to shed light on the origin of absurdism, a history of 'tragicomedy' should be given. Samuel Bucket's *Waiting for Godot* is considered as the most famous assigned 'tragicomedy' in history. Tragicomedy is a literary genre which contains both elements of tragedy and comedy. The term came to existence in one of the plays of Roman playwright Plautus entitled Amphitryon, he refers to the play as a tragicomedia in the prologue. Bennett claims that "It is very likely that Aristotle, in his Poetics, was describing the same phenomenon when he described Greek tragedies with dual endings" (11).

A pivotal debate took place over "tragicomic pastoral" in the Italian Renaissance which then became the turning point against the traditionalists. It became the point of disagreement for those playwrights who had departed from the rules formulated by Aristotle. Some dramatists like Giovanni Battista Giraldi (1504-1573) and Sperone Speroni (1500-1588) challenged the traditional authority with their plays, and Italian scholar Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484 -1558) challenged the ancient authority with his criticism. Before this point, most of dramatists used to follow either

the Greek or Roman authority i.e. Aristotle or Horace rules of drama. Bennet points out that, “The "mixed" elements of tragedy and comedy . . . split the theatre world into a quarrel between the Ancients or traditionalists and the Moderns or modernists. Simply stated, the Traditionalists thought that drama should not have its own independence from the ancients” (11-12). Tragicomedy became a literary genre in the renaissance, Shakespeare's *the Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest* are some examples of this genre. Furthermore, the elements of absurdism are also found in his other works. For instance in *King Lear*, he depicts human condition as arbitrary, hollow and fickle. Romantic writers of the ninetieth century supported Shakespeare's use of tragicomedy claiming that he reflected nature in his plays. So he was seen as a model for their plays, and the influence is reflected in the works of George Büchner, Victor Hugo, and Christian Dietrich Grabbe. Thegenre underwent with realism movement too, some examples are Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts* and *The Wild Duck*, and Anton Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard.* The genre is sometimes called Absurd drama in Modernism movement, in which claimed laughter is the only solution and reply which is left to human beings while facing the tragic pointlessness and chaos of existence and universe. Some of notable examples of modern tragicomedy are Bucket's *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot*, and Harold Pinter’s *The Dumb-Waiter*. Besides philosophers and literary authors, absurdity has been mentioned by Christian theologians as well, for instance Tertullian (160-220 AD) a Christian theologian, claims that the surest sign of the truth of Christianity is its absurdity. He believed that an infinite deity incarnating himself and undergoing suffering for human beings is so irrational that no one invents such a story. It can be concluded that absurd as a theme and its characteristics, was mentioned in many literary and nonliterary works, and the sense of absurd goes back to long ago.

Absurdism was influenced by some literary and philosophical movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Many critics claim that it is originated from existentialism since it has its origins from the works of the existentialist Danish writer Søren Kerkegaard. It is also strongly connected to Nihilism, the two movements share many elements. Dadaism and Surrealism had great influences on absurdism as well. Eugène Ionesco in an interview in *The Paris review* forthrightly declares that the two movements greatly influenced his and Samuel Bucket's works, “None of us would have written as we do without surrealism and Dadaism. By liberating the language,

those movements paved the way for us" (qtd. in Bennett 13). So absurdism's relation with the similarities and differences with other literary and philosophical movements are explained in detail in the second chapter.

The root of the existential agony of the philosophers of the Absurd lies in the spiritual depression existing at the time in the Euro-American world, a depression brought about by the lessons of history. By the forties, Western man had come to the realization that he was not advancing in civilization, but was actually getting more and more barbaric, more and more destructive, more and more incapable of learning from history. Man became desperate and hopeless about life. The numerous European wars had not taught him the way to avoid the WWI nor had provided him with wisdom for preventing Hitler and the incalculable carnage of the WWII. The economic depressions man could not prevent further undermined his faith in himself and in addition worsened his standard of living. With his faith in himself eroded, Western man inevitably was plunged into an agonizing spiritual crisis characterized by pessimism and despair. This was the mood that gave rise to the literature of the absurd. As it is already mentioned that the foremost factors which played great roles in the emergence of absurdism as a school of thought in literature and in philosophy were the two world wars, economic depression, and traumatic experiences for the whole world, Esslin indicates that, "the decline of religious faith was masked until the end of the Second World War by the substitute religions of faith in progress, nationalism, and various totalitarian fallacies. All this was shattered by the war"(Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd 23).The notion of the Absurd became most famous in literature after Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* in 1942. As it is mentioned earlier, the theme of absurd retraces to long ago and Camus is not the first writer to talk about the theme, for example Søren Kerkegaard wrote about its notions many years before him, but Camus is considered the most proponent writer of absurdism. Some other absurd writers are: Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Edward Albee, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr Thomas Pynchon., John Barth, and Harold Pinter.

1.3. Characteristics and Elements of Absurdism

Absurdist works illustrate human existence as pointless and chaotic, and human beings are victims of an unknown power which is beyond their control. The

novels or plays which are categorized in this movement normally have a blurred plot. The plot is sometimes cyclical or there isn't any plot at all. Another feature of absurdism is the lack of unity of time and place. Setting and time are typically not very lucid i.e. characters sometimes lose themselves and don't know who they are or where they are. The language is normally illogical, clichéd, and repetitive. The absurd writers often use silence and long pauses frequently in their works, and dialogue between the characters is often redundant. Characters are usually out of harmony they ponder about the world and have unanswered philosophical questions about existence, death, and the purpose of life. Bucket's *Waiting for Godot* is a good example, the whole play is about the dialogue of two characters who are waiting for Godot to arrive although they don't have any information about who he is or when he will come, but they still believe that he will arrive. The play shows human's doubt about the existence of God as Godot never arrives in the play.

The characteristics of Absurd American novels is not quite the same as absurd plays which is known as Theatre of the Absurd, yet American absurd novels are more similar to the Theatre of Absurd which is represented mostly by the French writers like Beckets, Genet, and Ionesco than the Existential Theatre of Sartre and Camus: as Esslin points out the difference between them, he says Sartre and Camus present absurdity in a “form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning” while The Theatre of the Absurd “strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought” (Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd 24), as Harris mentions in *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd* that “the absurdist novel of the sixties in America is rarely so total in its commitment to absurdity as are the French plays nor does it completely abandon the use of 'rational devices'” (Haris 20), but these novels look for new ways to put subject matter with form together like the writers of Theatre of the Absurd. The sense of being in an absurd life is not only represented in the novel's theme, but it is also reflected by events, characters, and language as can be seen very clearly in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*.Absurd theme is embodied by a series of ridicules incidents and events, by funny, caricatured, and exaggerated characters, and by a language contains clichés, meaningless puns, and repetition of empty words and phrases.

Some genres are used in absurd fiction like satire, black humor and incongruity. As Cornwell in his book *The Absurd in Literature* states, “Satire, humour and incongruity are always potential ingredients of the absurd. The abasement of reason, particularly within a disparate setting of humility, 'glory' and 'otherness', also goes some way in the direction of absurd” (IX). Moreover, the use of burlesque and parody is another feature of Absurd fiction, and Vonnegut is one of the writers who use them to express the Absurd.

CHAPTER II

ABSURDISM WITH RELATION TO OTHER LITERARY MOVEMENTS

2.1. Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that can be defined as a set of ideas which revolve around the human existence. According to this school of philosophy, humans define their own meaning in life, and it also emphasizes on inner sides of human and human being himself. It doesn't depend on rational decisions alone, but also it looks at human being as a combination of mind, emotion, feeling, conscience and human soul; this, however, doesn't imply that existentialism denies logic and rationalism at all. In other words, this philosophical movement proposes that man is full of anxiety and despair with no meaning in life; it is just simply living until he makes a decisive choice about his own future. So man can create his own meaning by a combination of consciousness, free will, and personal responsibility. This is a way to achieve dignity as human being. Accordingly, choice is the most crucial theme in existentialist writing.

The philosophy arose in 19th century with the works of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Though he does not mention the term in his works, but he is considered the father of this school of philosophy. In his works, Kierkaard explains that human beings can be saved from discontent and troubles, and can reach freedom and spiritual serenity through God. This was the idea of most of the Christian thinkers for a long time. Kierkegaard is considered the leader in Christian Existentialism and he is the founder of Existentialist Philosophy. The Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky is also considered one of the renowned components of the movement. Dostoyevsky views human nature unpredictable and self-destructive in most of his works. The philosophy was expanded later at the beginning of the 20th century with the works of the German-speaking Bohemian Jewish author, Franz Kafka. In his works, Kafka presents isolated men confronting vast, deceptive, sinister bureaucracies, and his main themes include anxiety, guilt, and solicitude. Later writers were German philosopher Martin Heidgger and German-Swiss psychiatrist and philosopher, Karl Jaspers. This idea influenced many more philosophers in Europe consequently, namely Berdyarv, Unamuno, J. De Gautier and M, Fondame,

whose works are sorted under atheistic existentialism. The philosophical movement became prominent and reached its peak in the mid-twentieth century in Europe with the works of famous philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.

It is very important to note that Existentialism is not synonymous with Atheism. In other words, all existentialists are not atheists; some Existentialists are monotheists like Kierkegaard. Therefore, Existentialism is categorized as Atheistic Existentialism and Monotheistic Existentialism, the latter category is also known as Christian Existentialism. Atheistic Existentialism is diverged from the works of Kierkegaard and developed within the framework of Atheism visions. The most significant proponent of Atheistic Existentialism is Sartre. For him, the most significant principle of the philosophy is that existence precedes essence which quite opposes with Plato and Aristotle's view regarding essence. The two ancient Greek philosophers believed that everything has essence including us, and they claimed that our essence exists in us even before we are born, and that can be understood as; in order to be a good human, we should adhere to our essence. In other words, our essence gives us purpose because they thought that we are born to be something. This belief which is known as Essentialism was a standard view of universe until the late nineteenth century when Friedrich Nietzsche refused the idea that we are imbued with any essence or purpose.

According to Sartre an individual is a conscious living being and has free will, thus human comes to the world first and then through his consciousness, free will and his actions make his own essence. Human being has free will and is a free being i.e. he is sent to this world as a free man. For Sartre, as long as human is a free being and has a free choice, he is responsible for his actions. Thus, he must be very careful while taking action and choosing any choices. This responsibility leads to discontent because as long as an individual responsible for his destiny, he is responsible towards the destiny of the whole humanity. The second category (Monotheistic Existentialism), on the other hand, traces back to the works of Danish philosopher Kierkegaard. This movement is based on his understanding of religion and Christianity.

For better understanding of absurdism, we should distinguish absurdism from existentialism. The two schools are close to each other therefore they sometimes may

lead confusion to distinguish one from the other. It is believed that absurdism came out of existentialism and many scholars consider it a component of existentialism. They both diverged from the human anguish and confusion. For Atheistic Existentialists, there isn't any inherit meaning, and inherit meaning doesn't exist for Monotheistic Existentialists, unless the individual comes to knowledge of God i.e. inherit meaning is found with a leap faith of God, while on the one hand many absurdists claim that life is meaningless and they deny inherit meaning. On the other hand, some absurdists don't totally deny inherit meaning, but they claim that life might have meaning and it can never be known or discovered. They altogether agree that it is definite that human can never know inherit meaning even if there is, so inherit meaning can never be found for absurdists. Another difference is the pursuit of meaning; the aim of Existentialism is to look for meaning, while the absurd occurs when an individual looks for meaning and order in the cosmos. Moreover, the goal of Existentialism is creating individual's construction of meaning, and for Christian Existentialists who are known as Monotheistic Existentialists this type of meaning must be with corporate with God. For absurd, individual's construction of meaning is created when one becomes conscious of his or her absurd situation i.e. if an individual wants to survive, he must embrace the fact that life is absurd. Furthermore, accepting the absurd helps human being to create one's own meaning and to cope with the problem which is life itself (Burnham).

2.2. Nihilism

Nihilism is a philosophy based on the belief which labels all values as worthless and it is associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that have no loyalties. According to nihilists, life is entirely meaningless indeed. Nihilists believe that “all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy” (Pratt).

Nihilism is mostly associated with the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). He states in his *Will to Power* that there isn't any true world therefore any belief or anything which is considered as true is essentially false. For him, there isn't any essential objective order or structure in the universe apart from

what we give to it. Ivan Turgenev, a Russian novelist, explains the term in his novel *Fathers and Sons* which was published in 1862 in which helped the growth and spread the popularity of the term: when one of the main characters is asked what does it mean to be a nihilist? He replied, “A nihilist is a man who does not bow down before any authority, who does not take any principle on faith, whatever reverence that principle may be enshrined in” (qtd. in Mack 609). Professor Donald Crosby in his book, *The Specter of the Absurd,* mentions two Nihilistic themes; the first theme is when “human reason is bankrupt and incapable of reasoning any of its own significant questions” (Crosby 3), the second nihilistic theme is the belief that Atheism and Nihilism came down to the same thing “that the only alternative to believe in God and adherence to traditional Western religious teachings in nihilistic despair” (4). Moral nihilism denies the sense of moral obligation, the objectivity of moral principles, or the moral viewpoint.

The aim of nihilism can be understood more clearly by distinguishing four types of nihilism all of which share a similar characteristic that's being a general attitude of denial and negation of meaning. The first perspective is epistemological nihilism; this type of nihilism is linked to extreme skepticism and it denies the possibility of truth and knowledge. The second one is political nihilism; this kind of nihilism recommends the devastation of all existing social, political, and religious orders as a precondition for any future improvement. Ethical or moral nihilism is the third perspective which refuses the possibility of complete ethical or moral values. Good and evil are not clear here, and values which are related are the result of social and emotional pressures. The last and most relevance to absurdismis existential nihilism which confirms that life doesn’t have any inherit meaning and value. But absurdism says life is meaningless on its own term that reality does not necessarily offer an objective meaning.

Camus was inspired by Nietzsche's works and philosophy and clearly mentions that in an interview which was published in the Nouvelles Litteraires on March 10, I951, in which he says straightforwardly: “Nietzsche is without doubt one of my spiritual parents” (qtd. in Rossi 407). Rossi also explains Camus' understanding of Nietzsche in one of the passages of Camus' books, The Stranger and *The Rebel* respectively, in which he reveals that Camus:

> Points out that Nietzsche's doctrine of total responsibility stems from his revolt and thereby offers an insight into the paradox of revolt-acceptance contained in Meursault's act. Camus tells us that according to Nietzsche the moment that man revolts and denies God and the possibility of immortal life, "he becomes responsible for everything that lives, for everything which, born of pain, is destined to suffer life." And elsewhere in *The Rebel* Camus says: "Conscience comes to light with revolt." The absolute freedom discovered in the moment of revolt is therefore inseparable from a total responsibility, and this in turn implies a general prohibition [. . .] A more profound logic then replaces the "if nothing is true, then everything is permitted" of Karamazov by a "if nothing is true then nothing is permitted." To deny that a single thing is forbidden in this world amounts to giving up what is permitted. Where no one can say what is black and what is white, the light is extinguished and liberty becomes a voluntary prison. (406-407)

Nihilism and absurdism both share the notion that the world is basically meaningless. However, for the absurd the task of figuring out the meaning of life is between that individual and the rest of the world. i.e. happiness and purpose might be found in a meaningless world, while Nihilists believe that the search for meaning is a hopeless act, while they both strongly reject the notion of having a purpose that gives someone happiness.

2.3. Expressionism

Expressionism was an artistic style in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century which advocates the primacy of subjective emotional meaning rather than objective reality. It portrays the subjective emotions aroused by objects and events within a person. Artists achieve their objectives through distortion, fantasy, and exaggeration and also via the lucid, unpleasant, violent, or dynamic application of formal elements. More explicitly, it is a distinct style or movement which refers to a several German artists and also some French, Russian, and Austrian ones. Those writers were active before and after WWI. The movement ended with Nazi's coming to power in 1933. But the roots of the German Expressionist movement traces back to the works of Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, and Belgian painter James Ensor, who developed a highly personal painting style from 1885 to 1990. These painters expressed different possibilities of color and line in order to discover dramatic themes which are full emotions, while the use of this technique was due to expressing the qualities of grotesque, fear, and horror. They also escaped from the literal depiction of nature so that they could emphasize more on

their subjective perspective or states of mind. The second wave of Expressionism started with a group of German Artists in 1905 leading by German painter and printmaker Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, who was one of the founders of the artists group Die Brücke or "The Bridge". This artistic group was the key group led to the foundation of Expressionism in the twentieth-century art. Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Fritz Bleyl were also early members of the group. These artists rebelled against Impressionism in which they aimed to refill German art with a spiritual energy which they thought it had lacked it (Britannica).

In literature Expressionism emerged as a reaction against materialism, self-righteous, satisfied bourgeois prosperity, rapid urbanization and mechanization within pre WWI in the European society. During and after WWI, it was the foremost literary movement in Germany. Yeganehin his *Literary Schools* points out that the movement "subordinates 'form' and 'technique' to the communication of instance feeling, and attempted to widen aesthetic consciousness by exploring aspects of mind not considered by Realism or Naturalism" (344). The Expressionists express the subconscious and unconscious mind, freely. They suppress the exterior forms in favor of inner reality. They rebel against common sense, authority and convention both in art and life, and reject the tradition of the well-made play and plausibility in art. Abrams states that the main precursors of Expressionism:

> were artists and writers who had in various ways departed from realistic depictions of life and the world, by incorporating in their art visionary or powerfully emotional states of mind that are expressed and transmitted by means of distorted representation of the outer world. Among these precursors in painting were Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and the Narwigian Edvard Munch. (117)

The representation of reality is distorted to communicate inner reality in Expressionism. Expressionist works are often highly subjective. The writers depend on their personal experiences and imagination to create dramatic situation which is also a feature by which absurdist writers are described.

The movement initially associated with poetry and drama. So in terms of drama, the Expressionist playwrights expressed their ideas through a new style in which the plays no longer had its former chronological, and casual relationship of the plot, so for the sake of the theme, the plot became incoherent and confusing.

Language lost its function and value more than it had in traditional drama and the imitation of life is replaced by the presentation ecstatic states of mind. Senses and characters are shown in a stylized fuzzy manner in order to create an emotional shock. They also focus more on general truths rather than specific situations. Moreover, the leading character usually expresses his anguish in long monologues phrased in an intense and elliptical language that explores his spiritual depression. The German playwright, Frank Wedekind and Swedish writer, August Strindberg are considered notable forerunner of Expressionist playwrights although Reinhard Sorge's *Der Bettler* "*The Beggar*" is the first complete Expressionist play which was written in 1912, and performed later in 1917 (Britannica). The principles of expressionism influenced the techniques and themes of some of the most important twentieth century literary works. These features are found in many absurd plays, such as Samuel Bucket's *Waiting for Godot*, Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie*, and Harold Pinter's *The Dumbwaiter*.

2.4. Dadaism

Dada or Dadaism was an artistic and literary movement of the European avant-garde in the early twentieth century during World War I. The movement emerged in Zürich after many writers, artists, and intellectuals from France and Germany moved to Switzerland because it was a neutral country, they were fed up with war and the current situation therefore they were against any other movements and all the-isms like nationalism, rationalism, materialism which they thought had contributed to a meaningless war, and they wanted to show their dissent via artistic medium. These writers stated in their forums that if the current condition and society kept going in that direction, they wouldn't be a part of it or its traditions, and since they called themselves non-artists, they decided to create non-art because they believed that art and everything in the world didn't have any meaning anymore. The meaning and origin of the term is still controversial. Scholars have different views, some claim that it means "yes-yes" in Slavonic language while some others say state that that Hugo Ball and Richard Huelsenbeck picked the world haphazardly by stabbing a knife into a French dictionary which pointed to the word 'Dada' which means hobbyhorse(Abrams 392).

The movement later spread in Paris and New York after 1920.The alleged non-artists' art had delicate obscenities and scattered humor. Dadaism had only one rule which was not following any other rules, so it could be considered as a protest movement more than a style of art. Some of the characteristics of movement were that it offended rather than to impress. It was also corrosive, confrontational and provocative. Moreover, the movement used real elements like newspapers, advertisements, and old junks in order to demonstrate the reality. One of their most outrageous works was a painting by Marcel Duchamp in which a mustache and beard were painted on a duplicate of Mona Lisa and wrote L.H.O.O.Q under the painting which means "She has a hot arse" in French. As Freud had psychoanalyzed Leonardo's art before claiming that he was homosexual, and couldn't finish his works due to the sublimation of his sexual life to art, Duchamp similarly reveals gender ambiguity at in Leonardo's arts, and by mocking Leonardo's painting Duchamp claims that Leonardo observes the male form in the female. Dadaismis ghost-like and brief, and is an obdurate and unimportant mockery of the futile conceit that claims cultural monuments stand for something ever-lasting and immortal. It doesn't only avoid common logic, but also it doesn't attempt for any internal system or order of its own. Many renowned Dadaists committed suicide, the good ones killed themselves as the ultimate expression in Dadaist performance art as the ultimate expression in movement performance of art.

The movement has a great influence on the rise of absurdism. Both movements emerged after the hopelessness of people after wars. Dadaism emerged after WWI whereas absurdism arose after World War II. Furthermore, both movements viewed life as meaningless and expressed their views by using satire and humor.

2.5. Surrealism

Surrealism was an artistic and literary movement founded by the French poet and critic Andre Breton one year after the decline of Dadaism in1924. The term was used earli**er** in 1917 by the French playwright Guillaume Apollinaire to describe his play *The Beasts of Tiresias* (1917). The movement, in many respects, was an offshoot of an earlier art movement known as Dada, which emerged during WWI. The Dadaists' motivations were profoundly political because of being disillusioned by the

massive destruction and loss of life brought about by the war. They ridicule culture, reason, technology, and even art. They believe that any faith in humanity's ability to improve itself through art and culture, especially after the unprecedented destruction of the war, is naive and unrealistic.

As a result, the Dadaists created works using accident, chance and anything that underscores the irrationality of humanity. The Surrealist program grows out of Dada, but it puts a more positive spin on Dada's essentially negative message. It tries to reveal a new reality higher than that of daily life. Dada reflects nihilistic protest against all aspects of Western culture, but Surrealism steps beyond nihilism that brings Dada to self-destruction. However, like dada, it is a reaction against destruction brought about by the rationalism that guides European culture and politics in the past and culminates in the horrors of World War I.

Surrealists attack the culture and sacred values. They create a super-reality that mixes the perception of the unconscious mind with the external realities of the outside world. Andre Breton in T*he Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) defines Surrealism as "a means of reuniting conscious and unconscious realms of experience so completely that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in an absolute reality and surrealism" (qtd. in Benjamin et al 218).

Surrealistic elements can be found in the works of Farnz Kafka, Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon, and Dylan Thomas. The Surrealists are greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud the Austrian founder of psychoanalysis. They are especially receptive to his distinction between the ego and the ID. Freud concludes that we repress our real desires into our unconscious part of our minds, and that's the reason the Surrealists argue that the subconscious is the highest plane of reality and attempts to recreate its workings dramatically. Many of their plays seem to be set in a dream-world, mixing recognizable events with fantastic events. In seeking to gain access to unconscious, the surrealists invented radical new art forms and techniques.

Surrealism ranks among the most important and influential European art movements of the first half of the twentieth century. The Surrealists seek to establish an art free of aesthetic or moral preoccupations. They often employ grotesque themes, dreams, hallucinations, and subconscious visions in their writings. A recurrent device

in their words in the placing of familiar objects in new or illogical relationships found to stress the superficiality of conventional visions of reality. In order to liberate the imagination from the prison of rationalism, the Surrealists write whatever words come to their conscious mind and regard these words as inviolable. Though Surrealism is no longer an organized movement, its ideas and thoughts survive in many forms and movements like absurdism after the WWII. To sum up, what makes Surrealism different from absurdism is that it is more about distortions of reality. It also attempts to find a new way in which reality can be changed so that it would be different from what's normally experienced. Whereas absurdism does not attempt to color the reality, but accepts it as it is.

CHAPTER III

ABSURDITY IN KURT VONNEGUT'S WORKS

3.1. Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. was born on November 11, 1922, in Indianapolis, U.S. He was renowned for his satirical literary style through which he used postmodern techniques and elements of fantasy as well as science fiction in most of his novels in order to draw attention to the terrors and ironies of human civilization. He is a humanist writer although much of his novels are marked by fatalistic perspective. Vonnegut was ignored by critics for many years and he didn't receive any literary claim until he published his famous novel *Slaughterhouse-five* in 1969. He didn't get public notice for three reasons: first, he was a contemporary writer writing about science fiction, and most of all, he was a funny writer. After publishing his masterpiece, his earlier novels began to be republished and his books were all checked out by students in the university libraries. Later critics realized that Vonnegut's works were beyond science-fiction. He is a very serious writer while the use of comic is only a technique to deliver his message.

He studied chemistry and biology at Cornell University from 1940 to 1942, and a year later he was sent to Carnegie Mellon University by the army to study engineering. During WW II, he was sent to Europe so as to take part in the Battle of the Bulge where he was captured by the Germans and interned in Dresden, a nice German city with no military presence at that time. He was held as POW there for the rest of the war. He was imprisoned in a meat cellar deep under a slaughterhouse making vitamins with other prisoners for Germans during the Allies firebombing. He witnessed the devastation of the city which affected him greatly. Its reflection can be seen obviously in his novels, and *Slaughterhouse-five* is a direct inspiration of it. After WWII, he got married with Jane Marie Cox, his high school girlfriend, with whom he had three children. Before his writing career, he had several jobs like teacher, newspaper reporter, and public relations employee for General Electric. Eventually, he died on April 11, 2007 in New York City.

Vonnegut is a rich writer who has fourteen novels, namely: *Player Piano* (1952), *The Sirens of Titan* (1959), *Mother Night* (1962), *Cat's Cradle* (1963), *God*

Bless You, Mr. Rosewater(1965), Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death (1969), which was written based on his own experience during WW II. His other novels are: *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), *Slapstick (1976), Jailbird(1979), Deadeye Dick (1982), Galápagos(1985), Bluebeard (1987),Hocus Pocus*(1990), *Timequake (1997).* Besides, he has three novellas which are: *Sun Moon Star* (1980), *God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian* (1999), and *We Are What We Pretend To Be: The First and Last Works* which he wrote during 1940s, but he didn't publish during his lifetime. The novella was published after his death in 2012. Vonnegut is a playwright as well in which he wrote seven plays. His most notable plays include *Fortitude* (1968) *Happy Birthday, Wanda June* (1970) *Between Time and Timbuktu* (1972). In addition to this, Vonnegut is the author of one hundred twenty three stories and sixteen collections.

3.1.1. Vonnegut's Writing Style

One of the notable aspects of Vonnegut's technique is that he is very concise authors whose works lack redundancy. He doesn't give much detail in introducing characters into the novel. Therefore, the reader is more interested in knowing what would happen next. He cares about readers very much as he states in his article entitles "How to Write with Style" in which he wrote for the *International Paper Company* “do so as a mark of respect for your readers, whatever you’re writing. If you scribble your thoughts any which way, your readers will surely feel that you care nothing about them. They will mark you down as an egomaniac or a chowder head--or worse, they will stop reading you”. It seems that he has a large sense of awareness towards readers as well when he states “I started out writing for a large audience. And if I did a lousy job, I caught a lot of shit in twenty-four hours”(Vonnegut, Wampeters, Foma, & Granfalloons(Opinions) 260). Vonnegut's writing style is shaped by a strong sense of audience. He knows that most of people are not good readers, and therefore he has to write short and in a simple style in order to hold their interest. “I avoid sentences where the reader could get lost . . . I have made my books easy to read, carefully punctuated, with lots of white space” (qtd. In Allen 48).

Vonnegut treats absurdity with absurdist techniques like satire and dark humor to express his message and to show all the absurdity in the world, as Todd F. Davis in

his book, *Kurt Vonnegut's Crusade; or, How a Postmodern Harlequin Preached a New Kind of Humanism*, explains Vonnegut's use of humor:

> Vonnegut uses humor to face what for many seems impossible to face: the lack of definitive control over human existence. His humor entails the absurdity of everyday events that consonantly thwart our intentions to make sense of the world, and, perhaps what makes Vonnegut the master of such humor is his ability to build absurdity upon absurdity, story upon story, toward a thunderous punch line that in the end appears to be an admonition to the reader no to journey down the dark path of absolutism but, rather, to embrace the free play of life in an attempt to help humanity. (T. Davis 56)

He also uses style such as motifs and symbolism to convey his message in most of his novels. He illustrates the atrocities of war through style in some of his novels and in *Slaughterhouse-Five* in particular. Moreover, he demonstrates his inconceivable experience in WWII in the book through motif and symbolism i.e. he uses motif and symbolism to develop the major themes of the novel like death. He shows his views through Billy Pilgrim who is affected by Tralfamadorians philosophy about death as he states in the book when he hears about the death of somebody, he "simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is 'So it goes'" (Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 27). He uses the phrase "so it goes" after every single sentence in which death is mentioned. Some examples of using the motif is when he talks about the death of his wife in the car accident, "one hour later she was dead. So it goes" (83), he uses the phrase more than one hundred times in the book, and another common example of overusing the phrase is when he mentions his father's death, he "died in a hunting accident during the war. So it goes" (24). The writer uses the phrase "so it goes" in order to hide his grief and pain which he experienced during the war and the main reason is that he cannot deal with them. Another interpretation of the phrase is claiming to have a new beginning after the death of each one of his relatives and acquaintances. Vonnegut is affected by the same mechanism that Tralafamadorians follow to hide their grief. For example, when Pilgrim asks Tralafamadorians about their reaction towards death and tragedies happen during war, they simply tell him that "there isn't anything we can do about them, so we simply don't look at them. We ignore them. We spend eternity looking at pleasant moments" (17).

Vonnegut uses symbolism in his novels in order to symbolize his speechless silence towards the devastations caused by war through a bird while he writes “everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre […] All there is to say about a massacre, things like ‘Poo-tee-weet?’” (19). Moreover, he mentions "blue and ivy" a few times which is another symbolism in the novel. The phrase symbolizes the line between life and death which means that death is always very close to us. An example is when Pilgirim is an old man in the basement in under a very cold weather, “his bare feet were blue and ivory” (28).

Another notable aspect of Vonnegut's technique is using unusual structure. The use of flashbacks and flash-forwards is prominent in his novels. For example, it is very hard to guess the beginning of *The Slaughterhouse-five'*s plot precisely. The first section of the book talks about the difficulties of writing the book while with the first paragraph of the second chapter, he starts the plot, but we don't know when the plot starts precisely. “Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963” (17).As it is mentioned in the second chapter of the book that Pilgrim has come "unstuck in time", he is once at a particular point of his life and he might find himself suddenly at another point in his life either past or future.

One chief point of Vonnegut's novels is the illusions which men embrace. Vonnegut deals with those illusions that make human existence more depressed that it should be. “The significance man attaches to such artificial distinctions as race, nationality, even national dogma, forces him to overlook the common humanity that links all men” (Haris 54).

Most of Vonnegut’s novels are about science fiction and black humor. Therefore, many critics consider him a science fiction and black humorist writer as Stanley Schatt states that Vonnegut “has been labeled at various times as a mediocre science fiction writer, a social satirist, a Black Humorist, and a major novelist”(9). In order to make sure whether he is a pure science fiction writer or not, we must go back to his essay "Science Fiction" which he wrote in 1965 in which he states “I learned, in 1952 from the reviewers of Player Piano, that I was a science fiction writer [. . .]. I have been a sore headed occupant of the file drawer labeled science fiction ever since,

and I would like out, particularly since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal" (Vonnegut, Wampeters, Foma, & Granfalloons(Opinions) 144). Michael Chrichton states that Vonnegut extricated himself from the limitations of ordinary science fiction long ago (Shaw 7), and Ernest W. Ranly states:

> Vonnegut at times adds fantasy to his stories, whereas pure sci-fi permits only what is possible within a given scientific hypothesis. Vonnegut adds humor, a wild black humor, while most sci -fi is serious to the point of boredom. Vonnegut, generally, adds a distinctive sense and literary class. And, finally, Vonnegut seems pre-occupied with genuine human questions, about war, peace, technology, human happiness. He is even bitterly anti-machine, anti-technology, anti-science. Surely, he is no longer an ordinary science fiction hack. (7-8)

The prejudice is clear in Ranly's last sentence which he confirms that Vonnegut is not a science fiction writer but an anti-science fiction one. Simpson also confirms that his works are alerts against the dangerous ideas which might arise through adding a science fiction novel:

> I claim that far from being a science fiction writer, Kurt Vonnegut is a writer whose works, when read closely, ultimately warn against the dangerous ideas that exist within science fiction. At the center of his canon resides the notion that science fiction is capable of filling humanity with false realities and empty promises for utopian societies that do not and, perhaps most important, cannot exist. I have labeled *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965), *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), and *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) as Vonnegut's Troutean trilogy. In each of these novels, the ideas found in the science fiction novels of Kilgore Trout succeed in distorting the realities of Vonnegut's protagonists. A close examination of each novel reveals that through Trout, Vonnegut realizes the dangers that lie at the heart of science fiction if it is read and interpreted as reality (262).

Moreover, Harris says that Vonnegut freed himself from being labeled as science-fiction after his first two novels, as Vonnegut explains "I thought it was narrowing my readership" (Haris 53). On the basis of the results of the mentioned critics and writers, it can be concluded that Vonnegut is not a pure science fiction writer; rather, he is considered a serious writer.

3.1.2. Kurt Vonnegut's Contribution to Absurdism

Absurdity reaches its peak at the sixties of the twentieth century in America with writings of some American novelists like Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, and so on. As Haris says “the practice of treating absurdist techniques becomes almost standard during the sixties, a period that can rightfully be called the Decade of the Absurd” (10), and Vonnegut is considered one of the most active writers who were behind the development of the absurd in novels in the sixties of the last century.

Vonnegut uses a steady pattern in portraying an absurd universe which is faced with laughter in all of his novels, as Simpson describes him as a serious writer and claims that he is “a writer setting out to discover the mysteries of the human condition. Using irony, satire, and black humor as his helmet, breastplate, and flaming sword for battling the existential malaise of the twentieth century, Vonnegut forces his readers to consider what it means to be human in a chaotic, often absurd, and irrational universe” (J. Simpson 262). In his absurdist novels, the vision of an absurd world is not only reflected in the novels’ themes alone but it is also “reflected as well by incident, characterization, and language” (Haris 21). The Absurd life is demonstrated by a series of ridiculous and ludicrous events, caricatured and exaggerated characters, and by unclear and ambiguous language. On the other hand, Shaw says “Vonnegut conveys absurdity by parody and burlesque, ridiculous events, grotesque characters, juxtaposed incongruities, non-sequiturs, various forms of verbal wit, and anything else that might serve to destroy the reader's concept of a logical, orderly world” (Shaw 4). He uses burlesque and parody as a method to reject literary affectation in order to understand and order reality. He doesn't only ridicules life but any tools which is used to inspect life. This burlesque is not confined to literature, but also to religion as in the novels *The Siren of Titan* and *Cat's Cradle*: In the first novel, Rumfoord founds a new religion, The Church of God the Utterly Indifference, and he introduces himself as the head of the religion. He tells them that he can work miracles and predicts fifty events that he claims will happen in the future. In the latter one, Bokonon creates a new religion Bokononism which depends on foma. As Vonnegut explains, the purpose of the religion is to distract the citizens of San Lorenzo from their pitiful life and man is the most sacred one in the religion not God.

Harris in his book *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd* talks about multiple realities of life and the use of parody:

> Life . . . resists any impositions of order because its realities are multiple. Any attempt to order these multiple meanings, unless done ironically, results in a falsification of reality […] in a world such as this, in which there is no reality but only realities, "what better way to present it," asks Buckeye, then [by] parody: to present a reality that is questioned by another. Parody not only ridicules the pretensions of literature (or history or philosophy or religion) to understand life but rejects as well as the view of an ordered universe reflected in the art form being parodied. (25-26)

Characters in Vonnegut's novels try to establish order and meaning in a universe which lacks them indeed. They keep asking questions like “what are people for?” In *The Sirens of Titan* the main character's father sought for a sign that helps them to answer that question but it was in vain; the same is true with the Tralfamadorian when they could not find any purpose in their universe to live; therefore, they eliminated themselves. A message can be found in Vonnegut's novels for a man in the twentieth century from which we learn how to deal with the absurdity of our universe. It entails an intricate response to an intricate universe. The response is in realizing the absurdity, viewing the world as a joke, and learning how to cope and live with it. This requires a mixture of laughter and compassion which are opposite to each other:“The laughter allows enough distance to enable us to live with the chaos around us; the compassion for our fellow beings gives a purpose to human life”(Shaw 13).

Harris points out that in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, man can possibly response to absurdity in three different ways: firstly, “Man may practice uncritical love, hoping through kindness and charity to lend some meaning to an otherwise meaningless human condition” (66-67). For example, in *Mother Night*, Howard Campbell loves his wife so much and therefore he wants to write a book about their love, and as he says the purpose of the book is "to show how a pair of lovers in a world gone mad could survive by being loyal only to [. . .] a nation of two" (Vonnegut, Mother Night 37). Nevertheless, his wife gets killed in the war and then he falls in love with his sister, but it discovers that she is a Russian spy and betrays him. Another example is Eliot Rosewater who associates with love and art, but it turns out later that his charitable activities don't t improve anything. Among all the novels of Vonnegut, only numerous characters respond to life with love and kindness in, but

they do not succeed in the end as love and kindness don't give them any meaningful change to their condition. In *The Sirens of Titan*, the author supports love in which he states that:“a purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved” (Vonnegut, The Sirens of Titan 220).

The second way is to “manufacture new illusions to supplant the old-comforting lies that will shelter him from the icy winds of an absurd universe” (Haris 67). The inability of human being in understanding this pointless and meaningless universe makes them to be in need of illusions to maintain. In *Cat's Cradle,* for example, Bokonon creates a new religion called Bokononism which depends on foma. It means a harmless untruth or a beneficial lie as Vonnegut comments on the book in the novel: “Don't be a fool! Close this book at once! It is nothing but foma!”(Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle 118). Vonnegut says Bokonon wrote the book “as a way to distract the people of San Lorenzo from their pitiful lives. What is sacred to Bokononists? Not God; just one thing: man” (94).In *Slaughterhouse-five,* Eliot Rosewater and Billy find life meaningless and they don't t enjoy life due to the terrible experiences in the war therefore they engage in science fiction in order to make a new world for themselves by foma to live by. Eliot tells a psychiatrist “I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful new lies, or people aren't going to want to go on living”(Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 100).

The third and last way that man can take to response to absurdity is simply to “accept the absurdity of his condition, neither affirming nor denying it and never asking the most meaningless of questions, why?” (Haris 67). Lies and love are both futile in responding absurdity, therefore like Camus, Vonnegut considers the last option which is resignation to absurdity. He says that man by recognizing the things that he can't change, would help him to be able to change the things he can. Harris states that "the main idea emerging from *Slaughterhouse-Five* seems to be that the proper response to life is one if resigned acceptance" (69). Billy learns from the Tralfamadorians to resign looking for answers and asking why questions. He surrenders to the inevitability of events and accepts everything as they are: “Everything is alright, and everybody has to do exactly what he does. I learnt that on Tralfamadore” (Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 189). When Billy asks about choosing him not another to abduct: "why me"(77), the Tralfamadorians tell him

about the cosmic absurdity “That's a very Earthling question to ask, Mr. Pilgrim. Why you? Why us for that matter? Why anything? Because this moment is simply is [. . .] Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of this moment. There is no why”(77). Vonnegut implies that the proper response to the universe and life is resignation, and is taking the world as it is, any endeavors to change or understand it results in failure.

Vonnegut is the delegate of a new group of writers who view absurdity as an answer to the twentieth century issues and experiences and they see it as a way to cope with it. Furthermore, Vonnegut found laughter as a painkiller for the pain men suffer from in the universe and this analgesic gives human a temporary relief. According to Vonnegut, when one achieves the absurd vision in life, he will be able to laugh instead of cry while dealing with understanding the universe. So for him, absurdity and laughter are linked to each other in way that laughter is the only necessary way to respond to absurdity. Therefore, if one observes the world as absurd, his response is to laugh at it and view it as a big joke. As far as insanity is not considered, the man's merely protection against absurdity is laughter, “Laughter puts absurdity into perspective by allowing us to accept it intellectually, rather than being overwhelmed by it emotionally or driven mad by it, trying to find meaning logically where, in fact, none exists” (Shaw 13). Vonnegut uses laughter as a remedy in *Cat's Cradle* when Bokonon explains maturity as “a bitter disappointment for which no remedy exists, unless laughter can be said to remedy anything” (Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle 134). Even if laughter does not offer the escape, it can give distance from events that challenge a rational and serious approach.

3.2. Kurt Vonnegut's novels

Vonnegut has been classified as a science fiction writer or black humorist by many critics. Critics did not take his works as serious subjects for many years. William Gary Shaw was one of the few researchers who found serious topics and themes behind his comic style. He found a consistent pattern of portraying an absurd universe in Vonnegut's works which must be faced with laughter. This depiction of absurd universe can be seen almost in all of his works. He wrote and published six novels in the 1950s and 1960s. His first two novels in 1950s are science fiction novels. *Player Piano* which was published in 1952 is a novel that depicts a fictional city called Ilium in which a computer controls the people's lives. The computer is named EPICAC ironically and humorously after a material which causes vomiting. Vonnegut in the novel foresees a near future that everything is controlled by machines. The plot of the second novel, *The Sirens of Titan*, which he published in1959 is somehow similar to the first one. The plot takes place on several planets including Earth and Mars. The inhabitants Mars who electronically controlled try to invade Earth. Rumfoord who knows about past, present, and future plots everything in order to ship a metal to a Robot, Salo, who was built millennia earlier to carry a single message to a another galaxy. Human beings who live in such a weird worlds struggle with themselves and their environments as well.*Mother Night* is published in 1962. The plot is about Campbell's memoirs starting from a prison cell in Israel in 1960s.He pretends to be Nazi and tells his memories in the war and later in New York where he claims to be hiding. The novel is about distorting truth so it is difficult to know what's true and what is not in the novel.

Cat's Cradle is considered one of his best novels. The novel was published in 1963 in which the role of technology in human society is a major theme once again. It is about a discovery of a different kind of ice which is called ice-nine. It is a destructive form of ice which is capable of solidifying all water on earth. It is a symbol of a massive destructive technology which can be developed or used purposely disregarding humanity. H published *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* in 1965. The book is about how to treat people, recognizing humanity in other people, and being kind and generous to others.

Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* brought him fame and enhanced his reputation among other literary writers. It is an antiwar book published in 1969 in which the time helped him to gain more attention because during which Vietnam War was taking place. Vonnegut was a pacific and humanistic writer and the WWII had left a great effect on him therefore it took him almost twenty-five years to write the novel. The novel is based on one of the most significant events of his life, so Vonnegut comments on the book saying that he was compelled to write it.He was POW during WW II, and witnessed the firebombing of Dresden city in Germany in an underground slaughterhouse by the Allied countries, which resulted in the destruction of the city and the death of more than one hundred thirty-five thousand people most of whom were civilians. He was one of the few who survived during the firebombing. Vonnegut in the novel criticizes the event and wants to show what American allied had done to Dresden city because the media didn't talk about the event much and it went unnoticed and the reason behind it was the city had a little military value. The novel is semi-autobiography and has many similarities with Vonnegut's real experience. For example, the protagonist of the novel, Billy Pilgrim, was also a POW and witnessed the bombing of the city in an underground meat locker in Dresden.

He wrote and published three novels in 1970s, first of which was *Breakfast of Champions* which was published in1973. Like *Slaughterhouse-Five*, there are many autobiographical tendencies in the novel, but what makes this novel different from the previous one is that Vonnegut appears in more than one character in the novel. He can be seen as Philboyd Sludge, the writer of the book. Then as a Pontiac dealer, Vonnegut ran a Saab car dealership himself once, who goes crazy after reading once of Kilgore Trout's novels. Kilgore Trout, Vonnegut's fictional character plays in his many novels. He arranges a meeting with Trout in the end of the novel where he finds out that the previously unsuccessful and poor novelist Trout becomes famous, successful and rich, who can finally stand on his own in a way that the author lets him, go forever.

Slapstick: Or, Lonesome No More was published in 1976. It is another semi-autobiographical novel in which Vonnegut says in the prologue "this is the closest I will ever come to writing an autobiography" (*Slapstick*1). The main characters of the novel, Wilbur Swain and his twin, Eliza, are born abnormal therefore they are sent to

be raised in a distant.In the novel, the world is hyperbolic distortion. The novel is full of jokes over politics and religion.He published *Jailbird*in 1979 in which he recounts the memoirs of Walter F. Starbuck, who recently released from jail after serving time for a minor role in the Watergate conspiracy. The novel is based on a true event in 1972, the story of a fictitious participant in Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal administration. Richard Nixon was the 37th president of The United States from 1969 until 1971. The scandal eventually ended with the president's resignation.

He published three more novels in 1980s. *Deadeye Dick* was published in 1982.The novel recounts the story of the main character, Rudy Waltz, also nicknamed *Deadeye Dick*, who murders a pregnant woman as a child. He later feels guilty for what he did for the rest of his life, therefore seeking forgiveness for it. He published *Galápagos*in1985.Galápagos is the name of Islands near Ecuador where the novel takes place. The plot of the novel is set one million years in a future. It is narrated by the ghost of Kilgore Trout's son, Leon Trout, who was executed while working as a shipbuilder. Later on, his ghost inhabited a cruise ship bound for Guayaquil, Ecuador, which carries tourists to the Galápagos Islands.In the late 1980s, Vonnegut published another successful novel, *Bluebeard*, in 1987.It is considered his most extensive examination of artistic attempt. Rabo Karabekian, who is the narrator, is an elderly artist of Armenian ancestry who firstly began as a copyist but later became an abstract expressionist. He is able to copy anything but the criticism which his representational painting lacks "soul", irritates him. The criticism goes on and his abstract expressionist work is condemned claiming that it is so subjectively nonrepresentational as to be nonsense.

Vonnegut published his last two novels in 1990s. *Hocus Pocus* which was published in 1990 is another Vonnegut's antiwar novel.It is set in 2001 in which Vonnegut foresees what America would soon become a decade earlier. The book is about brutality of war, freedom and humanity. The protagonist, Eugene Debs Hartke, like Vonnegut and Billy, came back in war. He is a Vietnam veteran and college professor. Vonnegut in his last novel, *Timequake*, which he published in 1997, shows the difference and not having free will. A "timequake" takes place on February 13, 2001, and as a result everyone and everything will go back to 1o years earlier to 1991. So everyone will relive their past next ten years exactly as they did before. Vonnegut

depicts a kind of life where everyone knows what is going to happen and no one will be able to do a thing about it. People will spend their time lazily, living like actors in plays who cannot do anything else except what they have told to do without having free will (Tomedi; Schatt).

3.2.1. *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Vonnegut tried to write about his dreadful experiences of Dresden city in WW II for many years and he said that he had tried five times before he could finish *The Slaughterhouse-five*. As he mentions in the book "I thought it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, [. . .] but not many words about Dresden came from my mind then--not enough of them to make a book, anyway"(Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9). The reason was not only about his shortage of memory about the firebombing, but the firebombing case was considered a top secret for many years by US government.

Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist of the novel, frequently bounces from one event to another between his childhood, his experiences during WWII, and his post war experience as an optometrist and father in Ilium. So it is difficult to sketch out a clear plot of the novel because the plot is not linear in development. The novel is full of absurd events which represent the absurdity of life: Billy is captured to another planet by Tralfamadorians from where time is not linear i.e. there isn't unity of time; past, present, and future exist at the same time. Billy's life is not stable, and has no control over where he will go next in life. During the WWII, he is kept in a slaughterhouse as a prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany, and there he witnesses the city's firebombing which culminates in the whole city's destruction, but he survives fortunately. He gets married with the daughter of a prosperous owner of the Ilium School of Optometry, and has two children. His father in law sets him up in business right after the marriage. He goes on a trip to an optometry conference when their plane crashes, and everyone dies except him, including his father in law. While hearing the news, Valencia, Billy's wife rushes to go to hospital, her car crashes on the way, and dies of carbon monoxide poisoning as a result. He later goes on a radio program to talk about Tralfamadorians and the abduction, but everyone thinks he lost his mind. Billy is assassinated while giving a public speech as he would predict before. According to

the Tralfamadorians philosophy of time, Billy is not dead, but he picked another time of his life to live in and he is back to time of WWII.

Vonnegut uses black humor technique in the novel in which “disturbing or sinister subjects like death, disease, or warfare, are treated with bitter amusement, usually in a manner calculated to offend and shock” (Baldick 36). Black humor is a humor discovered in agony, despair, or horror. It can exist as a pessimistic view of the universe. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut develops the scope of black humor by integrating irony and by using words or phrases that create a mock serious tone which frequently give way to absurdity, As Vonnegut explains that the German guards “gone to the comforts of their own homes in Dresden. They were all killed with their families”. By using this tone of irony, the gloom of death is seen less horrific than it really is. Another example is that the British officers could use objects of inhumanity like their candles and soap which made from human fat without remorse, Vonnegut masks the brutality of the horrible events by using a tone of black humor.

Wild Bob's scene is another instance of mock serious which adds to absurdity. He was the American infantry officer in the war whose entire regiment about forty-five hundred soldier, a lot of them children, got killed in the battle. He is waiting to be loaded in the boxcar to the POW camp. He believes the incoming POWs to be under his command, so he assures them “that there were dead Germans all over the battlefield who wished to God that they have never heard of the Four-fifty-first. He said that after the war he was going to have a regimental reunion in his home town, which was Cody, Wyoming. He was going to barbecue whole steers” (Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 69). The seriousness of the event soon turns to absurdity once it is realized that he is injured and is about to die. The absurd situation here is that the soldiers whom he talks to are not from his regiment, Four-fifty-first, and what makes the situation more absurd is that he believes that the Germans died and before their death, they wished to God that they had never heard of his regiment, but as the narrator explains, those soldiers who died were actually Bob's soldiers.

A chaos absurd world which surrounds Billy Pilgrim is exposed by radical juxtaposition in the book. Billy's apathetic condition is juxtaposed when he is captured by the Germans “they searched him for weapons [. . .] the most dangerous thing they found on his person was a two-inch pencil stub”(56). As we know that

pencil and war are two very contradictory things, but Vonnegut makes the two juxtaposed things equal; thus, by mentioning opposite things, the writer humorously exposes the absurdity of the war. When Billy and his friends arrive at the prison camp, English prisoners welcomed Americans who were captured before them, and the noticeable part of it was that the English prisoners, “were dressed half for battle, half for tennis or croquet” (94). Another example is that Billy gives Valencia a diamond which he found during the war, and Mr Rosewater comments on that, “That's the attractive thing about war [. . .] Absolutely everybody gets a little something” (109). Many examples of juxtaposition can be found in Kilgore Trout's *The Big Board*as well. “The flying saucer creatures who capture Trout's hero ask him about Darwin. They also ask him about golf” (199).

Vonnegut destroys rational expectation by using reversals in order to convey absurdity. Billy's mother's disease is an instance of this kind of reversal, she wasn't expected to live after she caught pneumonia, but she lived for years after that disease. Another example happens when Billy is on the train going to the meat locker “On the eighth day, the forty-year old hobo said to Billy, This ain't bad. I can be comfortable anywhere, 'On the ninth day, the hobo died. So it goes”(79). Using reversals in the novel are series of events which happen to Billy is random rather than based on a logical cause-effect order, which shows that Billy is enclosed by absurd and illogical events. Furthermore, Vonnegut gives an extended series of reversal expectations. Billy was worried at the Lion's Club conference. He was required to give a public speech there and believed that he didn't have a good speaking voice nor did he have anything to say, but once he opened his mouth, his voice was like a gorgeous instrument and everyone listened keenly, “It grew serious, told jokes again, and ended on a note of humility”(52).

There is confusion between fiction and reality in the novel, thus reader faces bewilderment and this shows the absurdity of the novel. The clash of fiction and reality is noticed in the structure of the work from the very beginning. Billy Pilgrim's fiction is based on writer's own biography but with some different views. Trout's novel, *The Big Board*, which Billy reads is another clash of fiction and reality in *Slaughterhouse-five*. The book is about a man and a woman who are abducted by extraterrestrial. They are taken to a planet called Zircon-212, and put in a zoo. This

fiction becomes reality for Billy since the plot of the novel is very close to Billy's abduction to Tralfamadore planet. He was also put in a zoo with another earthling, Montana Wildhack, who was a movie star. Some critics believe that after the plane crash, the events from the novel remain in Billy's head and this causes him to suffer concussion. The man and woman in the novel which Billy read, have a telephone and a ticker tape. They also have a million dollar to make business. What's odd in the novel is that they aren't aware of the fact that the telephone and the tickertape are fake. The writer tries to show the absurd once more by entailing that the only meaningful stuff in life turns to be meaningless and false eventually.

Vonnegut expresses absurdity in many ways in which one of the most efficient ways he uses to convey is by destruction or distortion of time. Time is considered one of the most logical concepts for human beings, but a different principle of time is presented in the book through Tralfamadorians “when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist” (31). Vonnegut also tries to show the arbitrary of time as he complains in the first chapter of the novel, “The time would not pass. Somebody was playing with the clocks, and not only with the electric clocks, but the wind-up kind, too. The second hand on my watch would twitch once, and a year would pass, and then it would twitch again [. . .] As an Earthling, I had to believe whatever clocks said-~and calendars”(25). Vonnegut shows the distortion of time by using non chronological plot. Montana Wildhack, the prisoner in Tralfamadorian planet with Billy, notices the arbitrary nature of time and comments about it, “They're playing with the clocks again,' said Montana, rising [. . .] She meant that their keepers were making the electric clocks in the dome go fast, then slow, then fast again” (197).

He doesn't only play with time in the novel, but also reverses history. When Billy is watching a movie on TV, he sees that the movie goes backwards. After seeing the movie backwards, the story goes backwards as well:

> American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from an airfield in England. Over France, a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards [. . .] When the bombers got back to their base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were

> operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders separating the dangerous contents into minerals[. . . .] The American fliers turned in their uniforms, became high school kids. And Hitler turned into a baby, Billy Pilgrim supposed. That wasn't in the movie. Billy was extrapolating. Everybody turned into a baby, and all humanity, without exception, conspired biologically to produce two perfect people named Adam and Eve, he supposed. (Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 74-75)

Vonnegut reverses chronology of the plot and history to support the theme of absurdity once more and his description absolutely contradicts with logic. The writer uses irony intentionally to reverse meaningful interpretations and conclusions.

He also uses weak and ridiculous soldiers. While the American soldiers are ridiculous and laughable, the same is true for the German soldiers. Billy was a weak boy with a goofy smile, silly fur coat and didn't even have a gun. The German soldiers who were responsible to guard the prison were no better. One carried a crane instead of a rifle, and had an artificial leg “the eight ridiculous Dresdeners ascertained that these hundred ridiculous creatures really were American fighting men fresh from the front. They smiled, and then they laughed. Their terror evaporated [. . .] Here were more crippled human beings, more fools like themselves” (145). Moreover, Billy's capture with his friends was also ridiculous. Weary was beating Billy, but the ludicrous part is Billy was making a strange sound which was more like laughter, meanwhile Germans see them and capture them. This event is tragicomic, a combination of laughter with horror, which is meant to evoke an absurd situation.

Like *The Sirens of Titan*, Chance is a main collaborator with absurdity which shows up in different events in this book as well, as O'Hare read a story about making an army of children in France and Germany in 1213, and then selling them in North Africa which were about 30,000 young children. The children were shipwrecked and nearly half of them drowned and the other half who survived in the shipwreck were sold in North Africa; “Through a misunderstanding, some children reported for duty at Genoa, where no slave ships were waiting. They were fed and sheltered and questioned kindly by good people there-then given a little money and a lot of advice and sent back home” (22). Chance decides on life, death, slavery and freedom. Chance plays a role similar to absurdity like the death of Billy's father who shot by a friend mistakenly while they were hunting together. Another instance of chance is Billy's survival, when Billy was with weary and the two scouts in the battlefield

altogether , the scouts left Billy and weary, and ran off but they got killed after a while. On another hand, Billy and Weary did everything wrong like beating Billy by Weary, but they only got arrested. He is on the plane with the groups of optometrists and the plane crashes, everybody dies including his father in law but he survives. Another instance is when American planes were firebombing Dresden, Billy was there, and it was a luck that Billy survived and others near the riverside died that day: “The planes sprayed them with machine-gun bullets, but the bullets missed. They then· saw some other people moving down by the riverside and they shot at them” (172). There are many Coincident events which reinforce chance in the novel. The guard in the meat locker resembled Billy who was tall and weak, he: “might have been a younger brother of his. They were, in fact, distant cousins” (151). Another instance of coincidence is when Billy gets on a talk show in New York “He by chance was given a room which had once been the home of George Jean Nathan” (189).

Vonnegut's use of irony in the novel has significance well. Billy is a thoroughly apathetic, rich and successful person. He doesn't have any feeling and emotion for death and the corpses around him, and everything is alright for him. But he cries when he sees the horses are mistreated in Dresden. As Vonnegut says that he didn't cry for anything else in the war before. Billy's cry for the horses is ironic here, as if the death of human being doesn't have any value, and Vonnegut criticizes the cruelty of war. Furthermore, Edgar Derby's letter to his wife is a dramatic irony. He is imagining writing a letter to his wife in which he assures his wife that nothing is going to happen in Dresden “Don't worry. It will never be bombed. It is an open city” (142-143).The irony goes on as he "was shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his” (8). This part can be considered as the climax of the book. He survives in the combat zone and then during Dresden firebombing, but gets killed for stealing a teapot. This is the most absurd event which Vonnegut creates to tell about the absurdity of war and universe.

Vonnegut uses non-human terms to describe Billy in the novel. When Billy catches on fire near the stove, one of the Englishmen shouts at him: “You're on fire, lad!' He said [. . .] 'My God-what have they done to you, lad? This isn't a man. It's a broken kite” (96). The Germans give Billy a coat and he is being fooled and humiliated by them. The English prisoners say that the coat was just an insult because

it was a women coat. The phrase 'broken kite' is not a compliment here, but it is a metaphor for a man without brain, man can't function without having brain as a broken kite can't fly. Moreover, Vonnegut uses simile and likens him to nonhuman objects many times in the book: He was a “funny-looking youth, tall and weak, and shaped like a bottle of Coca Cola” (28), he was “with a chest and shoulders like a box of kitchen matches” (36-37). The phrase ' filthy flamingo' has been used many times to describe Billy:“He looked like a filthy flamingo [. . .] The Third bullet was for the filthy flamingo” (37). The use of metaphors and similes is to reinforce the absurdity of war, and to show how impropriate and weak soldiers are involved in war as Shaw states that the events in the novel are absurd, Vonnegut is not satisfied to stop there yet, but he emphasizes the absurdity and humor which he presents through bizarre, figurative language and eccentric metaphors (Shaw 158-161). Some other figurative and ludicrous examples are: The Germans found Billy “the most screamingly funny things they had seen” (Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 90), and his coat has been made for “an impresario about as big as an organ-grinder's monkey” (90), and when Billy wants Weary and the scouts leave him alone in the battlefield, Vonnegut mentions: "the big dog barked again [. . .] that dog had a voice like a big bronze gong (51).

Vonnegut doesn't only view absurdity as the solution for understanding human condition in the twentieth century, but also he determines that it is the best way to cope with it and this sense of absurdity should be responded with laughter. For Vonnegut, laughter is temporary relief painkiller of existential grieves. As Shaw points out:

> if one can attain the absurd vision, he can laugh at rather than cry about his surroundings. And if laughter cannot provide the final escape, it can at least provide distance from events that defy a serious, rational approach […] And if, as Walpole stated, life is a comedy for those who think and a tragedy for those who feel) laughter (which is purely intellectual and totally void of feeling) transports us away from tragedy (feeling). Current novelists like Joseph Heller, Ken Kesey, Thomas Pynchon, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. attempt to convey the absurdity around them and to present it in comic form. (13)

3.2.2. *The Sirens of Titan*

The Sirens of Titan is Vonnegut's second novel after *Player piano* which he published in 1952. He published the novel in 1959. Many critics viewed it as rubbish in literary criticism because they saw it as another pure science-fiction novel, but actually it "it is a serious (although humorous) treatise on absurdity" (Shaw 36). It is satirical novel and also deals with the nature of free will. It declares that most of humanity's major moments are the side effect of an alien civilization attempting to transport a spare part to one of their space ships. The opening sentence of the novel proves that it is not a typical science-fiction novel, "Everyone now knows how to find the meaning of life within himself" (Vonnegut, The Sirens of Titan 7), but it has underneath meaning as Marvin points out that in fact taking the reader into the future is one of the characteristics of science fiction. The future is shown from a more distant point in the novel. So Vonnegut is looking back to a time that "calls the 'Nightmare Ages' when people searched for the meaning of life in outside themselves" (43-44). In that time with the end of WWII, space exploration became the last step for questing meaning in an apparently meaningless universe. As Vonnegut explains in the novel, the explorers in space found exactly what they had already found on earth, "a nightmare of meaningless without end" (7).

Vonnegut explains meaningless and absurd events in the novel. The plot of the novel starts on the earth with the protagonist of the book Malachi Constant, who is the wealthiest man on the planet. Winston Miles Rumfoord, the second protagonist, obtains the power to foresee future, read minds, and move into space and time after he passed through chrono-synclastic infundibulum with his dog kazak in his spaceship. If anyone moves into chrono-synclastic infundibulum becomes chrono-synclastic infundibulated, as a result would be able to see in all three dimensions at once i.e. he would be able to see the present, past, and future all together, Vonnegut explains this perspective of time more in his later work, *The Slaughterhouse-Five* through Tralfamadorians. Therefore Rumfoord is chrono-synclastic infundibulated and appears for one hour in every 59 days. Phrases like chrono-synclastic infundibulum indicate that Vonnegut doesn't try to write about science-fiction in a serious manner, but he rather parodies it.

As a result of this experience, Rumfoord foresees events, so at the very beginning of the novel, he tells Constant that he is going to marry Rumfoord's wife, Beatrice and with whom he will have a child on Mars. After that, he will travel from Mars to Mercury, then to Earth, and finally to Titan, Saturn's moon, but Constant doesn't believe his predictions. Although he and Beatrice try everything in order to prevent Rumfoord's predictions, but they fail. Consequently Constant loses all his wealth and soon goes bankrupt, he finds a job as an officer in the Martian, an army the aim of which is to invade Earth, but all the soldiers are controlled with antennas which are planted on their brain, so they are more like robots not real soldiers. On his way going to Mars with the Martians,Beatrice is kept in a room in the same spaceship and none of them is aware of the other's existence in the ship, and Constant rapes her in the dark one night which culminates in Beatrice's pregnancy.On Mars, she gives birth to a child, named Chrono, so Rumfoord's first prediction comes true. Constant's and others' memories are erased several times on Mars and as a result Constant executes his best friend Stony Stevenson unknowingly which cannot be interpreted as anything more than simply an absurd event.

When the army starts preparing to invade earth, Constant finds Beatrice and his son Chrono, but he gets captured and taken to a spaceship to Earth for the fighting. The spaceship goes to the caves of Mercury instead of Earth, so he misses the war because he was staged to survive. The invasion actually has been planned before so all the Martian army is slaughtered. Rumfoord reveals himself to Constant and it is realized that the invasion of Earth was a plan by Rumfoord to found and introduce a new religion, The Church of God the Utterly Indifference. Rumfoord introduces the new religion to people at the last day of the war between Earth and Mars, and he introduces himself as the head of the religion. He tells them that he can work miracles, and predicts fifty events that he claims will happen in the future. The flag of the religion is blue and gold, and some words are written in gold letters on it: "Take Care of the People, and God mighty will Take Care of Himself" (128), which indicates that Vonnegut is not praising religion here but he rather attacks it that one cannot depend on God while looking for finding meaning in the universe. He also mentions two teachings of the religion which are: "Puny man can do nothing at all to help or please God Almighty, and Luck is not the hand of God" (128), and Rumfoord uses Constant as a part of the religion. Constant then stays for three years in the caves

of Mercury until he finds out how to fly the ship back to Earth, there on Earth, he finds out that people have all believed in Rumfoord's new religion and he was expected by the crowd to return. As he lands on Erath, people greet him as the promised Space Wanderer, the messiah of the new religion. Since Rumfoord can foresee the future, he has prophesied Constant's return to Earth and told his people that when you ask him about the things happened to him, his answer would be: “I was a victim of a series of accidents, as are we all” (161), and this is exactly how he answers when he is asked, so this makes Rumfoord's religion much stronger. After that, they exile Constant, Beatrice and Chrono to Titan, the largest moon among Saturn's nine moons. The moon is only inhabited by Salo, a robot from Tralfamadore planet whose ship broke down there for two hundred thousand years, and he is waiting for the replacement part for his spaceship. Rumfoord reveals that human history has been directed by Tralfamadorians, and the purpose of human life is to helpSalo's spaceship which needs a small metal replacement part and the replacement part is in the form of Chrono's good luck piece. After realizing the truth, Salo begins loving Rumfoord more than Tralfamadaorians, and he takes Constant to Earth where he freezes to death in a bus stop.

The novel begins with describing the difference between human being searching for meaning within their own souls versus looking for answers outside earth. Marvin points out that “the narrator invites readers to adopt the point of view of an observer from the future who already knows that the meaning of life is to be found within human soul” (Marvin 51), the narrator also claims that the agents who were in charge of finding meaning in space ultimately found out what had already been found on Earth, “a nightmare of meaninglessness without end” (Vonnegut, The Sirens of Titan 7). He also rejects having a blind faith in religions. He doesn't attack one particular religion alone but all in general, as he believes that all religions are gimcrack and also states, “gimcrack religions were big business” (7).

Pointlessness of universe and life is the central them of the novel. Vonnegut creates a plot that logic and reason don't play role in explaining any events in the book, but everything rather happens by chance. So Vonnegut's use of chance and accident in the book plays an important role in expressing absurdity. Malachi Constant, the richest man on earth, inherits his fortune from his father who got his

wealth by chance that he used an infallible system for stock market, in which he took the first sentence from Bible, Book of Genesis, which says “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (53). He then rewrote the sentence in capital letters and put periods between them. After that, he searched for corporations with those initials, and bought shares with them. It ended up with a great success. Furthermore, Rumfoord's journey through a chrono-synclastic infundibulum is by chance as well which culminates in foreseeing future events.

Vonnegut responds to absurdity in different ways with different characters in the novel. In one hand, Constant who is called Unk on Mars fights against the absurdity that he faces, “Unk was at war with his environment. He had come to regard his environment as being either malevolent or cruelly mismanaged. His response was to fight it with the only weapons at hand--passive resistance and open displays of contempt” (141).On the other hand, Boaz who is a private first class and officer in the Martian army, and he is the only one who doesn't have an antenna in his head, reacts absurdity with laughter,

> It was laughter. It was Boaz's laughter. What made it so strange was that Boaz had never laughed in that particular way before - had never laughed before at the things he was laughing at now. He was laughing at the ferocious mess he was in—at the way he had pretended all his army life that he had understood everything that was going on, and that everything that was going on was just fine. He was laughing at the dumb way he had let himself be used--by God knows who for God knows what. 'Holy smokes, buddy,' he said out loud. (129-130)

Boaz and Constant both look for order and purpose in universe, but Boaz in spite of all the questions swirls in his mind about his condition and universe, responds to his absurd condition with laughter. He accepts it as a cosmic joke. Consequently, he finds contentment and peace with the harmoniums. Moreover, he devotes all his life for them and stays in the caves of Mercury for the rest of his life. According to him, staying there with the harmoniums is the only place where he can do something good without harming anyone.

Although the human history is made to repair Salo's ship, but Salo is simply another victim like Constant. He didn't know that his mission was something absurd, and he calls it “fool's errand” (219). Constant's response to absurdity changes when he learns about the secret of human history at the end of the novel: “It took us that long

to realize that a purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved" (200).He comes to understand the purpose of life which is only love, a kind of love which is without questions i.e. not only love those who love us, but rather love everyone and everything that doesn't resist to be loved. This love pushes him to insist on telling Salo leaving him in Vonnegut's city, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Vonnegut demonstrates this persistence on purpose to show Constant's humanity and love which is another essential theme of novel, as Constant explains the reason for that, Indianapolis, "is the first place in the United States of America where a white man was hanged for the murder of an Indian. The kind of people who'll hang a white man for murdering an Indian--' said Constant, 'that's the kind of people for me" (200). Todd F. Davis explains those kind of people as those "who see all of the humanity as equal, deserving compassion and consideration and love" (55). Constant's love is for humanism as he claims that native Indians are as equal as a white Americans. With the help of Salo's hypnotizing he can see his best friend Stony Stevenson whom he killed on Mars unknowingly, he believes that Stony came down from heaven in order to take him to paradise with him.

Rumfoord talks about the absurdity of universe as he explains it to Constant: "It's chaos, and no mistake, for he says, "Tralfamadore reached into the Solar System, picked me up, and used me like a handy-dandy potato peeler!" (199). All the acts of making the Martian army on Mars, slaughtering the Martians, and the new religion, The Church of God the the Universe is just being born. It's the great becoming that makes the light and the heat and the motion, and bangs you from hither to yon" (28). Rumfoord who seems like a god on earth stages everything in the beginning of the novel and he the most powerful, but it turns out later that he is just a victim of another meaningless higher power as Utterly Indifferent, which Rumfoord makes and everything else is for the sake of delivering a piece of scrap metal to Salo on Titan. So everything which has happened on Earth and other planets and the whole humanity has been directed by Tralfamadorians for only one single purpose which is repairing salo's spaceship in order that he could carry on taking a significant message from one part of the universe to the other. Vonnegut's plot is deliberate and adds to the Absurd.

Vonnegut endeavors different techniques in order to add to the Absurd. As it is mentioned before, he begins with the plot first which is very ridicules;

Rumfoordmakes an army on Mars, he then slaughters them except four people in order to announce his new religion, and exiles Constant, Beatrice, and their son Chrono to Titan to deliver a replacement part for Salo's spaceship which is revealed to be the purpose of human history, Salo receives the replacement part, and takes Constant and lets him die at a bus stop. The most absurd is that it is revealed that the message which Salo carries around the universe is only Greetings, and he yet continues caring the message, “Would you like to know what the message is that I have been carrying for almost half a million Earthling years—the message I am supposed to carry for eighteen million more years?' [. . .] 'A dot,' he said. 'A single dot,' he said. 'The meaning of a dot in Tralfamadorians' said Old Salo, 'is—'Greetings'” (210).

Vonnegut uses other effective technique to express absurdity as well. He uses verbal wits like exaggerated, mind-boggling imagery and metaphors to convey a comic response to absurdity. Charles L. Elkins in his review in *Survey of Science Fiction Literature* states that “Vonnegut’s use of irony helps the reader tolerate the painful apprehension of an absurd universe”. Vonnegut's description of Miss Wiley is an example of using this verbal wit she “was a crazy-looking little old lady with a lantern jaw. She wore a frizzy black wig that looked as though it had been nailed to a farmer's barn door for years” (85). Vonnegut's comparison of Miss Wiley's head to farmer's barn door is and exaggerated humorous metaphor. Another example is, a dog's bark is compared to a voice of “a great bronze gong” (15). Before Constant's return to Earth, Rumfoord describes him to the people “as benevolent as Marie Antoinette, as creative as a professor of cosmetology in an embalming college” (177). Thus Vonnegut uses this technique to strengthen the absurd vision of the novel.

The use of metaphoric language is sometimes parodied in the novel, according to Shaw, Vonnegut uses this technique “to keep us from taking the plot too seriously and to insure that the response to the absurdity is comic” (Shaw 45), Vonnegut parodies periodic sentence and uses an absurd language when he introduces Constant as Unk on Mars, “The third man in the second squad of the first platoon of the second company in the third battalion of the second regiment of the First Martian Assault Infantry Division was called Unk” (Vonnegut, The Sirens of Titan 70). The use of the irrelevant details and the pattern number "The third, the second, the first, the second,

the third, the second, the first" is to continue the comic tone,undercut the seriousness of the information expressed, and finally to keep the absurd vision in the novel.

Parody is one of Vonnegut's most important devices which he uses to keep the absurd vision in the novel. Vonnegut parodies Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* when he explains the history of Tralfamadorians in which he explain human searching for purpose in,

> Once upon a time on Tralfamadore there were creatures who weren't anything like machines. They weren't dependable [. . .]And those poor creatures were obsessed by the idea that everything that existed had to have a purpose, and that some purposes were higher than others.
>
> These creatures spent most of their time trying to find out what their purpose was. And every time they found out what seemed to be a purpose of themselves, the purpose seemed so low that the creatures were filled with disgust and shame.
>
> And, rather than serve such a low purpose, the creatures would make a machine to serve it. This left the creatures free to serve higher purposes. But whenever they found a higher purpose, the purpose still wasn't high enough. So the machines were made to serve higher purposes, too.
>
> And the machines did everything so expertly that they were finally given the job of finding out what the highest purpose of the creatures could be.
>
> The machines reported in all honesty that the creatures couldn't really be said to have any purpose at.
>
> The creatures thereupon began slaying each other, because they hated purposeless things above all else.
>
> And they discovered that they weren't even very good at slaying. So they turned that job over to the machines, too. And the machines finished up the job in less time than it takes to say, “Tralfamadore”. (192-193)

Vonnegut tells Tralfamadorian history through an alien machine to tell human history indirectly, thus he indicates that life is the same all over the universe, a planet which is called earth, is inhabited by strange creatures who named themselves 'humans'. Vonnegut claims that we are like the same creatures who seek for meaning in everything surround us, we hate purposelessness, we also want to find a high purpose, and we create and develop machines which can kill way better than we can do on our won. The outcome of such characteristics of creature only leads to destruction.

The Siren of Titan is about the purposelessness of universe, and Vonnegut demonstrates it directly and indirectly through some techniques which are mentioned above in the novel. He also suggests that for surviving mentally in such a chaotic condition, one should be aware of his condition and do three things: he should first recognize and then accept the inherent absurdity of universe and his life. Secondly, he should realize that this absurd condition is humorous and then take it as a cosmic joke. The finale is sympathy and compassion, he should dedicate to compassion i.e. man should love his fellow man in the face that they are both in the same situation.

Malachi's father leaves him one letter which is concerned with the guest for meaning in a meaningless world. What he tells Malachi, in part, is "what I want you to try and find out is, is there anything special going on or is it all just as crazy as it looked to me? ... I kept my eyes open for some kind of signal that would tell me what it was all about but there wasn't any signal" (64).This is a straightforward admission of absurdity. Like Beckett's two tramps in Waiting for Godot, Malachi's father waits futilely for anything meaningful. He is a parody of the traditional prophet who knows everything and passes the knowledge on to his son (Shaw 41).

CHAPTER IV

ABSURDITY IN ALBERT CAMUS' WORKS

4.1. Albert Camus

Camus was a French-Algerian journalist, novelist, playwright, and essayist. He is best known for his absurd works. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957.The great literary artist was born in a working class family in November 1913, in Mondovi, Algeria. His father died in WWI by the Germans just one year after Camus' birth. Therefore, his mother who was partially deaf had to work in other families' houses, looking after their children. Camus grew up in a bad and small apartment under a harsh condition. His harsh childhood reflects on his works to a great degree. In many of his novels, he shows his own life and childhood through his characters. Masters states that all of his characters are an extension of him and his views (12). His rejection to submit to the injustice and futility of the world is the essential theme that passes through most of his works. His works are marked as absurd. He excluded himself from existentialist writers and rejected tobe called a philosopher.

Camus was an intelligent student; he was accepted into Lycée Bugeaud secondary school in 1923, where he was high school scholarship student. He studied literature and philosophy at University of Algiers. He started playing for a prominent Algerian university team as a goalkeeper in 1928, and he left his football career unwillingly due to his health problem in 1930 when the symptoms of tuberculosis first appeared on him, and he suffered from the illness for many years.

He worked at various jobs in the early years of his life such as a meteorologist, worked in a shipping company and in an automobile-accessory. He finished his bachelor degree in1936, and presented his thesis titled "Relationship of Greek and Christian thought in Plotinus and St. Augustine" in the same year. He married at the age of twenty and got divorced one year later. He contributed in politics during his university years in which he first joined Communist Party in 1934 in response to the rise of fascism in Europe, but left soon; then, he joined the Algerian People's Party. He was unhappy about the injustice and suffering of the world, so his contribution to politics was to help improve people's life. Furthermore, he ran The Workers' Theatre

"*Théâtre de l'Équipe*" from 1935 to 1938.He completed his first book *A Happy Death* in 1937 but didn't publish it during his lifetime, which was published in 1971 posthumously. He published *Betwixt and Between* "*L'Envers et L'Endroit*" essays in 1937, which engages with man and death in terms of his unconscious universe and the defenselessness of man towards death. He worked as journalist at *Alger-Republicain* and in 1938, and his writing on the bad conditions of Muslims in Kabylie region awakened Algerian government to take action and brought him public notice. He was also against French colonization.

After he remarried in 1940 during the WWII, he was warned to leave Algeria, claiming that he had become a threat to national security due to which the *Alger-Republicain* was banned. He then moved to Paris where he joined the French Resistance to save Paris from Nazi's occupation. He acquainted with Jean-Paul Sartre and met him in Paris, they made a good friendship. He wrote his most famous work *The Stranger* "*L'Étranger*" in 1941 in Paris. Camus was one of the few Allied Journalists who condemned the use of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima by America. He later criticized Communism that this made a rift between Sartre and him. He didn't gain public fame outside of Algeria until he published *The Stranger* in 1942, which is about an alienated character from the society. He published his most remarkable work *The Myth of Sisyphus* in the same year. The treatise explains the reality of human condition and the problem of committing suicide; the book was a great success. In the book, Camus describes the futility of life, stating that there is a fundamental conflict between what we expect from the universe which is reason, meaning, and order, or reasons, and what we really find in it that chaos. After five years from publishing *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he published his second novel *The Plague* which was a reflection on the evil of Nazism. Furthermore, one of his significant philosophical works is *The Rebel*, which he published in 1951. The book is a collection of essays on the ethics of rebellion and political violence. Camus wrote some plays as well such as *Caligula* (1938), *Cross Purpose* (1944), *The State of Siege* (1948), *The Just Assassins* (1949), and *The Misunderstanding* (1958). He died in a car accident in 1960 in Paris in the age of forty six (D. Simpson).

4.1.1. Albert Camus' Writing Style

Camus' style of conveying the Absurd is different from style of Ionesco and Bucket as Martin Esslin points out that Camus presents absurdity in a form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning (Haris 20). Sartre comments on Camus' style as he points out that he uses a flat style to convey the Absurd, such flatness of the style does not emphasize anything more or less than anything else (Hinchliffe 40). Gruickshank agrees with Sartre's opinion on this. He also points out that Meursault's first person narrative contradicts the traditional first person narrator in the nineteenth century. So such narrative is usually subjective, but Meursault's first person narrative is flat and objective. Gruickshank's explanation on Camus' first person narrative usage is shown below:

> The first person narrative gives an impression of authentic directness. The severely restricted vocabulary prevents analytical directness. And by bringing authentic directness and lack of analytical power together in the same character Camus conveys a strong impression of the void felt by someone who experiences the absurd. (Hinchliffe 154)

The use of narrator is different in *The Plague*. Camus uses a fake third person narrator technique. He wants to present his story objectively through third person narrator which makes the novel more like a journalistic account of events than a usual human story. He tells the entire novel in third person narrative until the last chapter where he reveals the actual narrator who is the main character, Dr. Rieux. However the third person narrator is not a complete omniscient narrator because he narrates some events in Tarrou's chronicle account and this makes the novel more objective. Camus uses this plot device to broaden showing events outside Rieux's chronicle and which he hasn't experienced since the reader realizes the real narrator at the end. This technique also shows multiple perspectives in the novel.

Moreover, Camus' works possess psychological unity. He was not one of those writers who had vast different subjects in their works. On the contrary, his writing talent arose from his intentional narrowed subjects. He cared more about the relationship between art and those social and historical conditions in which he could find himself; he also thought about the relationship between art and anything else

which could be a sign of awareness to that new period. Therefore, he shed light on the most significant issues in his time in politics, philosophy, and religion (Bree 142-143).

Camus presents his characters as particular individuals, and then gives full names, families, friends, and a real social world with occupations in which while reading the characters, the reader visualizes a real life. He demonstrates absurdity in the lives of individuals as well as their relationships with the outside world. Furthermore, Camus does not give much information about the individuals' physical appearance, but he rather gives description about the characters' actions from which reader deduce their personal qualities (Zileli 16-18).

Thus, he reflects the absurdity of existence in the lives of particular individuals. In other words, he portrays the absurdity in the relationship between the individual and the world. One of the characteristics of his works is that he thinks of different answers and different directions. He believes that the writer should expose such answers and directions and suggest choosing one of the answers to readers so that the reader can choose his answers from one of the possibilities he gives. So he doesn't impose his ideas and thoughts on the reader. He also tries to make a balance between his thoughts and his action, keeping such a balance in his decisions in daily life. He was always logically optimistic regarding the public issues related to people. He was against old religious beliefs, but on the contrary he was always with dialogue, and he was with the open and suspicious mind concerning any issues. He uses two paradoxical words 'absurd' and 'adventure' to describe inevitable human condition (Bree 143-144).

Camus is not absent in his works, but exists in some ways in most of his works instead. For instance, there are many similarities between Meursault and Camus’ own

life in *The Stranger*. They are both French Algerian born. The district where Meursault lives in is Belcourt in the novel, which is the same place Camus lived in with her mother in 1914. All the places mentioned in the novel are real physical places like the prison located in the high lands of the city, the small garden near the court or the beach where Meyrsault murdered the man (Ree 42). The setting of *The Plague*, for example, which takes place in Oran city is a real place which Camus himself acquaints with well. There were some social factors and psychological uproar in his psyche creating the fundamental nature of his works like Mersault's physical desire for life and ignoring whosoever around him or like he attempts to reach Caligula's nihilistic view.

4.1.2. Albert Camus' Contribution to Absurdism

Camus is among one of those writers who deal with human condition, and their works deal with alienated characters and from whom the pointless strives for and against life is represented. The futile manner of life is reflected very efficiently through the way he gives roles to his characterizes. The social and political period in which Camus lived in had a great influence on his philosophy towards life, and towards understanding the universe as chaotic. Lev Braun in his book, *Witness of Decline Albert Camus: Moralist of the Absurd* points out that the period during which Camus lived had a major influence on his writings and beliefs because the intellectual and political life of France was very unstable and it was under the most problematic circumstance; during the second World War men began to lose the sense and feeling of safety, faith, and meaning in life,

> There are moments in the lives of men when politics become their fate. Such was the case in France for those who entered adult life in years preceding the Second World War. If ever a time created the impression that the universe was absurd, it was indeed the period. Events seemed beyond control. Men felt trapped, a prey to anonymous forces, unavoidably drawn into a war that nobody wanted to face, that spurred no heroic anticipations, not even an elementary feeling of national solidarity. (Braun 30)

Camus is considered as the founder of absurdism although some critics label him as existentialist but in an interview in 1951, he claims that he was neither philosopher nor an existentialist, and points out that *The Myth of Sisyphus* was intended as a rebuke to so-called existentialists (Hinchliffe 35), he also points out in the same book

that, “The great novelists are philosophical novelists” (Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays. Trans. Justin O'Brien 101). Davis talks about his philosophy of absurdism as it,

> responds to the basic question: what makes life worth living? Faced with the crimes of historical materialism, and lacking any recourse to a higher moral power, Christianity and Marxism are regarded as dangerous prophecies of a kingdom yet to come. Claiming that the ends justify the means, both ideologies sacrifice innocent lives, either in the hopes of salvation or a never-achieved classless utopia. (M. H. Davis 228)

He only gives an instance of absurd in *The Stranger*, and he then explains the philosophy of absurd thoroughly in the later work *The myth of Sisyphus* which he published after the first one in 1942. Sisyphus was the King of Ephyrain Greek mythology. He was punished by the gods for his rebellious nature by rolling a big rock up to a mountain every day, whence the rock falls back of its own weight (Camus 119). Sisyphus' punishment as Camus says is a representative of human condition. When we compare this story to our life, we can see many similarities. We roll the rock every Monday morning. When we reach the summit in Friday evening, the rock rolls back down to it position, and the weekend when we have time to relax presents the moment when we walk down the mountain in order to start rolling the rock once more in Monday morning. The last thing we can think about is Monday morning and the task of pushing the heavy rock uphill lying before us. It is certain that we won't find any escape from it and we only have two choices: either to continue to be a slave to our rock or to struggle from a different perspective in which we accept the absurdity of our life. The fact that struggle is always going to be a part of it, we will be the master of the rock. Suddenly it's not we who push the rock, but the rock pushes us, “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (63). As Pinn says Camus “appreciates the manner in which humans encounter the world, values struggle over surrender to absurdity and confronts death, “blinks” in that he seems unable (or unwilling) to hold the tension of absurdity—the marriage of life and death. He wants and seeks a solution” (Pinn 349).

According to Camus, we are all in the same condition as Sisyphus, and we live in a futile life as we come to this world without our willing. We don't have free will in

matters such as how and when we are born? So life is a big punishment for us just like Sisyphus's punishment. Sisyphus is punished with a devastating and futile labor. But what makes his punishment devastating is the main concern? Is it destructive because of the size of the rock? For instance, would it be less devastating if he rolled a smaller rock? Is it because he gets tired? Is it because that he does it alone and no one gives help? Would it be better if he had a companion while rolling the rock up to the mountain? None of the above statements is the exact reason which makes the punishment devastating. The chief reason is that it is endless. There isn't an ending point of the punishment. It goes on in parallel with life. Thus, the punishment is life itself. Moreover, what's worth noting is that Sisyphus's condition is not something permanent or a destiny that he cannot get rid of. Sisyphus didn't have free will when he was punished to roll the rock up to the mountain, but he has free will how to deal with the punishment. Qanih says the rock is a special world that he can experience it. It is his own rock and he is free how to push it. The act of trying and attempting to push the rock up o the mountain is enough to make him happy (Qanih 90). Thus, Sisyphus doesn't try to change the punishment, but he is aware of his condition and finds happiness in the punishment eventually, As Camus says “We must imagine Sisyphus happy” (Camus 123). As a result, accepting the reality of our condition doesn't lead hopelessness but helps to create our own meaning and purpose and keep on living.

Camus also points out that life and the existence of human being in the world are essentially meaningless, but it starts being nonsense after human beings quest for meaning in them. It will be meaningless after one tries to find the meaning by questions like; what's the purpose of life? Why were we born and why we will die? And, when one attempts to understand and explain everything through logic. According to Camus, life does not have any meaning one could find. Life is simply rolling the rock continuously, so any quest for meaning will be in vain that's why human beings should learn how to cope with it instead. Human beings cannot understand why they were born or why will they die one day. Meaninglessness is the outcome of human being while they search for meaning in a life devoid of any meaning and purpose.

He points out that there is a basic conflict between what we expect and want from universe such as order, meaning or reason and what we really get from it which is chaos. Therefore, the Absurd is the outcome of the discord between human and the world. We can't find the meaning which we look for in life itself, neither can life give some reasons or meanings. We either find the meaning through a religious perspective or we end up with the belief that life has no meaning. Camus takes the latter outcome that life is meaningless, and questions if it necessarily pushes us to commit suicide. When we realize that life is meaningless, does it mean that it is not worth living? This is the same question he begins *The Myth of Sisyphus* with, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (3). He claims that if we are in such situations, then we have no option than either to have a leap faith in Divinity or to commit suicide. But Camus takes the third possibility which is accepting the absurd and mastering our rock. He argues that humans "get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking" (8) which means our instinct for life is much stronger than our reasons for committing suicide. Thus, confronting absurd does not encourage one to commit suicide, but it rather supports to live life to its fullest.

As Camus claims that the starting point that undermines human is when one tries to find meaning in a meaningless life. He explains how we should deal with this meaningless life as Sisyphus learnt to deal with his punishment besides the pointlessness of his labor. He reclaims that life doesn't end after being aware of our condition but it is the starting point of it. Life starts after we become conscious of the meaninglessness of life. He goes further and affirms Sisyphus as the absurd hero. What makes him hero is not because he only endures his fate, but he can overcome it. He accepts his labor and condition and never weeps nor laments for them (Timrayner). What is important is that Sisyphus is conscious of his state and we must be aware of our condition and confront with it as Sisyphus did.

4.2. Albert Camus' Novels

Camus depicts absurdity in all of his novels. He does not explain the absurd in his novels like he does in his essays, but gives absurd examples differently in each novel. Although the subjects and themes he raises in his works seem depressing and full of despair, he denies labeling them to pessimism. He states that pessimism does not lie in recognizing the absurdity, injustice, meanness that controls the world, but in giving one's assent to them (Masters 2). Camus wrote written five novels but only published three of them. He wrote his novel *A Happy Death* in 1937 but he didn't publish it during his lifetime, which was published posthumously in 1971.The novel takes place in Algiers whose main character is Patrice Meursault, who resembles *The Stranger*'s Meursault in many ways; they are both Algerian-French clerks in Algiers and both kill another man. Some critics believe that it is just a preamble to *The Stranger*, but this is long-established. One of the significant differences between the two novels is that *A Happy Death* is written in third person unlike *The Stranger* which is written in first person. The novel is into two parts: Natural Death and Conscious Death. The first part begins with Patrice killing a man named Zagreus, who was quadriplegic. Zagreus asked Patrice to kill him because he was not content with his life and thought it was just a waste. The second part of the novel, A Conscious Death, begins after the death of Zagreus. Patrice looks for meaning within his life in the second part. He travels extensively in pursuit of meaning and happiness, and he finallyhe comes to a conclusion that true happiness is thinking of life in a conscious matter, and he becomes content with the life that he had lived before he dies.

In 1940s, he published his two famous novels: *The Stranger,* which is considered his masterpiece in 1942. The novel is about Meursault, the protagonist of the novel. Everything starts with a telegraph which informs him that his mother has died. He goes to the nursing home in Marengo where his mother lived. At night while he is sitting vigil with his mother's friends from the old people's home, he drinks a cup of coffee and smokes which people find is odd. The novel is about Meursault's alienation from the society. He goes to his normal life after her mother's funeral as if nothing important has happened in his life; he goes swimming with his friend, Marria, they watch a comedy movie, and they have sex later just one day after his mother's lose. He becomes friend with a bad boy who is known to be a pimp, Rydmond, but he

doesn’t care what the neighborhood talk about him and from the consequence of this friendship, he kills an Arab man on the beach that he later complains that the heat pushed him to do so. In his trial, he is sentenced by death, accusing him of not having a heart because he didn’t see sand and didn’t cry for his mother.

Camus published *The Plague* in 1947. He shows an example of absurd life in the novel in which people of Oran face absurd, they don’t have metaphysical justification for the things happen to them nor do they have an essential connection to the universe. The story recounts through an unknown first speaker for the most parts of the story, and Camus reveals the speaker, Bernard Rieux, in the end. The mess starts with a sudden rat's, and it goes to climax with thousands of them dying publicly. Dr Rieux knows that the reason is plague epidemic after confronting several sudden deaths with similar symptoms, but the authority doesn’t take responsibility and doesn’t recognize the disease as plague at first. Life is on a mess, citizens are imprisoned in the city, and people lose their personal characteristics due to their harsh situation. Characters act differently with the plague, Camus shows different types of people during the absurd condition. He shows examples of selfless and selfish people facing the plague.

Camus published *The Fall* in 1956. It is an extended monologue by the self-proclaimed Jean-Baptiste Clamence, and the monologues are conducted over the course of five days. In *The Fall*, Jean-Baptiste Clamence is an intensified Meursault. The themes in the novel are similar to of *The Stranger*’s, but they are presented in more lucidity and bitterness. The themes which haunt both novels are:the consciousness of the absurdity of human condition,death, non-existence, the problem of indifference and obscurity in modern life, and being innocence or guilt in the individual. The novel takes place in Amsterdam. Camus raises other subjects like evading responsibility towards other human beings: Clamence was walking across a bridge in an evening in November, and he heard the voice of a woman down from the river who might have thrown herself into the river from the bridge, but he continued walking, pretended that he had not heard anything and neglected the sound. He avoided responsibility towards the woman, and this haunts him in the novel.

Camus was working on a novel before his death, *The First Man*, but he couldn’t finish it. It was published posthumously in 1995.The novel affirms the value

and virtue of the human condition unlike his previous novels.Camus referred to the book as the novel of his maturity. It is a fascinating novel which is narrated in the third person. The novel stands for a search for the Camus' self as well as a kind of testimony. The themes and subjects raised in the novel help the reader to understand Camus' works in a clearer perspective. The setting of the novel takes place in Algiers, Camus' city, and recounts Jacques Cormery's story from his birth to his later years in secondary school. It is divided into two parts; the first part is called "Search for the Father," while the second is called "The Son, or The First Man". Camus shows essential things in the novel like the search for a lost father, the painful love of a son for his mother, and childhood. The reader feels like he reads an autobiographical novel while reading *The First Man* because of the many similarities between Jacques and Camus. Jacques is born in a poor family like Camus, and he also loses his father only one year after his birth that dies during WWI in the first Battle of the Marne. His mother is half-deaf too and they live with his grandmother, which these are all based exactly on Camus' own life.

4.2.1. *The Stranger*

The novel, *L'Étranger,* was published in 1942. The book was originally written in French, and the English translation was published later in 1946. It is not Camus' first book, but it is his first book which made Camus known in Europe. It is considered one of the most influential books of the twentieth century. It seems simple and straightforward on the surface, but it has many underneath philosophical criticisms. The book consists of two parts. It is about a French Algerian man like Camus himself, Meursault. In the first part of the novel, Meursault's mother dies, but instead of grieving and mourning for her, he acts indifferently and doesn't shed any tears for her. Just one day after his mom's burial ceremony, he meets a girl whom he knows, taking her to watch a comic movie and making love with her at home. He also becomes friend with a pimp, Raymond, who only brings him trouble and culminates in killing an Arab who is brother of Raymond's girlfriend. Everything happening in the first half of the book is just profound arrangement for things which are going to happen in the second half i.e. the events which might be taken as irrelevant to the main theme of the novel turns out to be important weapons used against Meursault in the court. The second part of the book is about his trial. He acts very apathetically in

the trial and doesn't defend himself. Ironically, his trial is focused more on his indifference rather than his actual crime. Consequently he is sentenced by execution, claiming that to have been a merciless and cruel criminal.

The novel is a sample work of Absurd. Sartre in "An Explication of *The Stranger*s" which he published in a collection of Critical Essays, *Situations I* in1947, states that *The Myth of Sisyphus* which was published a few months after *The Stranger* is a precise commentary on the first novel. He, in the same essay, also asks and discusses the question of how a character like Meursault can be understood. He is an indifferent hero who is neither good nor wicked; neither moral nor immoral, so he is what Camus calls 'absurd'. He also points out that the novel does not explain anything, but it rather describes the situation and result only (qtd. in Hinchliffe 39).

The novel begins with one of Meursault's most well-known speech and Camus' authentic introduction, “Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know” (Camus, The Stranger. Trans. Mathew Ward 10). His doubt definitely indicates that they don't live with each other and "home" from the phrase “I got a telegram from the home” (10) indicates the old people's home not their own home. Nevertheless, it is very peculiar and abnormal that his attitude when he talks about the date of her death is as if he talks about something like a complex mathematical problem or something difficult like his mom's birthday. So the book’s beginning with absurd tells a lot about the protagonist of the novel.

The reader can feel two points from the very first lines, it can be said that Meursault has an absurdist view of life on one hand. In any society, it usually brings sadness and grief to any person who hears about the death of a parent or a close relative unless he doesn't like him or her, but Meursault liked his mom, “he asked me if I loved Maman. I said 'Yes, the same as anyone” (56).Even though if such unpleasant incident does not affect that person very much, one might sometimes exaggerate in expressing grief and sadness to show the society that he loves that person, but Meursault does not wear any masks and he takes the news apathetically. His apathetical attitude towards his mother’s death is noticed several times in the novel; he acts apathetically towards his mother's death when he is in the mortuary and another example during her burial, where he smokes and drinks coffee next to his mother's corpse. His actions surprise some of the people who notice him.

It is unacceptable later for the court that his mom's friends from the old people's home were more touched by the incident than him. He keeps the same attitude before, during and after the funeral; he doesn't feel a change in his life after his mom's death: “It occurred to me that anyway one more Sunday was over that Maman was buried now, that I was going back to work, and that, really, nothing had changed” (25). He goes on living the same way that he did before his mom died. His routine is all the same such as to go to work five days a week, to go swimming, to hang around with his girlfriend, and to make love at the weekend. He acts like how he feels regardless of whether others accept his action or not. He cannot wear a mask for others' acceptance although this action results in his death penalty at the end of the novel ironically.

Additionally, Meursault's indifference is not only with his mom's death, but he acts apathetically even in his relationship with Marie, she “asked me if I wanted to marry her. I said it didn't make any difference to me and that we could if she wanted to” (39). His relationship with her is not based on love; it is not important for him whether he should love someone in order to have a relationship with. He doesn't think that he loves her, or even if he does, he doesn't it know it, “A minute later she asked me if I loved her. I told her it didn’t mean anything but that I didn't think so. She looked sad” (34).Marie keeps asking him about whether he loves her, but he never changes his answer. He always tells her the same think that he probably doesn't love her, and this is not an impediment to their marriage if she wants to, “then she wanted to know if I loved her. I answered the same way I had the last time, that it didn't mean anything but that I probably didn't love her” (39). Marry is puzzled and tries to understand him. She just can't understand how comes that he agrees to marry her, but he doesn't love her, she asks him “So why marry me, then? [. . .] I explained to her that it didn't really matter and that if she wanted to, we could get married” (39). Marriage is not a serious matter for Meursault and he doesn't care or think about it much with whom he will get married. When Marry asks him if he views marriage as a serious matter, he simply says no, it isn't for him, “she just wanted to know if I would have accepted the same proposal from another woman, with who I was involved in the same way. I said “Sure.” Then she said she wondered if she loved me, and there was no way I could know about that” (39) 39). The conversation between Marry and

Meursault about love and marriage with all the repetitions and Meursault's honestly in his indifference adds to the Absurd.

Meursault is aware of his absurd condition, therefore his consciousness pushes him to act indifferently throughout the novel. When his boss asks his opinion and offers him a position in Paris, his boss “was planning to open an office in Paris which would handle his business directly with the big company, on the spot, and he wanted to know how I felt about going there” (38), he refuses the offer and claims that it is all the same for him. It doesn't make sense for him to change his own life because he doesn't care much;“then he asked me if I wasn't interested in changing a life. I said that people never change their lives, that in any case one life was as good as another and that I wasn’t dissatisfied with mine here at all” (38). His boss dislikes his answer and indicates that Meursault has no ambition which is disastrous in business.

He doesn't take any initiative in life because everything has equal significance and equal absurdity for him. He doesn't have an appropriate communication with the society, and doesn't care whether being within the community or staying outside it as everything ends with death. Therefore, he does not even defend himself in the court. He believes that all people's life is essentially equal. When the judge announces his punishment and asks him if he has anything to say, he simply answers "no" and he accepts the punishment which is his death penalty. The reason for this is that he may think it is useless to say anything, and it proves his absurdity once more:

> The presiding judge told me in a bizarre language that I was to have my head cut off in a public square in the name of the French people. Then it seemed to me that I suddenly knew what was on everybody's fact. . . I wasn't thinking about anything anymore. But the presiding judge asked me if I had anything to say. I thought about it. I said, "No". (83)

He has very much the same attitude toward life like Sisyphus does. His days are all spent the same, no matter what happens around him; before and after his mother’s death, and before and after the murder. He does not expect any more from life. He doesn’t have big goals in life, nor does he hope or dream for the future. For him, the future and the past do not even exist, and he simply lives in the present with few things that give him pleasure. For him, expecting more than what he does, would

be asking too much of life. Brian Masters in his book, *Camus: A Study*, describes Meursault's indifference:

> Meursault‘s passivity is so total that he is wholly indifferent to the relative importance of courses of action which are proposed to him. Drinking a cup of coffee or going to bed with Marie have the same significance in his mind. There is no hierarchy of values. He restricts himself to answering questions, never affirms a choice. (Masters 26)

Camus raises another theme in the novel to reinforce the Absurd which is getting used to life by showing Salamano's scene with his dog. The two old creatures have been inseparable for eight years but they never get along with each other until the dog gets lost, “The dog pulling the man along until old Salamano stumbles. Then he beats the dog and swears at it. The dog cowers and trails behind. Then it's the old man who pulls the dog” (Camus, The Stranger. Trans. Mathew Ward 27). Old Salamano takes the dog out for a walk twice every day and they repeat the aforementioned scene repeatedly, “Then they both stand there on the sidewalk and stare at each other, the dog in terror, the man in hatred” (27). He always beats it up and swears at, and whenever the dog wants to urinate, he doesn't give enough time and yanks at. But once he loses his old dog which he used to beat and call "Filthy, stinking bastard", he becomes very sad and desperate.

> He was looking all over the place, turning around, peering into the darkness of the entryway, muttering incoherently, and then he started searching the street again with his little red eyes [. . .] 'They are not going to take him away from me, are they, Monsieur Mersault? They will give him back to me. Otherwise, what's going to happen to me?'. (36)

It is very absurd that Salamano treats the dog very badly when it is with him, and he can't stand living without it when he loses it. Camus depicts this scene deliberately in the novel. It is not about whether Salamano likes the dog or not, but it is that he has got used to having it in his life. Therefore according to Camus, Meursault's not crying and not being sad for his mom's death doesn't indicate that he didn't like or he hated her, but it was rather because they lived separately and he didn't get used to having her in his life for the past three years. Accordingly, Camus' message is that persisting on living doesn't mean that life has got meaning but it rather because we get used to living. Moreover, realizing the absurdity of life doesn't motivate man to commit suicide as well.

There are many similarities between Meursault and Sysiphus. Meursault's daily routines somehow the same with Sysiphus's futile labor which was rolling a big rock up to a mountain repeatedly. Camus gives a detail about Meursault's daily routine; He goes to work five days a week. He works until noon then goes to Celeste's restaurant with one of his colleagues, Emmanuel, to have lunch. After lunch, he usually takes a nap at home, and goes to the office again after the nap and works until evening. His five days of work can be compared toSysiphus' rolling the big rock up to the mountain, Friday evening when Meursault finishes for the week is compared to the rock on the top of the mountain, the two days of the weekend is compared to the fall of the rock to its own place. Meursault starts over the same routine on Monday and repeats it every week. He doesn't run away from his futile labor and he accepts his absurd condition like Sysiphus.

Qanih has a different view concerning Meursault's view of life. According to him, Camus creates a kind of character who cannot take any responsibilities in life. The reason behind that is not that they hate life or if they don't want to be responsible people in the society, but it is rather because they think life is pointless and there isn't any purpose in life to fight for so that they don't want to be a part of that meaningless life. Meursault is the best example of this type of character. He is very calm and does not speak much. He does not lie, and more particularly he does not lie with his feelings and emotions, he doesn't hide them and doesn't act hypocritically. But he rather acts and speaks according to his feelings and emotions. Moreover, he does not care or think what society will talk after him or how they interpret his actions and speeches. Thus, his honesty makes him a stranger among the society because according to Camus society does not accept any person who is honest and who only act according to what his visceral feelings push him to do. So it can be concluded that Meursault is a victim of society (Qanih 83-84).

Meursault questions life only through logic. He is atheist like Camus himself, and he does not rely on theology to understand life and the universe. The chaplain of the prison asks him to repent but he refuses because he doesn't believe in God, “have you no hope at all? And do you really live with the thought that when you die, you die, and nothing remains? 'Yes,' I said” (Camus, The Stranger. Trans. Mathew Ward 90).The priest knows a lot about psychology and insists on trying to reclaim

Meursault's soul for Christianity. He speaks of certainty and tries everything to overcome him, but his attempts are unsuccessful, "he burst out, 'No, I refuse to believe you! I know that one time or another you've wished for another life.' I said of course I had, but it didn't mean any more than wishing to be rich, to be able to swim faster, or to have a more nicely shaped mouth" (92). The priest's attitudes annoy him, and he loses his total indifference for the first time in the novel. He is sure of "the worthlessness of the chaplain's so-called certainties" (Hinchliffe 38), and the social norms and religious beliefs he has therefore he never gives in to the priest's beliefs and ideas. He understands the inevitability of death and states that all human beings are equal in the face of death:

> What did other people's deaths or a mother's love matter to me; what did his God or the lives people choose or the fate they think they elect matter to me when we're all elected by the same fate, me and billions of privileged people like him who also called themselves my brothers. Couldn't he see, couldn't he see that? Everybody was privileged. There were only privileged people. The others would all be condemned one day. And he would be condemned, too. What would it matter if he were accused of murder and then executed because he didn't cry at his mother's funeral? (Camus, The Stranger. Trans. Mathew Ward 93)

He even goes further and claims "Salamano's dog was worth just as much as his wife" (92), animals are worth just like human beings, and Salamano didn't feel sad for his wife as much as he did for his dog. What he means is that human life is not more honored than animal life since they are all equal and have the same end which is death.

Thomas Henna has a different opinion on Meursault's consciousness of absurdity. He states that the protagonist of the novel shows the indifference of an absurd hero without his consciousness of absurdity, and the glimpse of revolt emerges very late in the novel. So it's his apathy which makes him a stranger in society. Henna also points out that neither we nor the other characters feel that he is a stranger. An absolute judgment is made on him due to his murder crime and his world comes into a clash with the world of absolute values. Therefore, it is moral legalism which is based upon fixed values in a sphere that has none itself, destroys him. The novel shows a divorce between one's endeavor to live sincerely in accordance with the indefinite nature of human existence and an endeavor to impose general moral values on that indefinite nature. Furthermore, he points out that it is only the visit of the priest at the

end which stimulates the response of revolt, freedom, and passion (Hinchliffe 40). With the closing speeches of the novel, Meursault directly states that life is meaningless and it lacks rationality, and claims that the world is indifferent to human beings:

> For the first time, I that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world . . . I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate (Camus, The Stranger. Trans. Mathew Ward 94).

The phrase “I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again” shows that he is here fully aware of his absurd condition, and he accepts it. So one's realizing and accepting absurd condition doesn't bring him sadness and hopelessness, but it rather brings him happiness; As Renstrom states that “accepting life's lack of meaning grants total freedom. Freedom from destiny, from society, from personal fears and desires. This freedom allows us to define ourselves and to give life the meaning it doesn't inherently have” (Renstrom 23). Camus uses similar phrase at the end of the story of Sysiphus, “One must imagine Sysiphus is happy” (Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays. Trans. Justin O'Brien 123). Renstrom also claims that according to Camus we should accept life's absurdity and enjoy the freedom and peace to be found in the absence of meaning. It doesn't matter if Meursault goes to Paris or stays in Algiers, if he marries Marrie or if Salamano beats his dog. It doesn't matter if Meursault kills a man or if he's put to death. Meursault emerges as a true nonconformist because he doesn't just revel in absurdity; he actually creates personal meaning by embracing it (Renstrom 22-23).

The novel is set on the detachment from the unity of community i.e. Meursault's conflict arises when he "doesn't play the game" as David Sherman used the phrase in his book *Camus*. In other words, he keeps himself outside the game while everybody else plays it. Meursault doesn't act according to the society's imposed rules, social norms, and traditions. He doesn’t lie, and he doesn't lie with his feelings above all that he never hides them regardless of the consequences. It is hard for him to lie in the court about his emotions during the funeral, “He is consistently

loyal to the truth of his own feelings, this being the only truth that he can know, that he can be sure about. Take from Meursault his sincerity and he would crumple in vacuity" (Masters 27). On the other hand, there is another kind of game that he is personally involved which is his own game that its rules are unknown and cannot be distinguished evidently while he avoids in the determination of decisions. His indifference leads him to be choiceless for his actions, and whatsoever he does falls into the absurd. Camus depicts him an absurd character who doesn't act and react to his problems and circumstances in accordance with the imposed social rules and norms. He declines any force which may expel him from the liberty of existence as Braun states "it is for each man to choose his way. From this conviction spring two basic values in Camus's ethics. The first one is life itself, in its tragic sweetness. The other one is happiness understood here as a sense of unity with the sensuous world" (28), and Meursault's happiness is sensuous one.

4.2.2. *The Plague*

The setting of the story takes place in 1940s in Oran, a port city in northwest Algeria, which Camus is acquainted with well. The narrator is an unknown first speaker who is obsessed with objectivity, and tends to focus on the city's physician, Bernard Rieux, who reveals himself at the end of the novel and turns out to be the unknown narrator. The mess starts first with a rat's death all a sudden and then thousands of rats stagger into the open and die. People start dying after the rats stop dying publicly. The problem is that no one dares to call it plague. Dr Castel and Rieux are certain that it is a plague epidemic after confronting several sudden deaths with similar symptoms, and they work hard to force the authorities to take it serious and take action against it. The authorities are obliged to place the whole city under quarantine. In the third part of the novel, the community is at the climax of suffering. Everything is on a mess and time appears to have stopped, and people have lost their personal characteristics (King 66). Therefore no one is allowed to leave the city and they are all imprisoned until the plague ends which lasts for nine long months. Different people act differently with the plague, some only think about saving themselves and leave the city behind while some others are kind of selfless and try hard to find a cure and save others' lives. The city returns to its normal life after the plague and borders open to leave the city and also to the visitors to come.

Somecharacters undergo changes during the plague, for example Cottard cannot cope with it after the plague. He fires randomly into the street until he gets captured by the police.

Camus keeps on exploring the Absurd in *The Plague*, but he deals with different aspects from *The Stranger*. The plot of the novel is about a bubonic plague in Oran city in Algeria, and in the one hand some critics claim that the pestilence represents Paris condition which was occupied by Hitler during WWII. Moreover, some themes in the novel reflect Camus' own life. One of the main themes of the book is isolation, as the citizens of Oran are not allowed to leave the city during the plague; Doctor Rieux is separated from his wife as he sends her at the very beginning of the novel before the plague, Rambert, a journalist from Paris who is trapped in Oran, tries hard to leave the city in order to reconcile with his lover, and Camus was once separated from his family in Algiers as well. In the other hand, what most of critics agree on is that the pestilence represents the Absurd itself, and the book demonstrates the futility of doing one's best in an absurd world. Camus also shows the different reactions to the Absurd through different characters; Rambert wants to escape from it, Father Paneloux links everything to religion, Rieux understand and confronts with it. He also motivates others to confront with it.

Raymond Rambert is a journalist from Paris who is on assignment and trapped in Oran when the city is quarantined. He demands the authority letting him leave the city and turn back to his wife since he is not from the city, but the authority declines his request therefore he tries to escape the city illegally. He represents those who feel no involvement with everyone's problems and want to escape from the Absurd. His character grows and changes in the course of the novel. The plague changes him from a self-interested character and journalist to a responsible person who admits that it is everyone’s problem to fight the plague and risk their own life for that. He does everything he can with Rieux to fight the plague. When the gates are opened to visitors and his escape is allowed, he willingly decides staying in the city and helping Rieux rather than seeking a solitary happiness for himself and leaving the city behind. Thus, he works as a volunteer on the hygiene teams, and his wife visits him and they reunite in Oran. He represents those whose conscience drives them to the help of community rather than their own personal interest and happiness.

Father Paneloux represents religious people facing the Absurd. He puts all his faith in God and interprets everything through religion. In his first sermon, he claims that the disease is a punishment which God has sent to the city's citizens so that they will be awaken from the sins they are committing. According to him, God gives them another chance if they just awake from their dreary condition. After the death of Othon's child, Rieux is very disturbed and gets into an argument with Paneloux. Although he is distressed by the death as well, according to him death is the act of God and cannot be questioned as he states, “perhaps we should love what we cannot understand” (Camus, The Plague. Trans. Stuart Gilbert 218), but Rieux can't take his abstract notion, “No, Father. I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture” (218).

A kind of hypocrisy is noted in Paneloux's characterization in the novel. After passing time and seeing no progress, in his second sermon, he quite retraces what he has previously said. He speaks more gently “instead saying 'you' he now said 'we'” (Camus, The Plague. Trans. Stuart Gilbert 222). He also takes back his word in which he has said "plague was sent by God to punish sinners,” instead now he says that as hard as the plague can be, Christians must attempt to see the good in bad, and instead of preaching retribution, he preaches hope and faith to Christians. Moreover, he goes on and tries to answer the question which Rieux argued with him about innocent children's suffer and how God lets them die like that. His answer is that it is the will of God and humans cannot necessarily be able to get it, and it is not important how hard they try to understand it, “My brothers, a time of testing has come for us all. We must believe everything or deny everything. And who among you, I ask, would dare to deny everything” (224). The word 'dare' indicates that he threatens the audience that they don't have another option except believing everything without questioning.

Even though according to him God is behind everything that is what Rieux doesn't accept, he has similar views that one must do his best during time of struggle and suffering, “No, we should go forward, groping our way through the darkness, stumbling perhaps at times, and try to do what good lay in our power. As for the rest, we must hold fast, trusting in the divine goodness, even as to the deaths of little children, and not seeking personal respite” (227). King states that Paneloux adopts a Kierkegaardian Christianity after the child's death. He still has faith in God and

believes that He is behind everything happens, but he does not understand the concept of suffering anymore. According to his understanding of God, He wills everything including the Absurd, and human being have to have faith and have to challenge the Absurd (King 70). Paneloux accepts his own suffering and dies from the plague without ever calling on the aid of the Doctor. When he falls ill, he accepts his own suffering, and refuses calling a doctor to treat him, because it's against his beliefs and principles. He dies while clutching a crucifix.

Camus usually has a character that represents religion in his works in order to show the religious view facing of the Absurd. As in *The Stranger*, he has the Chaplain who comes to Meursault in prison to convince him repent before his execution. In *The Plague*, Camus wants to let the reader that the right answer for Absurd is not a blind faith. He proves Paneloux wrong through Rieux's beliefs and reactions to the Absurd. He also shows it through his style of narrating. The reader obviously notices that the unknown narrator who observes the events with an objective view is likely to be Camus himself, but at the end of the novel it turns out to be Rieux who opposes Paneloux's religious beliefs strongly. Moreover, Camus gives the readers many hints about Paneloux's religious characterization. For instance, during his first sermon in which he speaks very severely, a large number of people from the city come to the church listening to him. But in the second sermon, the church is only three-quarters full, “The superstition had usurped the place of religion in the life of our town, and that is why the church in which Paneloux preached his sermon was only three-quarters full” (Camus, The Plague. Trans. Stuart Gilbert 222). This indicates that religion has lost its power and enthusiasm in the city, where superstition has replaced it. Furthermore, his death has significance as well. Although the cause of his death is not the plague epidemic and is registered as "unknown case", he doesn't survive the general plague, and he cannot even save himself.

Dr. Rieuxis one of the most significant characters facing the Absurd. He works hard against the plague in the novel. He is one of the first ones who recognize the plague epidemic, andhe understands the nature of the disease. Even though he knows that the pestilence which he is fighting cannot be stopped, he never attempts to quit. Although he empathizes with his patients, but as he is vigilant against the contagious disease, he knows that he should protect himself and separates his emotions from his

job therefore the plague doesn't affect him physically. He believes that people should do what needs to be done even in absurd conditions in which they only see failure. He is also conscious of the inevitability of the plague, after the plague ends and people go to their regular life he says that this state might be only a pause in this endless war between the Plague and life, “the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; [. . .] it can lie dormant for years and years [. . .] Perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city” (308).

Camus states in his notebooks, “the plague brings the benefit of forcing one to think, but, considering the misery it produces, one would be mad or criminal to consent to it” (King 67). He also declares that one cannot remain detached from the Absurd through Rieux's depiction. Rieuxis always objective which is seen as a symbol of revolt against the Absurd. He doesn't agree with Paneloux's view of life whose belief is based on abstraction and sees every event through divinity. When Othon's young boy sadly dies from the plague, Paneloux states that his death is a part of God's will, but Rieux rebukes himfor his illogical thoughts, “Rieux swung around on him fiercely. 'Ah. That child, anyhow, was innocent, and you know it as well as I do” (Camus, The Plague. Trans. Stuart Gilbert 218). Camus shows Rieux's revolt against the Absurd not only through his attempt at objectivity towards confronting the disease but also through his revolt against the religious beliefs which Paneloux has.

King states that Rieux develops ethically and philosophically as he obtains a clear understanding of the permanent and meaningless evil in the world (68), and his knowledge and career as a doctor help him in understanding the Absurd. According to him, religion requires one to have faith in futile and vain abstractions that's why he rejects religions in general or any religious beliefs. He inquires abstract beliefs since they are unable to prevent the plague epidemic and avert the innocent people from suffering, therefore these kind of abstract beliefs are not as significant as accepting and revolting the Absurd. Moreover, he believes in the beauty of nature and appreciates it which is the reason of his motivation getting up each morning, but he doesn't have a blind faith in love or hope as well. For him only tangible things like the sunrise and sunset of each day have significance, every other things including life itself is absurd, and truth is uncertain. What Meursault learns in *The Stranger* when he

is in prison, Rieux learns from the merciless plague as well, “But what had he, Rieux, won? No more than the experience of having known plague and remembering it, of having friendship and remembering it, of knowing affection and being destined one day to remember it. So all a man could win in the conflict between plague and life was knowledge and memories” (291).King states that Rieux encounters hopelessness, but he faces it with a new kind of attitude, and he has a different view of life. Camus illustrates his reaction to the Absurd by showing his struggle with the Absurd that he doesn't attempt to escape from it, his denial and rejection of the Absurd, his acceptance and viewing the truth in life, and finally existence of the Absurd. Moreover, Camus used Rieuxas a very well portrayed model of what one can learn and do in facing the Absurd (King 68).

As the bubonic plague represents the absurd world, Camus shows human condition in the book and depicts several significant characters to represent different ways in which one can react to the problem in his life. As it is mentioned above that Camus shows three different types of characters in which each type treats with the Absurd differently. Moreover, the human condition is revealed through characters like Dr. Rieux, Cottard, and Tarrou. Each one of them has different characteristics which show positive and negative sides of the human condition.

Cottard is represented as an opportunist character that uses the plague for his own benefit. In other words, he manipulates the situation as a mean of escape from responsibility. Before the plague, he is afraid of the police and nervous about being caught, so due to this reason he makes friends with those who are associated with working against the plague and helping people. He thinks that these people may once help him as a character witness. Moreover, he is happy when the city is put under quarantine because he doesn't feel alone anymore in his state of constant fear. When he is first introduced in the novel, he tries to commit suicide, and the crime he has committed before his suicide attempt which he doesn't mention it in the novel always makes him to think he is a criminal. Consequently his fear of being criminal leads him fall victim and becomes a criminal as he involves in profitable smuggling trade during the plague. He acts crazily when the plague ends, he fires on the street and then gets arrested by the police, Cottard “was still screaming. A policeman went up and dealt him two hard blows with his fists, quite calmly, with a sort of conscientious

thoroughness" (Camus, The Plague. Trans. Stuart Gilbert 305).Camus deliberately portrays him as a character that is full of self-interest, fear, and hope to emphasize that such kind of person won't survive the Absurd.

Tarrou is another important character in the novel regarding studying the Absurd. Rieux narrates parts of the novel through his diary. For him, man's duty is to heal himself and find inner peace first so that he won't hurt others and so that he dies with a peaceful conscience. King views him as a warrior of the plague as he is "obsessed with death and the necessity to combat it" and has an "ironic awareness of life's absurdity" (King 69). Even though he is an atheist, his goal is to be a saint, a kind of saint who doesn't believe in God. So, he means the term in a secular manner, and his aim is "to reach purity of thought and action" (70). His endeavor in his entire life is to be pure in thought, and Rieux says, "Tarrou he had lived, and he realized the bleak sterility of a life without illusions. There can be no peace without hope" (Camus, The Plague. Trans. Stuart Gilbert 292). He is the last victim of the plague, and the plague overcomes him. H dies and never achieves his goal, becoming a saint. What Tarrou seeks to achieve is impossible, so his search is highly personal and spiritual, Rossi states that "Tarrou's search is futile and ineffectual because he had sought for a perfect state vaguely called peace, yet realizing all the while the impossibility of transcending his relative existence [. . .] Tarrou had seemed to attain that difficult peace of which he had spoken, but he had found it only in death, when it could be of no use to him" (Rossi 422). Camus represents Tarrou to those who place faith only in themselves and in a hope for escape from the Absurd. Therefore, this way of escape is futile in confronting with the Absurd.

Camus in The Plague shifts his focus to resistance, and the use of the plague epidemic gives a sense of death and absurdity in a closed world in which the citizens of the city are doomed to separation and exile. Hinchliffe points out that "Camus is moving towards his statement of the counter-idea of revolt which emerges in The Rebel" (44). He also claims that Camus' revolt "has not produced anything which negates the Absurd, but man does learn that he can, without help from God, create his own values and pass beyond the anguish which is the terminus of existential revolt"(44). Camus suggests in the novel that all people which die every day is not an issue which we can do something about, but seeing the people being oppressed is a

situation which we are able to improve. He also views having desire for life as a means of diminishing pessimism therefore realizing and accepting the Absurd is just a beginning not an end.

CONCLUSION

The first half of the twentieth century was very devastating and drastic events like the two World Wars, over one hundred million deaths in the wars, and the great depressions caused serious changes in the minds of the people which were main factors behind human beings being desperate in life and consequently the rise of absurdism as a means of presenting the reality of human condition. The absurd was not only the wars nor the deaths of millions of people alone, but as Camus says it bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality. Absurdism questions life and realities which are considered to be reality within life. Indifference almost always is seen within the absurd. So it wonders the difference between having and not having a job? Between getting up to work at 8 or 9 o'clock? Between getting divorce or getting marriage? What makes them all different? It doesn't matter what one does and how hard he tries, death is inevitable and it is the absolute end. These are all absurd then.

Vonnegut describes human condition and the world rationally in his works although his descriptions might not be very explicit but it proposes some answers which assist in the comprehending course. Like Sartre, he believes that existence precedes essence which rejects any purpose or meaning before existence. In his works, the absurd life is demonstrated through a series of ridiculous and ludicrous events, caricatured, exaggerated characters, and an ambiguous language. His works question how the cosmos works, why man is here, where he comes from, and where he goes eventually? Thus he persists in his state of anxious loneliness by not accepting simply living without reasoning it. Like the other writers of the absurd, Vonnegut is eager to find purpose, order, and reason in the cosmos and in its relation to it, whereas he finds pointless, unpredictable, and cruel things just insanely happen instead. Moreover, any attempts to prevent these pointless events culminate in pointlessness. Vonnegut like Camus forces his readers to consider what it means to be human in a chaotic, often absurd, and irrational universe. He usually explains such events from an outside perspective of extra-terrestrial things in his novel. For instance, Tralfamadorian's explanation of such issues is that these events occur because the moment is simply structured that way, Rumfoord from his chrono-synclastic infundibulum, learns about fixed patterns of time as well. Bokonon says

because they are meant to happen this way. So, Vonnegut describes the absurd rather than explaining it like Camus does. To sum up, for Vonnegut, the world seems ultimately absurd place where life is basically meaningless.

Vonnegut is one of the significant writers viewing the absurd as an answer to the twentieth century issues and experiences. He sees absurd as a way to cope with life in his works. In his novels, absurdity can be responded in three different ways: The first possible response is practicing uncritical love, trying to lend some meaning to a meaningless human condition through kindness and charity. This response doesn't work and characters who respond to life with love and kindness won't succeed at the end. The second option is to create new illusions to replace the old-comforting lies which soothe man from the meaninglessness of the absurd universe. Human beings are unable to understand this pointless and meaningless universe; therefore, they need illusions to maintain. Vonnegut calls these illusions foma. The term means a harmless untruth or a beneficial lie. Since lies and love are both futile in responding absurdity, therefore like Camus, Vonnegut considers the last option which is resignation to absurdity. It is accepting the absurdity of human condition. For him, though unable to change things only by recognizing them, it helps man to be able to change the things he can.

In his works, Vonnegut finds laughter as a painkiller of the pain man suffers from in the universe, and this analgesic gives human a temporary relief. He points out that when an individual achieves the absurd vision in life, he will be able to laugh instead of cry while dealing with understanding the universe. So for him, absurdity and laughter are two sides of the same coin, and laughter is the only essential way to responds to absurdity. Therefore, if one observes the world as absurd, his response is to laugh at it, and view it as a big joke. As long as insanity is not considered, the man's merely protection against absurdity is laughter. It facilitates man to understand absurdity in different perspectives which helps him not to be emotionally overwhelmed by it, but rather to accept it logically, while it allows him to endeavor to find meaning rationally where, indeed, none exists. Moreover, he uses laughter as a remedy in *Cat's Cradle* when Bokonon explains maturity as "a bitter disappointment for which no remedy exists, unless laughter can be said to remedy anything" (Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle 134). Thus Vonnegut's view of laughter is the suitable

solution for the issue and even if it does not offer the escape, it can provide distance from events that challenge a rational and serious approach.

As for Camus, he points out that there is a basic conflict between what we expect and want from universe such as order, meaning or reason and what we really get from it which is chaos, and futility. Therefore, the absurd is the outcome of the discord between human's quest for meaning and the world's ability to give meaning. According to him, we can't find the meaning in life itself which we look for, and neither can life give some reasons or meanings. So Camus explains three possible responses to this dilemma: He questions that while realizing that life is meaningless, does it mean that it is not worth living? Does it necessarily push one to commit suicide? He argues that humans "get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking" (Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays. Trans. Justin O'Brien 8), which means our instinct for life is much stronger than our reasons for committing suicide. He also claims that confronting the absurd does not encourage one to commit suicide, but it rather supports to live life to its fullest. Thus means he refuses committing suicide as a reasonable answer. He claims that people in such situations have another open way to answer the problem which having a leap faith in Divinity. Similar to the first way, He doesn't take having an absolute faith in divinity as a reasonable solution, he calls it a philosophical suicide since human beings empty their rational reasoning and leave it all to an uncertain supernatural power. Thus, he takes the third option which is he believes to be the right one, which is recognizing and accepting the absurd, and he calls this, confronting the absurd.

As Camus published *The Plague* five years after *The Stranger*, his account of the absurd improves and broadens his focus of the absurd since he gives more detail of it in the second novel. His dealing of the absurd can be classified into two stages. In the first stage, he only describes the feeling of the absurd as he does in *The Stranger* within Meursualt's characterization. In the second novel, he declares that the absurd must be confronted which is presented through Dr Rieu's characterization. Moreover, in the first novel, only one character, Meursault, represents man against the absurd, but the case is quite different in *The Plague* in which different characters in the city are presented differently in facing the absurd, each one looking for his own solution as well as facing the absurd in his particular way. Nelson states that the

multitude of characters in the second novel is due to the fragments of Camus' mentality i.e. the different representation of each character in a particular way representing Camus' different confrontations of the absurd (87). Rambert, for example, wants to escape from the absurd at the beginning of the plague by leaving the city. Father Paneloux has a leap faith in God. According to him, man should accept everything happening to him, including despair, and should love what he doesn't understand. Dr Rieux faces the absurd from the very beginning of the plague until it ends. His philosophy is that man must do what needs to be done even in absurd environments where he can only see failure. He is also vigilant of the inevitability of the absurd. Therefore, according to Camus, in order to overcome the absurd, man must accept it as it is without any illusions or any religious beliefs, and then try to cope with it.

Camus' absurd is different from Theatre of the Absurd of Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Genet. As he presents the absurd in a form of lucid and rationally based on reasoning, while the writers of the Theatre of the Absurd, as Esslin explains, endeavor to convey its sense of the absurdity of the human condition and the deficiency of the rational approach by neglecting rational devices and discursive thought. They also try to achieve a kind of unity between its fundamental hypothesis and the form in which these assumptions are conveyed premise to absurdity nor completely reject the use of rational devices. Like the Theatre of the absurd, however, his novels look for new ways to combine subject matter and form and use style to convey his message.. Vonnegut's novels are neither as total as the Theatre of the Absurd in its

Vonnegut's style of illustrating the absurd is different from Camus'. His style is unique in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and the plot is vague. Whereas Camus' *The Stranger* presents equality and a kind of indifference on everything; in other words, everything has equal importance like in an absurd world. The style is flat and it doesn't highlight anything in a way appearing more or less valuable than anything else. Nevertheless, Vonnegut's style is quite different from Camus' which is somehow similar to the playwrights of The Theatre of the Absurd in which he uses the structure of the novel itself to convey his message. Vonnegut occasionally uses flat style as shown in *The Sirens of Titan* in which he equates the beginning and end of the novel

by the usage of the same sentence, as he starts the first chapter with Constant saying "I guess somebody up there likes me" (7), and he ends the novel with the same sentence when Stony says "but somebody up there likes you" (224). He also uses the same pattern in *The Slaughterhouse-Five* at the end of chapter one and before the story of Billy Pilgrim begins in which he says that the story of the novel "begins like this: Listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. It ends like this: Poo-tee-weet?" (Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 27).

WORKS CITED

"Absurdism." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster. 2017. Web. 16 April 2017.

A Man of Our Times. "*Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (2013): 45-55. Web. 24 Feb. 2017.

Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham.*A Glossary of Literary Terms*.10th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.

Ahmed, Shwan. *Friedrich Nietzsche*. Sulaymaniyah: Central Library, 2011. Print.

Akim, Melike Saba. "Absurdism as a Tendency in Theatre: Ranging from Aristophanes to Beckett and Pinter." *Lapis Lazuli -An International Literary Journal*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2013, pp. 50–59.

Allen, William Rodney. *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut*. Jackson: U of Mississippi, 1988. Print.

Al-Ma'ani, Raghad Adnan. *The First Person's Futile Search for Meaning in Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five*. Thesis. Applied Science Private University, 214. Amman,: American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 2014. Print.

Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford U Print, 2008. Print.

Baltzer-Jaray, Kimberly. "Absurdism: The Second Truth of Philosophy." *Journal of Camus Studies 2013*(2014): 3-17. Print.

Barzinji, Azad. *Nigakan*. Sulaymaniyah: Serdem, 2011. Print.

Benjamin, Walter, et al. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Harvard University Press Verlag, 1996.

Bennett, Michael Y. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre and Literature of the Absurd*. Ambridge University Press, 2015.

Biography.com Editors. "Kurt Vonnegut Biography."*The Biography.com Website*. 8 July 2014. Web. 25 May 2017.

Bloom, Harold. *Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-five*. New York: Chelsea House, 2007. Print.

Bly, William. *Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-five*. Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1985. Print.

Bowker, Matthew . H. "Holocaust Testimonies: After the Silence of Job." *The Meaning Of Absurd Protest: The Book Of Job, Albert Camus, And C. Fred Alford's After The Holocaust* 5.1 (2011): 163-83. Print.

Bowker, Matthew H. Albert Camus and the Political Philosophy of the Absurd: Ambivalence, Resistance, and Creativity. Lanham: Lexington, 2013. Print.

Braun, Lev. *Witness of Decline Albert Camus: Moralist of the Absurd*. New Jersey: Associate University Press, 1974.

Bree, German. *Albert Camus*. Trans. Aata Nahayi. Sulaymaniyah: Serdem, 2015. Print.

Burnham, Douglas, and George Papandreopoulos."Existentialism."*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Web. 1 Nov. 2016.

Camus, Albert. *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*. Trans. Anthony Bower. New York: Vintage, 1956. Print.

---. *The Plague*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Vintage, 1991. Print.

---. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage, 1991. Print.

---. *The Stranger*. Trans. Mathew Ward. New York: Vintage, 1989. Print.

Cornwell, Neil. *The Absurd in Literature* .Oxford University Press, 2013.

Crosby, Donald A. The Specter of the Absurd: Sources and Criticisms of Modern Nihilism. Albany: State U of New York, 1988. Print.

Cruickshank, John. *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*. London: Oxford UP, 1959. Print.

Curzon-Hobson, Aidan. "Extending the Contribution of Albert Camus to Educational Thought: An Analysis OfThe Rebel."*Educational Philosophy and Theory* 46.10 (2014): 1098-110. Print.

Davis, Muriam Haleh. “A New World Rising’: Albert Camus and the Absurdity of Neo-Liberalism.” *Social Identities*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2011, pp. 225–238. Print.

Davis, Todd F. *Kurt Vonnegut's Crusade, Or, How a Postmodern Harlequin Preached a New Kind of Humanism*. Albany: State U of New York, 2006. Print.

Duran, Jane “The Philosophical Camus.” *Philosophical Forum* 38.4 (2007): 365-371. *Academic Search Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 19 August. 2016.

Eagel, David. *The Analysis of The Myth of Sisyphus*. Trans. Ismail Ismail Zada. Sulaymaniyah: Idea Foundation, 2016. Print.

El Diwany, Fatma Khalil. "So It Goes: A Postmodernist Reading of Kurt Vonneguts Slaughterhouse-Five." *Int. J. English Lit. International Journal of English and Literature* 5.4 (2014): 82-90. Print.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. London: 1961.Pelican Books, 1968. Print.

---. *Absurd Drama*. London: 1965.Penguin, 1967. Print.

Farrell, Susan Elizabeth. Critical Companion to Kurt Vonnegut: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work. New York: Facts On File, 2008. Print.

Flynn, Thomas R. *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Foley,John. *Albert Camus From the Absurd to Revolt*.Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008. Print

Francev, Peter. "Meursault and the Indifference: Logotherapeutic Perspectic." *Journal of Camus Studies 2013* (2014): 51-63. Print.

Francis, Arthur Morius. *Nihilism: Philosophy of Nothingness*. Lulu, 2015. Print.

Galloway, David D. *The Absurd Hero American Fiction*. Austin: U of Texas Press, 1974. Print.

Gavins, Joanna. *Reading the Absurd*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Gnanasekaran, R. "Psychological Interpretation of the Novel *The Stranger* by Camus." *International Journal of English Literature and Culture* 2.6 (2014): 73-86. Print.

Goldstein, Rebecca Newberger. "Ancientuarrel: Philosophy and Literature." Thesis. Yale University, 2011. Print.

Habib, Rafey. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., (2005): 502-507. Print.

HamaAli, Umed. *Keshay Buni Mrov* [The problem of Existing Human Being]. Sulaymaniyah: Endeshe, 2015. Print.

Haris, Charles B. *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd*. New Haven: College & University Press, 1971. Print.

Hinchliffe, Arnold P. *The Absurd*. London: Methuen, 1969. Print.

Hochberg, Herbert. "Albert Camus and the Ethic of Absurdity."*Ethics* 75.2 (1965): 87-102. Web. 19 October. 2016.

Hoevenaar, Rebecca. *Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five: Making the Past Present*. Thesis. University Honors, 2014. Honors Projects, 2014. Print.

Hornby, A. S. "Absurdity." *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. 7th ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Isaac, Jeffrey C. *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992. Print.

Jensen, Mikkel. "Janus-Headed Postmodernism: The Opening Lines of SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE." *The Explicator* 74.1 (2016): 8-11. Print.

Kamal, Mohammed. *Falsafay Bun: Lekolinawayak Lasar Hzri Pash Metafizik* [Existentialism Philosophy: A Study of The Theory after Metaphysics]. Sulaymaniyah: Endeshe, 2014. Print.

Kaufmann, Walter Arnold. Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre: Revised and Expanded. New York: Meridian, 1956. Print.

King, Adele. *Camus*. New York: Capricorn, 1971. Print.

Libeg, Nicholas Robert. *Thus Spoke Billy Pilgrim: Kurt Vonnegut's Nietzschean Thought*. Thesis. Youngstow State University, 2013. Print.

Mack, Maynard. *Literature of Western Culture since the Renaissance*. Vol. 2.Norton, 1966. Print.

Marcel, Gabriel. *Man against Mass Society* . South Bend, Ind.: Gateway Editions. 1978. Print.

Marino, Gordon D. *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. New York: Modern Library, 2004. Print.

Marvin, Thomas F. *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*. London: Greenwood, 2002. Print.

Masters, Brian. *Camus: A Study*. London: Heinemann, 1974. Print.

May, William. *Postwar Literature: 1950 to 1990*. London: Pearson Longman, 2010. Print.

McArdle, Kelly A. "Poo-tee-weet? Unintelligent Things to Say About a Massacre: Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Honors in American Studies and US Interventions in the Post-WWII Era." Thesis. University of Connecticut Storrs, 2015. Print.

Mcinnis, Gilbert. "Evolutionary Mythology in the Writings of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr."*Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 64.4: 383-96. Print.

Mikkonen, Jukka. *Philosophy through Literature: The Cognitive Value of Philosophical Fiction*. Diss. U of Tampere, 2011: Tampereen YliopistopainoOy – Juvenes Print

Moody, Jennifer. "Mixing Fantacy with Fact: Kurt Vonnegut's Use of Structure in Slaughterhouse-Five."*The Online Journal of Undergraduate Literary Criticisim* 1.1 (2009): 74-81. Print.

Mooij, J. J. "Some Remarks on the Relation between Philosophy and the Study of Literature." *Philosophica* 2.16 (1975): 85-98. Print.

Mustazza, Leonard. *Critical Insights: Slaughterhouse-Five*. Hackensack: Salem, 2010. Print.

Nagel, Thomas. "The Absurd."*The Journal of Philosophy* 68.20 (1971): 716-27. *JSTOR*.Web. 25 Feb. 2017.

Nelson, Roy Jay. “Malraux and Camus: The Myth of the Beleaguered City.” *Kentucky Foreign Romance Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1966, pp. 86–94.

Pinn, Anthony B. "The End: Thoughts on Humanism and Death." *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 54.4 (2015): 347-54. Print.

Pratt, Alan. "Nihilism."*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Web. 8 Sept. 2016.

Pritchard, Duncan. "Absurdity, Angst and the Meaning of Life." *University of Edinburgh*. Print.

Qanih, Mariwan Wirya. *Dilraqi w bemali (Obduracy and homelessness).* Sulaymaniyah: Endeshe, 2015. Print.

Raskin, Richard. "Camus’s Critiques of Existentialism." *An Internet Journal of Philosophy* (2001): 156-65. Print.

Ree, Louis. *Lekdaneweyek Derbaray Romani Namo (An Explanation of The Stranger)*. Trans. Hama KareemArif. Sulaymaniyah: Sardem, 2015. Print.

Renstrom, Joelle. “Freedom, Absurdity and The Stranger in the Classroom.” *Briarpatch*, 2009, pp. 22–24.

Rigney, Ann. "All This Happened, More Or Less: What A Novelist Made Of The Bombing Of Dresden." *History and Theory* 47.2 (2009): 5-24. Print.

Rossi, Louis R. “Albert Camus: The Plague of Absurdity.” *The Kenyon Review*, 1958, pp. 399–422.

Roth, Leon. “A Contemporary Moralist: Albert Camus.” *The Royal Institute of Philosophy*, vol. 30, no. 115, Oct. 1955, pp. 291–303.

Schatt, Stanley. *Kurt Vonnegut Jr.* Boston: Twayne, 1976.

Shaw, William Gary. *Comic Absurdity And the Novel of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.* Diss. Oklahoma State U, 1975. Oklahoma State U Library, 1976. Print.

Simpson, David. "Albert Camus (1913—1960)."*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Web. 15 Oct. 2016.

Simpson, Josh. ""This Promising of Great Secrets": Literature, Ideas, and the (Re) Invention of Reality in Kurt Vonnegut's God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, Slaughterhouse-Five, and Breakfast of Champions "Fantasies of an Impossibly Hospitable World": Science Fiction and Madness in Vonnegut's Troutean Trilogy." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 45.3 (2004): 261-71. Web. 24 Feb. 2017.

Smith-Luedke, Jeff. *The Absurdity Of Philosophy*. Lulu, 2008. Print.

Summer, Gregory. "“The Gentleman from Indianapolis” Kurt Vonnegut, 1922-2007." *INDIANA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY*: 302-12. Print.

Tang, Jiannan. "Innocence: A Bittersweet Medicine in Slaughterhouse-five." Thesis. China University of Petroleum, 2011. Print.

Thody, Philip. *Albert Camus: A Study of His Work*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957. Print.

Thrall, James H. "Authoring the Sacred: Humanism and Invented Scripture in Octavia Butler, Kurt Vonnegut and Dan Simmons." *Implicit Religion* 17.4 (2014): 509-31. Print.

Timrayner."Camus, Absurdity, and Revolt."*Philosophy for Change*. 17 May 2010. Web. 11 Oct. 2016.

Tomedi, John. *Kurt Vonnegut*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004. Print.

Vanderwerken, David L. "Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five at Forty: Billy Pilgrim—Even More

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. New York: 1969. Dial Press, 2007. Print.

---. *The Sirens of Titan*. London: 1959. Gollancz, 2004. Print.

---. *Cat's Cradle*. New York: 1963.Dial Press, 2010. Print.

---. Mother Night. London: 1961.Vintage, 2015. Print.

---. *Wampeters, Foma, & Granfalloons(Opinions)*. 1974. New York: Dial Press, 1999. Print.

---.*Slapstick: Or, Lonesome No More!*. 1976.London: Vintage, 1991. Print

Yeganeh, Farah. *Literary Schools: A Reader*. Tahran: Rahmana Publication, 2009. Print.

Zileli, Bilge Nihal. *Absurdity of the Human Condition in the Novels by Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett*. Thesis. Middle East Technical University, 2005. Ankara: METU, 2005. Print.

VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORİJİNALLİK RAPORU

VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

11/ 09 /2018

Tez Başlığı / Konusu

Absurdity In Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five And The Sirens Of Titan, And Albert Camus' The Stranger And The Plague.

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu belirlenen tez çalışmamın Kapak sayfası, Giriş, Ana bölümler ve Sonuç bölümlerinden oluşan toplam **98** sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, **11/ 09 /2018** tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından **Turnitin** intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtreleme uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı **% 11 (Dokuz)** dır.

Uygulanan Filtreler Aşağıda Verilmiştir:
- Kabul ve onay sayfası hariç,
- Teşekkür hariç,
- İçindekiler hariç,
- Simge ve kısaltmalar hariç,
- Gereç ve yöntemler hariç,
- Kaynakça hariç,
- Alıntılar hariç,
- Tezden çıkan yayınlar hariç,
- 7 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç (Limit match size to 7 words)

Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Tez Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılmasına İlişkin Yönergeyi İnceledim ve bu yönergede belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal İçemediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

11 /09/2018
Soran A. Abdulrahman
Adı, Soyadı, İmza

Adı Soyadı	: Soran A. Abdulrahman
Öğrenci No	: 159201266
Anabilim Dalı	: ingiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
Programı	: .....
Statüsü	: Y. Lisans ☑ Doktora ☐

DANIŞMAN
Doç. Dr. Bülent Cercis TANRITANIR
11/ 09 /2018

ENSTİTÜ ONAYI
UYGUNDUR
...../...../2018
Doç. Dr. Bekir KOÇLAR
Enstitü Müdürü