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**Questioning Identity Construction and Free Will in
Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night* (1961): A
Postmodern Viewing**

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LITERATURE

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Dedication

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Abstract

The issue of identity construction and the problem of free will have always been a matter of question in postmodern context. Postmodern literature fairly reflects this combination through attempting to interpret both concepts as social constructs. Kurt Vonnegut is among the postmodern authors who are dedicated to portraying the mayhem of identity construction in relation to the endless argument over the authenticity of free will. Vonnegut, through his fiction, depicts the critical journey towards identity formation and the interrogation of free will and fate, mainly in his oeuvre *Mother Night*. This postmodern novel embodies the protagonist's struggle with the consequences of his identity falsification during the Second World War. This dissertation, therefore, elucidates the process of identity masquerading and its psychological impact over the psyche of the characters, chiefly the case of the protagonist's troubled identity. In addition, it investigates the validity of free will and questions the correlation between free will and identity formation. Accordingly, the conducted research is overall based on the psychoanalytical approach to analyse the psychological and sociological factors that subsided the crisis of identity. Additionally, a humanistic approach is applied in order to achieve a comprehensive interpretation of the selected variables. As a result, the final elucidations have revealed that the characters' troubled identities could be traced back to the instability and unsteadiness that featured the postmodern epoch. Furthermore, the concept of free will is a human construct that is predetermined by a set of psychological external/internal factors.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

The Western society has witnessed an intellectual break-out in the Post-Second World War era, a reaction against violence, oppression and social regimes. This movement which is known as postmodernism has reconsidered the essence of the transcendent truth. Although this intellectual thought has puzzled contemporary intellectuals due to its complexity and controversy during the period, it impacts various fields such as philosophy, literature, art and history. The distinctive aspect that confounds scholars is the uncertainty of the movement as it cannot hold an identical definition or a specific foundation. Nonetheless, postmodernism predominantly reflects the total break-out from social constructs. Among these social conventions are the absolute truth, historical beliefs, identity formation, free will and reality. It supports the diversity of estimations towards typical concepts, as it adheres to challenge the totalitarian regime. The major purpose behind the rise of postmodernism is the damage that war brought to the world; additionally, individuals aver their skepticism towards authority, science, history and social norms. Following this line of thought, postmodern individuals face emptiness after deconstructing themselves from these social regimes; thus, they struggle to construct a sustainable meaning to their existence and identity.

Identity formation has always been a subject of debate among psychologists and sociologist; likewise, contemporary scholars tend to combine a tangible explanation of identity. It is in fact palpable that identity can be identified from different standpoints; however, it is generally agreed that the formation of identity seems to be an issue during the current societies .It seems that the debate of identity is almost an endless subject, but for postmodernists, it becomes even more crucial to acknowledge whether the concept of identity itself exists because it is no longer a matter of solving the problem of attaining a solid identity , but a matter of whether this universe holds significant meaning. This identification becomes more perplexed in

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postmodernism, for this reason they tend to reflect this struggle of identification with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and social masquerading to show the fluidity of identities.

The Postmodern perception of social constructs as well as the issue of the absolute truths creates a sense of doubt concerning whether concepts such as free will and value objectively exist. For the confusion it holds by its claim that power is the base of everything and that the imposition of power influences the collective beliefs and orders of the societies, which in a sense makes them captive to predetermined systems and perceptions. This claim threatens the idea that individuals have free will. However, it is still impossible to assume that the counter claim of freedom is also fully valid and solid.

Literature chiefly adheres to postmodern ideology and its struggle to form an identity with the question of free will. Among the authors who majorly delineate these problems is Kurt Vonnegut. In *Mother Night*, he exposes the crucial masquerading of characters and their journey between fatalist events and conflict of alternatives; therefore, this problem of identity construction and free will is covered through his fiction under a post-war sphere. This dissertation attempts to examine the problem of constructing an identity from both psychological and sociological aspects as well as the long-lasting conflict of free will and determinism from a contemporary viewing through observing the psyche of characters in Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night*. The research questions that are meant to be posed are as follows: how does Vonnegut depict the issue of identity and free will in the novel? What are the reasons behind the character's identity crisis? What are the character's motives behind masquerading? To what extent do the characters have free will? Do the characters have free will to construct their identities?

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In order to condemn answers, one suggests several assumptions. The protagonist's identity crisis is a consequence of his childhood and cultural influence of being a German immigrant in addition to his obsession with becoming a successful playwright. The Nazi's ideology influence and self-egoism are the main reasons behind the protagonist's masquerading. The protagonist has an extent of freedom; however, his ability to control the outcomes of decisions is above his will.

The research paper interrogates the two main variables which are identity and free will as a problem during the postmodern period. It points at studying the correlation between free will and the quest for identity in Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night* as a case study focusing on observing the characters. Hence, this dissertation attempts to explain the movement in which the novel takes place and explore its main thought. It gives general understanding about the contemporary troubled identities from both psychological and sociological perspectives, as it elucidates the conflict of free will and fate during the contemporary society. Its main objective is to expose the reasons behind the character's troubled identities as well as examine their free will and fate. Thus, it focuses on studying the correlation between the two main variables by viewing the attentiveness of the characters to construct new fake identities.

Mother Night by Kurt Vonnegut has been explored previously by several researchers. Robert T. Tally conducts a research entitled "*We are what we pretend to be*": *Existentialist Angst in Vonnegut's Mother Night* in which he focuses on analyzing identity and existentialism of the protagonist arguing that Howard Campbell suffers from schizophrenia by exposing the existential aspect in the novel. Another work by Haskoli Islands entitled "*The madness of Sanity: A study of Kurt Vonnegut's Mother Night*" suggests that all the consequences of the pretending that Campbell has done let to his madness; thus, he argues that Campbell suffers from madness. Another study

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that has been made by Robert T. Tally entitled *Kurt Vonnegut, an American: Grandfalloonery and National Identity* gives an outline on some of the author's works including *Mother Night*; furthermore, he explores Campbell's identity as he suggests that the depiction of the nation of two that refers to him and his wife Helga reflects his true nationality because the protagonist is a stateless person; therefore, his wife is his only nation. The aforementioned researchers focus on analyzing identity crisis through madness or schizophrenia. The variables of free will and identity have also been discussed separately in the previous studies; however, what lacks is the combination of both free will and identity in characters and studying the correlation of these variables. They lack the interplay between the effect of free will in both formatting an identity and causing an identity crisis, for this reason the research paper aims at analyzing the correlation between identity and free will, as it examines how they affect each other through the lens of sociological, and psychological theories provided by Goffman, Erikson, Freud, Tajfel, Lawler, and other philosophical ones such as Henry Frankfurt and Arthur Schopenhauer.

The dissertation uses several methods and approaches while conducting this case study. It first uses a historical approach to cover the historical background of the novel's period, which is postmodernism, as it also covers the main postmodern ideology. In addition to the humanistic approach that serves to comprehend the social behaviour of characters and their interactions. Moreover, the study is based on applied/analytical research method due to the application of relevant theories to help with interpreting the problem.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter explores the historical background and extended definition of the postmodern ideology in order to understand the movement's main thought that has influenced postmodern writers. Furthermore, it describes the major theories and variables of the novel which are identity and free will within the contemporary

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epoch. The second chapter attempts to decipher the postmodern viewing in the novel and majorly analyze the character's masquerade identities under the psychological and sociological theories. The third chapter exposes the free will and determinism through giving a set of philosophical interpretations about the characters' question of free will.

Chapter One

Inspecting Identity and Free Will in

Postmodernism.

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Introduction

The Postmodern epoch has remarkably impacted art, literature and philosophy. Unlike the previous historical movements, postmodernism has raised a massive controversial debate among scholars who exchange the discussion of whether this ideology holds a sincere meaning. Despite the controversy, its typical ideology continues to impact the 21st century, especially in architecture, literature and social media. One of the fundamental questions that has been highlighted during the postmodern epoch is the issue of identity. As the postmodern individual struggles to find meaning and truth, the question of the self becomes more strenuous. It is also a matter of whether the self has the absolute freedom of the will to form an identity and find a valid meaning to his/her existence. The latter, however, is undeniably reflected in literature, for this reason, it is mandatory to explore the postmodern ideology to get a closer background behind the rise of the movement and to expound the issue of identity and free will within the postmodern framework.

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I. Postmodernism: A Skeptical Ideology

The prudent way to define postmodernism is the rise of total skepticism towards the absolute truth. It emerged as an ideology that influenced art and reasoning throughout the 20th century and ostracized the typical narrative of concepts that ascended after the First and Second World Wars. Therefore, the traumatized drawbacks of the war, especially the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945), have affected people's way of thinking about the use of science. The postmodern individual, eventually, faces absurdity and illusion when he/she questions the self-nature, identity and fate. Postmodernism is also considered as a rebellion against modernism¹ that majorly tends to search for the real purpose of life in contrast to postmodernism which suspects the existence of the universe per se.

This skeptical ideology has majorly been adopted by various philosophers. Jean Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Michael Foucault's ideas are among the ones who developed the growth of the postmodern thought. For Lyotard, this movement doubts the validity of metanarratives; the latter entails the general agreement towards a certain concept or story in society; for example, the Enlightenment² scholar's belief that science civilizes humanity. Another example is Nazism which glorified the master race theory that has been adopted by several theorists including the Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg. This concept has used the Aryan race³ to symbolize the supremacy of the white Germans. Another belief is the American manifest destiny that entails the fate of expanding their land from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean by the will of God. These metanarratives generate a strong conventional fact in society

¹ Modernism is a movement emerged during the 19th century that intensifies the breakout from the traditional life and religion.

² Enlightenment is a European movement during the 18th century that is characterized by logic and reason.

³ Aryan race/Aryanism is originally meant to refer to the Indo-Iranians, but later publicized to describe the white German and European race. The Nazis have taken the Aryan term to reflect their supremacy.

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as people seem doubtless for its credibility; therefore, Lyotard in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) utters:

Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on [...] Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? (22).

Lyotard voices his skepticism towards the metanarrative, as he argues that this concept is an opportunity for autocrats to impose their opinions without being questioned. François aims to highlight the embracement of the diversity of opinions and multiplicity of small narratives in society.

Jean Baudrillard is a social theorist who decodes the assumption of reality within the postmodern setting. In his book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), he defines the concept of simulacra as the copies of the original while Simulation as the behavior of copying or viewing only the surface of things. This surface falsely gives a perfect shape of image by covering its original imperfections whereas Simulacra is exhibited as “Something having merely the form of appearance of a certain thing, without possessing its substance or proper qualities.” (Oxford English Dictionary). Simulacra is the final image of the surface itself in which people see and admire only the perfect side of it. Hence, it is the image of how things should appear rather than what they are originally deemed.

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Baudrillard has presented four stages of representation of the simulacra. This representation tends to reflect the sign of each image. This first representation, however, shows a faithful reality as he utters “The reflection of a profound reality.”. The second offers an evil fabricated image of reality, “It masks and denatures a profound of reality.”. The third stage suggests that images escalate beyond presenting reality to present something that only pretends to be original as he states, “It masks the absence of a basic reality.”. The last stage is described as the full simulacrum in which there is no reality but only the copies as he utters, “It has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.”. (Baudrillard 6)

In the postmodern setting, people focus on the copies of reality more than reality itself. According to Baudrillard, the postmodern age is experiencing the last phase of representation where there is no valid reality, so humans at this point move from the real to the hyperreal. It is worth noting that ‘hyperreality’ is a condition when people are confused between the real and the representation of the real; therefore, they are strongly attached to the fictional representations that falsely provide a misleading image of reality. This simulation has dominated the postmodern societies, and this can be exemplified with internet chats as a source of communication as well as the media news and shows. The role of the media is to offer a true depiction of the real world; however, media is the one that imposes a certain unrealistic lifestyle through advertisement which tries to convince people that certain products are necessary to maintain a lifestyle. Thus, obliquely, it is offering an unrealistic image of how people should look, talk, and behave. As for the simulacra, Jean Baudrillard perceives it as a model of Disneyland:

Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra. It is first of all a play of illusions and phantasms: the Pirates, the Frontier, the Future World, etc. This imaginary world is supposed to ensure the success of the

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operation. But what attracts the crowds the most is without a doubt the social microcosm, the religious, miniaturized pleasure of real America, of its constraints and joys. One parks outside and stands in line inside one is altogether abandoned at the exit. The only phantasmagoria in this imaginary world lies in the tenderness and warmth of the crowd, and in the sufficient and excessive number of gadgets necessary to create the multitudinous effect. (12).

Disneyland is a place that represents a fictional world in real life, and people tend to be astonished by this representation of fictional characters. Additionally, the Disneyland situation is a similar condition to the simulation of reality in the postmodern age:

Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the “real” country, all of “real” America that is Disneyland (a bit like prisons are there to hide that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, that is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false. (12).

Disneyland is a place where real actors appear as fictional characters to look more realistic to its audience. Baudrillard compares this to America as a hyperreal society that tries to appear realistic. Finally, Baudrillard’s skepticism towards reality has been an influential assumption on postmodernism.

Similarly, Michel Foucault, a historian, social critic, and a philosopher, influences the postmodern thought with his concept that explains the correlation between power and knowledge. The term power is often connected with oppression and viewed as an emblem of

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strength; however, according to Foucault, power is generated through knowledge, especially in the contemporary society.

Conventionally speaking, power is usually viewed as a military force or a high social class for example, a strong country with its superior military forces invading a weaker one, thus power's manner is often attached to violence, oppression and threatening which ironically points to its failure of controlling; therefore, power, in the true sense, does not require threatening others, but inspires them instead. This influence is called normalizing power as Foucault adheres "If power was never anything but repressive it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?" (36). According to the Foucauldian perspective, power comes from the influence and inspiration of others depending on the progress of training the mind to accept values or conventions without oppressing them.

In the view of that, normalizing power pushes people to do what is meant to be done by their own will. Parents, school, and teachers, as an example, have a consequential effect at handing strong conventional values that eventually control actions and decisions. Teachers could be a great influence on students and parents for their kids; therefore, individuals are normalized with society conventions, so people will follow blindly without oppression. Foucault thinks that power is at the hands of everybody. In his book *The History of Sexuality*, he utters: "One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society." (93).

Knowledge is the essence for both truth and power. Without knowledge, power and truth do not have a valid presence. For that reason, Foucault skepticizes the absolute truth and considers it like history for they both are relative and always changing because truth comes from social regimes which later become facts. These truthful facts generate power;

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furthermore, both power and knowledge are never stable, hence it only concludes the irrelativity of the triangle connection between truth, knowledge and power.

To summarize, postmodernism initially skepticizes social constructs such as power, reality and metanarrative. Some of the postmodern philosophers such as Michael Foucault, Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard agree to define the movement as the total break” out from these social conventions due to the illusion of the absolute truth.

II. Identity Construction : A Psychological Construal

The concept of identity has a long remarkable trace in western philosophy. It has been a question of interest for both psychology and developmental psychology fields for decades. Frequently, it is quite difficult to distinguish between a self-identity, a personal identity, and a personality which is what psychologists attempt to explain in simple terms and theories. It is necessary to initially set a distinction between an object identity and a personal identity, for the latter is an individual’s sense of self-realisation depending on the physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that are unique and that are not wholly shared with other individuals. Identity and self are two concepts that are used interchangeably for how both are linked. However, the self-concept is what a person uniquely characterises him/herself within her/his own mind, which further allows the person to conceptualise his/her existence. Hence, the self is the logical response to the question “who am I?” Whereas identity is the self-image that is externally exposed to the surface which is socially visible or as cognitive psychology defines it as the capacity of one’s self-reflection while being aware of oneself. Eventually, the two concepts combined would form the self-identity which is what psychologists define as one’s concept of oneself and being fully aware of one’s abilities and flaws as well as reflecting that conception to others according to how one would label him/herself. Self-identity can develop according to various psychological and social factors as the outcomes

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can be either positive or negative. It also consists of major components that are stated gradually as personal identity, body image, and personality. Thus, psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, Erik H Erikson, and James Marcia endeavour to provide a solid scientific explanation to the formation of identity and the personal characters of individuals.

II.1 Sigmund Freud's Perception of Self-Identity

The founder of psychoanalysis and the neurologist Sigmund Freud was able to break from the conventional beliefs that human beings have a single core or essence, where the self was regarded as the main subject or in other terms the core for both the mental and physical actions of individuals. Therefore, the self was initially seen as unitary and undivided. Freud challenged the idea that suggests that there is a single entity that directs human thoughts, feelings, and the perception of themselves, claiming that humans are multiplicity of systems that change with time. In his book *The Interpretation of Dream*, he suggested two main theories that exhibit the self's plurality regardless of how a person could appear as a unity. The first is a construction of the different systems on the mind which he called the 'topographical model'. The former shows how the mind is structured and how it functions; the model is linked to an iceberg that is divided into three parts. In this claim, he suggests that mental processes and awareness are conscious, unconscious, or preconscious where each of these parts on the mind influences human behaviours. The conscious mind contains the rational thoughts and feelings that are comprehended at certain times as well as memories that are easily recalled. The preconscious mind consists mostly of what is partially unconscious but still recalled with no difficulty. And lastly, the unconscious mind is fairly described as a locker or a reservoir of the feelings and thoughts that are beyond awareness and control.

Sigmund Freud suggested a second theory in which he called it the structural model. This model explains how the human psyche is composed of three elements that determine a

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person's personality; The Id, the ego, and the superego. According to his psychoanalytic theory, these three parts interact to form a whole which in psychology may translate into the self though each of those parts emerges at different points of life. The Id is the one and only component of the self that is present at birth, as it is the irrational part that seeks instinctual needs and that is ruled by the pleasure principle; including all of the biological instincts such as the sexual and aggressive drives which is regarded as primitive, yet if these needs and instincts are not satisfied immediately a state of tension would result since it does not operate rationally and it only operates within the unconscious mind.

Freud believes that the Ego is the part of the Id that is modified by the influence of the external world, as it develops to mediate between the primitive Id and reality. Hence, the Ego operates according to the reality principle. The Ego is the part that is linked to the conscious mind that is responsible for decision making as well as regulating the thoughts and behaviours by reason and social norms. Freud created an analogy of a horse being the Id while the Ego is the rider that controls it. The last component developed in the personality is the Super-ego which is the partly conscious and moral. It is formed through the internalisation of the rules taken from society or parents and by which help form a sense of judgement and further guidance. The super-ego works to perfect human behaviour and civilise it while it attempts to suppress the unpleasant urges of the Id. The super-ego consists of two systems; the conscience and the ideal self where the former is in charge of the feeling of guilt; for instance, if the ego surrendered to the urges of the Id, the super-ego punishes the ego through guilt. The latter being the ideal self or often called the ideal ego is the imaginary version of one's perfect state and how one ought to be facing the society as well as one's aspirations of career and positions.

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II.2 Erik. H Erikson's Perspective of Identity and Role Confusion

Erik H. Erikson, the German-American psychoanalyst, is recognised mostly for his contribution to psychological stages of development of human beings as well as for coining the concept of identity crisis. According to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, all humans go through eight stages of developing an identity in which he called Ego Identity as he perceives it as the conscious sense of the self that is developed through social interactions and personal experiences. For Erikson, the eight stages are the process that each individual must go through to construct an authentic identity; The stages are respectively: Trust vs. Mistrust, autonomy vs. Shame and doubt, initiative vs. Guilt, industry vs. Inferiority, identity vs. Confusion, intimacy vs. Isolation, generativity vs. Stagnation, integrity vs. Despair.

For Erikson, the most important stage of identity formation is the identity vs. role confusion, for at this psychological stage an adolescent faces the challenges of developing a sense of self while examining her/his beliefs, values, and goals. The fifth stage (age 11/12-22), from an Eriksonian point of view, involves a process where one would balance between selecting a single self and trying as much possible selves, which eventually would result forming their personality as well as their personal identity; it includes religious, gender, political, ethnic identities all in once. According to Erikson during the identity versus confusion stage, the conflict is centred on developing a personal identity. Successfully completing this stage leads to a strong sense of self that will remain throughout life. The full interpretation signifies how important the success of this process is for forming a genuine healthy personal identity; however, if it fails a severe confusion would result is displaying the roles that one may adapt against their own aspiration and nature; therefore, a weak and contrived identity is formed.

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II.3 Identity Crisis

Identity formation can undergo severe changes and instabilities that damage its whole essence. Identity crisis is a developmental process in which a person would question her/his beliefs, values, societal role, and self-reflection as it is not an actual diagnosis. The concept originates in Erik Erikson's developmental psychology, who believed that identity crisis is a part of the conflict one would undergo while forming a personal identity and analysing one's self reflection. In addition to midlife crises, Erikson also believed that by resolving life crises one develops a stronger personality.

James Marcia, another influential developmental psychologist, expanded the Eriksonian concept of identity crisis and confusion. First, he offers a theory that categorises four major stations of the development of identity and its continuum, but it does not suggest that every individual would pass through each of these stations during their youth. The first identity status is identity diffusion which represents a lower identity exploration. So, basically, the young individual here has no goals or established sense of personal identity. The second identity status is identity foreclosure that represents low degrees of discovering identity, yet the individual is not questioning his/her values and simply adjusting to what is implemented in their minds by their surroundings. The third status is named moratorium in which individuals undergo identity crises while exploring too many new concepts and being exposed to several life experiences, but they are not committed yet to make any crucial decisions. The last status is identity achievement which signifies higher degrees of both exploration and commitment toward identity where strong values are shaped and priorities as well as eliminating identity confusion. Marcia argues that during these stations some crises interrupt the formation of identity as they cause an inner conflict and a state of psychological upheaval that led to a sudden shock disrupting the four stations' process resulting in the progress to arrest in one of those stages without continuing with the correct order.

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III. The Postmodern Perception of the Troubled Self

The postmodern self is conceptually viewed as a consequence of emotional distress and deathlessness. The postmodern individual is wholly confined in a dilemma for not being fixed in terms of projecting one solid core or having one identity. Thus, a person existing within this time frame or era is a hybrid soul making her/his identity fully decentred and fluid, for the perception of the foundations of the world and the truth are shaken. Postmodernism posits a fragmented self that has no essence, only images. Fredric Jameson (1984) argues that the simple and indivisible ego-self existed at one time during the period of classical capitalism and the nuclear family, but has come to an end in the postmodern era. According to Kenneth Gergen (1991) “postmodern culture erases the category of self... as the person is saturated with images from the media that ...furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self.” (Gergen 6)

The social psychologist Erving Goffman, whose work is considered the precursor of the postmodern theory and conception of the self, had influenced the contemporary literature writers by his theory of the postmodern transitory self. He states that “The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented.” (Goffman 252). Here Erving Goffman suggests a definition for identity claiming that it is not a feature that is innate within sane human beings; it is rather a practice or an element that is achieved collectively. In other terms, Goffman argues that identity is neither an individual choice nor a singular reflection. Interestingly, he epitomizes humans as actors pointing that life is a huge stage, borrowing the theatrical concept dramaturgy and making it an inspiration of his psychological theory that studies “the self” as well as the “Impression Management”. According to his theory, it is believed that humans use

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“impression management” to present themselves to other humans, as they hope they would be perceived or seen.

In his book the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman refers to identity as a performance where “actors” role plays according to different situations and according to the different people they are surrounded by. In his dramaturgical account of human interaction, he argues that humans display a series of masks while facing others controlling how they appear, and that they somehow have to reflect an image of themselves that the others find suitable in a never-ending attempt to juggle those masks on the stage of life. However, for Goffman there is no true self and that behind all those performances and masks there is actually no identifiable genuine performer except what is performed. Following this claim, he challenges and almost denies the idea that humans have a fixed “psychological identity.” He attaches the idea that is necessary to “Choose your self-presentations carefully, for what starts out as a mask may become your face.” (Goffman Np).

Therefore, Goffman’s self-presentation theory suggests a couple of interesting views, the first signifies the human psychological ability to constantly change and adapt “images” and “selves” attempting to hide any of their human imperfections based on specific strategies including: their appearance, their manners, and the social setting they detect. The second view denotes the flaws of this ability where there are higher chances at failing at adapting a selection of distinct identities which may lead to a mental shock, creating a barrier to even distinguish between the authentic genuine identity and the one used as a social mask.

IV. A Sociological Interpretation of Identity

The problem of understanding identity has mostly become essential for contemporary social psychologists. They focus on studying how identity is constructed through social groups in society and how these groups tend to interact with each other. For that reason,

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contemporary social psychologist such as Henry Tajfel, Charles Cooley, and Steph Lawler have suggested valid theories to improve decoding the social identity.

IV.1 Henry Tajfel: Social Identity Theory

Henry Tajfel and his former student John Turner have reestablished interpreting social identity theory in their work *Human Groups and Social Categories (1981)*. This theory suggests that individuals construct their identity through the sense of belonging to a social group in society to increase their self-esteem. This could be any social group of different categorizations such as religion (i.e., Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) or education, football team, family, nationality and others. Tajfel and Turner elucidate:

Part of a person's concept of self comes from the groups to which that person belongs. An individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups. A person might act differently in varying social contexts according to the groups they belong to, which might include a sports team they follow, their family, their country of nationality, and the neighborhood they live in, among many other possibilities. (Tajfel and Turner np).

The small classifications tend to reflect the desires, goals and interests of that person, so often he/she points to a specific social group to describe his/her identity. Tajfel suggests two main groups known as the in-groups and the "out-groups" (us versus them). The "in-groups" are the group that the self belongs to, and the out-group refers to other social groups such as the Jews versus Nazis.

Correspondingly, Tajfel and Turner have created three stages for social identity theory. The first one is social categorization. This stage reflects how people classify others and

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themselves through the division of categories. They identify people with these groups such as Asians, American, German, male, female, white, black and others. This classification gives certain information about who these people are and how they behave, so it helps the person to interact with them according to each group of norms and interests. The second stage is the social identification. At this stage, the person identifies himself/herself in relation to a specific social group and acts in its manner. If one identifies himself/herself as a politician, he/she likely adopts a politician's way of behaving. Social comparison, as a finale stage, intensifies the judgments of people to other social groups as they tend to juxtapose their identity with others.

IV.2 The Looking Glass-self

Another identity theory is the looking glass-self theory that is developed by the social psychologist Charles Cooley. It portrays how individuals rely on other people's opinions to identify themselves. He believes that a part of shaping identity comes from judgments of others around us. 'Looking glass' is a symbol that reflects other's judgments as Cooley suggests: "I am not what I think I am, and I am not what you think I am. I am what I think you think I am." (Cooley np). The mirror represents people who influence a person's decisions, so they become a reflection of one's formation of identity. Additionally, the more a person interacts with them, the more likely they are to influence his/her behaviors. If an individual starts working as a teacher for the first time, he/she starts interacting with other colleagues and students that could value his/her worth. If students positively respond to his/her efforts, the teacher will likely feel skillful. If they respond with a negative feedback, the teacher will doubt his/her teaching skills. This example shows that students are manifested as a mirror to the teacher's value and worth.

Society in Focus adjusts the three principals of the looking glass theory. First one is that human's consciousness always pays attention to other's judgmental assumptions as it is

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explained, “An individual in a social situation imagines how they appear to others.” (91) . Secondly, people predict what others will say about them as it is mentioned, “that individual imagines other judgments of that appearance.” and finally, people already prepare what to respond for other’s sights which are also designated as follows: “the individual develops feelings about and responds to those perceived judgments.” (Thompson et al 91). In brief, the three principals explain how the looking glass theory is effective to understand how social identity is constructed as it also adheres that social identity is fluid and situational.

IV.3 Masquerade: The Art of Constructing an Identity

The theory that tends to explore the reason behind human’s identification through other’s interactions is exhibited in Steph Lawler’s book *Identity from sociological perspective*. It gives a tangible idea of how identity is socially viewed. Steph argues that “identity needs to be understood not as belonging _within’ the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations.” (19). For her, the idea of the real identity or self is built via the human’s personal self-evaluation. She thinks that the self is a combination of life experiences and memories to which humans construct their own characteristics from others because each one has his or her own journey in life; therefore, identity is equally combined from self-experiences and social ones, hence this personal identity narration results an autobiography as she clarifies:

Relationship between identity and autobiography is not that autobiography (the telling of a life) reflects a pre-given identity: rather, identities are produced through the autobiographical work in which all of us engage every day, even though few of us will formally write an _autobiography’. The narratives we produce in this context are stories of how we come to be the way we are. But it

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is through the narratives themselves that we produce our identities in this way.
(26).

Steph explains that humans often wear a mask not to fake their identity, but to reflect their real intentions. The reason behind humans masquerading is not to pursue acting, but to practice their real identity because performing allows them to discover their real essence, as she says “perhaps for self-preservation – but there is assumed to be a real person _behind’ the mask. In most cases, this _real person’ is assumed to be more authentic than the _mask’ or _masquerade.” (117). Socializing through masquerading constructs the person’s identity, thus this identity is not purely fake, but it reflects the person’s real interests; therefore, people perform their own identities as Lawler suggests “We become (social) persons through performing ourselves.” (118). Lawler thinks that identities are fluid and keep reforming, so humans always construct new ones or having many identities at the same time.

V. Free Will and Determinism

The concept of Free Will is quite complicated to be explained. It certainly calls for ambiguity that most theologians struggle to define without the need to involve additional concepts such as moral responsibility and determination. Free will as a state is the ability and availability of choice out of several courses of actions, as it had constantly caused a debate while tracing its nature; some believe in the view of libertarian free will where humans are metaphysically able to act freely. For others, the courses of actions and their effects have external causes; therefore, they are fully pre-determined and that is known as hard determinism which leaves no space for free will to exist. John Locke contributed to both personal identity and the free will vs. determinism debate. He regarded free will as a conceptual confusion in relation to the concept of power. Where his stands may have been interpreted incorrectly, Locke believes that free will is an illusion by taking a hard determinist

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position which denotes that moral agent⁴ have no freedom to choose and that their choices are predetermined. Therefore, there is no need to praise good deeds since the moral agent had no other choice but to do so. He developed a determinism theory based on universal causation⁵, leading to the conclusion that every single event that happened or would happen is determined by past causes.

VI. Free Will: An Existential Viewing

Existentialism attempts to explore the problems related to human existence. Free will has also been one of the main concepts that existentialists have different views about. Jean Paul Sartre believes that humans are free to become and do whatever they want as long as they take full responsibility for any choice they make. In his book *Being and Nothingness* he states that “Man is condemned to be free because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.” (Sartre 337) In those lines he describes humans as condemned to be free to create a purpose for their existence that they did not create. Consequently, humans own free will on earth that allows them to create their own essences and become aware of them, thus, humans are their choices.

Sartre took a libertarian stance believing that in terms of making decisions, moral agents are totally free and are morally responsible over the outcomes of their actions. For Sartre, humans are able to grasp their free will naturally because they possess a consciousness of their own existence, enabling them to consider all different possibilities and results; in other terms, he claims that there is a distance between the consciousness and the physical world, he calls a gap, which is what allows moral agents to own the freedom of their will. Furthermore, Sartre uses reverse psychology to demonstrate how moral agents have free will

⁴ Moral agent (physiopedia) taken from moral agency which means the ability to take ethical decisions based on the notions of right and wrong.

⁵ Universal causation is the proposition that everything in universe has a cause and an effect.

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as he claims that humans somehow deceive themselves by faking their freedom to avoid blame in which he calls bad faith.

VII. Free Will under the Shades of Postmodernism

The French philosopher Michel Foucault convincingly believes that there is freedom only where there is power. As this may seem inconsistent, for whenever power exists, freedom is confined or it is simply oppressed. However, for Foucault, the interrogation itself concerning whether human thoughts, life events, and decisions are a result of a free will or a determination of fate would be taken into political and social depths. Foucault views free will like a package that is a part of the human essence, though, it is partly complex to determine upon which basis that freedom affects one's core since he considers free will as a life accessory. Moreover, he extracts the concept of freedom of choice and decision from the concept of power in his book *The Subject and Power*, he explains in regard that "freedom must resist the exercise of power which finally aims at totally determining it..." and he goes beyond the concept of free will itself to explain that freedom of choice is the main condition of power in order to break from the social control over the political stands and representations of people.

In contrast, whenever power is imposed freedom of the collective is reduced; therefore, the individual free will is oppressed and almost non-existing. However, Foucault never denies the human freedom of will instead; he suggests that individuals are less free when power is applied as a discipline to control them socially. Additionally, power represents all the factors that hold any sort of influence over the process of decision-making and which can interfere with the reaction of individuals to the discipline of power and mainly making them not resist it which is the negative aspect of the disbelief of freedom.

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Conclusion

To conclude, Postmodernism has strongly publicized the sceptic ideology to embrace the multiplicity of interpretations and reject the transcendent truth. Therefore, it also rejects the conventional formation of identity and the total freedom to will. Identity could be viewed from various perspectives; however, it is generally agreed that the formation of identity is unstable and changeable in society. Hence, this instability and the will to belong to these conventions could lead to serious problems both mentally and socially. Postmodernists are doubtful about the extension of free will, as they ostracize the illusion of the absolute freedom of will.

Chapter Two

The Issue of Identity in Kurt Vonnegut's

Mother Night.

Chapter Two the Issue of Identity in Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night*.

"We are what we pretend to be" (Kurt Vonnegut)

Introduction

Mother Night is an autobiography that narrates the confession of the protagonist, the playwright Howard Campbell Junior, who shares his unexpected experience being a Nazi propagandist and an American spy. As an American soldier who survived the bombing of Dresden during the Second World War, Kurt Vonnegut uses his personal experience during the war as an inspiration to write *Mother Night*. Vonnegut's fiction heavily contains the subject of identity crisis, as he portrays the characters as detached from themselves and others and they suffer from self-emptiness. Additionally, they are disconnected from reality and always attempting to question the purpose of their existence. His characters often struggle with trust and loyalty, so they try to seek explanation, but eventually they seem powerless. *Mother Night* is a story with a morality, as he describes it: "The only story of mine whose moral I know." (1). This morality happens to be "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." (1). The story does not depict the tragic images of the bloody battles, but is about the power of propaganda, espionage, and masqueraded identities that are regarded as the main factors of mental trauma, self-delusion, and absurdity of meaning.

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I. *Mother Night*: A Postmodern Reading

The novel depicts a postmodern setting. It portrays a delusional confused timeline and almost unorganized story narration as it contains unchronological order of events that may confuse the reader due to the large use of plot twists and flash backs. The novel contains conspicuous postmodern literary techniques such as Metafiction, intertextuality, first person narration and dark humor.

The novel is an autobiography of the protagonist, Campbell. It indicates the use of metafiction considering that it is a self-reflexive oeuvre. At the beginning, Vonnegut indicates that he edited the protagonist's story and glimpsed a note that Campbell, with his criminal past could be unreliable as a playwright; therefore, the entire story is only viewed from Campbell's perspective as he states: "To say that he was a writer is to say that the demands of art alone were enough to make him lie, and to lie without seeing any harm in it". (Vonnegut 01). Kurt points to readers that they cannot trust a criminal playwright and propagandist; however, he continues to hint that some truths could be deciphered from his confessions stating, "now that I've said that about lying, I will risk the opinion that lies told for the sake of artistic effect—in the theater, for instance, and in Campbell's confessions, perhaps—can be, in a higher sense, the most beguiling forms of truth". (1). Finally, Vonnegut uses the first-person narration to give the protagonist a voice.

Vonnegut appears in the novel as a reader instead of an author. As he leaves inklings stating that he is only the editor for this autobiography and voices his opinion about the

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credibility of the protagonist's confession hints at the notion of the death of the author⁶. He glorifies the opinion of readers through honoring himself as a reader; furthermore, it indicates the adoption of the contemporary death of the author concept which mainly suggests the obliviousness of the author.

One of the conspicuous techniques used by Vonnegut is intertextuality. The latter is highly used during the postmodern epoch. It is when the author mentions other's writings or popular references in his/her novel either for paying homage or for symbolizing. Kurt Vonnegut has noted that the title is an inspiration from the German legend of Faust which is written by Goethe; therefore, it is mentioned in one of the devil's speeches "I am a part of the part that at first was all, part of the darkness that gave birth to the light, that supercilious light which now disputes with Mother Night her ancient rank and space, and yet cannot succeed; no matter how it struggles, it sticks to matter and can't get free." (Goethe 55). It is a tribute towards Goethe's own version of the Faust's in which he sold his soul to the devil just to reach the ultimate desire of accomplishments, despite this success, he remains unsatisfied. Faust's tragic death as an irrational lonely person resembles Campbell's situation, likewise his approval to serve Frank Wirtanen's demands by being a Nazi. He fails to find a purpose.

Dark Humor is another technique that often appears in most Vonnegut's novels as he is quite known for the use of dark humor. It is the ability to tell jokes about serious topics such as terror, death, depression and suicide with a sense of comedy. *Mother Night* outlines dark humor in several scenes as one of the jokes appears during Campbell's conversation with a guard in prison stating:

⁶ The concept of "the death of the author" glorifies the reader's view and tends to neglect the author's influence behind his own manuscripts. Authors usually denies their credibility for writing their works. It is famously adopted by Roland Barthes and later continues to influence contemporary literature.

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Bernard Mengel, a Polish Jew who guards me from midnight until six in the morning, is also a man my age. He once saved his own life in the Second World War by playing so dead that a German soldier pulled out three of his teeth without suspecting that Mengel was not a corpse. The soldier wanted Mengel's three gold inlays. He got them." (16).

Another joke is shown when Resi got rid of a noose, as Campbell states "Resi put the noose in the ash can, where it was found the next morning by a garbage-man named Lazlo Szombathy. Szombathy actually hanged himself with it—but that is another story". (115). He later reveals that the reason why Szombathy killed himself is because nobody believed he had a cure for cancer.

II. Warfare and Ferocity in *Mother Night*

Kurt Vonnegut introduces the theme of war perfectly for the horrors endured during World War II. Through *Mother Night* the theme of war is prominent; though the plot is set fifteen years after the Second World War ended, the reader is taken back and forth into the scenes and images that indicate times of conflict and war. It is not a gruesomely bloody novel, but it certainly describes what makes the Second World War horrific if compared to other previous wars, where the element of political propaganda was performed by the protagonist, Howard Campbell. As he confesses, "The medium of my war crimes was radio broadcasting. I was a Nazi radio propagandist, a shrewd and loathsome anti-Semite." (13) The protagonist Howard W. Campbell, Jr, a war criminal known as a Nazi and an American spy who ends up being on trial for the war crimes that he had committed which for some reason had a part in killing six million Jews. Furthermore, the novel contains the confessions of Campbell and how he was recruited as a spy for America at the age of 26. The confessions depicted clear images of war mostly when he

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described the scenes of burned corpses that were as filling the battle fields or when he spoke of all the differently ranked military men he had encountered. This could be seen in this passage:

My father and mother left Germany in 1939, when war came. My wife and I stayed on. I earned my keep until the war ended in 1945 as a writer and broadcaster of Nazi propaganda to the English-speaking world. I was the leading expert on American problems in the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. When the war was ending, I was high on the list of war criminals, largely because my offenses were so obscenely public. (14)

Notably, Campbell's depiction of the events implies a further sign of war specifically while mentioning the major destruction caused by war but not only the damage caused by machinery but mostly that caused by the political propaganda; and the element of espionage which in World War II played along with the massive media role in modern warfare.

III. The Religious and Patriotic Credos in *Mother Night*

Although the concept of religion in the novel is not present in the conventional sense; nonetheless, Kurt Vonnegut certainly immersed a sense of devotion within it. This, however, could be sensed through the Nazis' zeal and commitment to their ideology or as the white supremacists, like the secondary character Lionel David Jones, are devoted to their supremacy and hatred for the Jews more than they were ever devoted to God. The novel is explicitly containing concepts like faith, patriotism, and nationalism to the point it may become difficult to distinguish which belief stands most and what the characters could do for the things they believe in the most. As expressed in this regard:

When I got home, there was plenty of new mail in my mailbox, almost all of it from subscribers to The White Christian Minuteman. The common theme was that

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I was not alone, was not friendless. A woman in Mount Vernon, New York, told me there was a throne in Heaven for me. A man in Norfolk said I was the new Patrick Henry. A woman in St. Paul sent me two dollars to continue my good work. She apologized. She said that was all the money she had. A man in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, asked me why I didn't get out of Jew York and come live in God's country. (37)

The impression this passage implies is how zealous some people may be for their national and racial identities that they started considering them as their actual faith or rather their own religious doctrine that they obey and remain loyal to. The consequences of both blind faith and belief and lack of humanity combined are frightening; so scary that a whole nation of Nazis stood for decades defending what to them was a religious construct, especially after Hitler's attempt to include the Christian doctrine within the agenda of the Third Reich⁷. At some instances it is even more complicated to distinguish between who was a nationalist, who was patriotic, and who was nationless. In fact, it is what Campbell believed himself represented, "My name is Howard W. Campbell, Jr. I am an American by birth, a Nazi by reputation, and a nationless person by inclination." (10) Though he acts pretty patriotic at times, he seems to never notice.

IV. Perfidy

One of the novel's dominant themes is treason within the frame of war. It is definitely not that hard to notice that the protagonist Howard Campbell is the first to confess his betrayal to a nation or more likely to two nations. The American spy served America, his mother land, but he was barely ever given credits for his contribution after the war. By contrast, while living in Germany, he betrayed the nation and the people he loved for the sole reason of fulfilling his ego

⁷ Nazi Germany, it was the German state between 1933 and 1945 under Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party control.

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of becoming a real-life Hero. Ironically enough like Vonnegut believes it is odd how one could become a traitor by title, but not by nature, Campbell had absolutely no idea about the consequences of his treason and that he was taking part in the extermination of six million Jews. For him he was only in charge of sending implicit codes in the form of coughs and silent pauses while he broadcasted his Nazi propaganda radio show, without noticing that at the same time he excellently served Nazis in spreading the propaganda and hate speech against what Nazis hated the most; the Jews.

'Because I hated you so much,' he said, 'I studied you. I listened to everything you said. I never missed a broadcast.'

'I didn't know that,' I said.

'No one knows everything,' he said. 'Did you know,' he said, 'that until almost this very moment nothing would have delighted me more than to prove that you were a spy, to see you shot?'

'No,' I said.

'And do you know why I don't care now if you were a spy or not?' he said. 'You could tell me now that you were a spy, and we would go on talking calmly, just as we're talking now. I would let you wander off to wherever spies go when a war is over. You know why?' he said.

'No,' I said.

'Because you could never have served the enemy as well as you served us,' he said.

'I realized that almost all the ideas that I hold now, that make me unashamed of anything I may have felt or done as a Nazi, came not from Hitler, not from

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Goebbels, not from Himmler — but from you.' He took my hand. 'You alone kept me from concluding that Germany had gone insane.' (46-47)

For a second this sounds paradoxical that the protagonist realises that while being a spy for America, he is the perfect version of a Nazi serving the nation he had been spying on, which is why the protagonist appear to have an unstable identity and severely chaotic intentions.

Diving further into the novel, readers sense other forms of disloyalty; completely distinguished from betraying a nation, but still devastating treachery acts by other characters that try to justify it with their own reasons; as one could justify it in the name of love while the other might justify it with nationalism.

My wife never knew I was a spy. I would have lost nothing by telling her. My telling her wouldn't have made her love me less. My telling her wouldn't have put me in any danger. It would simply have made my heavenly Helga's world, which was already something to make The Book of Revelation seem pedestrian. The war was enough without that. My Helga believed that I meant the nutty things I said on the radio, said at parties. We were always going to parties. (25)

The passage is self-explanatory as it raises a question whether or not betrayal could ever be justified by love, but if love justifies betrayal the issue would be that there is no place for both. The novel is also littered with other instances of backstabbing; for instance, Campbell's friend, George Kraft and the woman he claimed to love Resi Noth both turn out to be soviet spies who were all along plotting to help capture Howard for a trial held by Israel. This scene of disloyalty is seen in the lines:

'I agree,' he said. 'But there's a lot of mystery about why the Russians should think you were such a fat prize.'

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'Russians?' I said. 'What Russians?'

'The girl, Resi Noth — and the old man, the painter, the one called George Kraft,' said Wirtanen. 'They're both communist agents. We've been watching the one who calls himself Kraft now since 1941. We made it easy for the girl to get into the country just to find out what she hoped to do.'(85)

In this scene the protagonist is shocked by the fact that his closest friend Kraft is acting behind back for a long time and that he is trusting the wrong person this whole time, additionally the woman that promised to love him is also not the innocent devoted lover she always claimed to be.

V. Obsession Disguised as Love

Although the novel tells the story of a war criminal who is in conflict between good and evil, it is full of love and devotion as seen in the bond Campbell had with his wife Helga Noth. The novel contains romance that these two constructed as an escape path from the cruel world, creating an idealistic version where there is no place for war or politics. The love they had also reflected this ideal love on stage since he wrote plays for his beautiful wife actress.

Good Lord — as youngsters play their parts in political tragedies with casts of billions, uncritical love is the only real treasure they can look for. Das Reich der Zwei, the nation of two my Helga and I had its territory, the territory we defended so jealously, didn't go much beyond the bounds of our great double bed. Flat, tufted, springy little country, with my Helga and me for mountains. And, with nothing in my life making sense but love. (25)

Howard Campbell found his inspiration and will to live in Helga, which is why after her death he never seems to be the same. He describes his world as dark and dismal when death took her away

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from him, he utters "And so, with my Helga presumed dead, I became a death-worshipper, as content as any narrow-minded religious nut anywhere. Always alone, I drank toasts to her, said good morning to her, said good night to her, played music for her, and didn't give a damn for one thing else." (27) from this scene and further, Campbell became a man with no home.

VI. The Significance of Propaganda

During the Second World War, Adolf Hitler and his predecessors contributed to grow the Nazi party mainly through endorsing their beliefs such as expanding Europe, eliminating the Jews, and creating a healthy German superior race. The Nazis principals have been rooted from scientific knowledge and historical narrations; consequently, they have adopted science and history to justify the German supremacy.

Campbell, as a Nazi propagandist, is approximately unaware of the serious drawbacks of his propaganda and broadcast it until he caused the death of millions. The plot reflects the serious consequences of propaganda as it shows how it has a significant role at controlling people's opinions; furthermore, this serious influence of the general narrative such as the German supremacy and the Aryan race has been a matter of question to Jean Francois Lyotard, as he argues that the general historical narratives are used to serve higher authorities. The Nazi ideology is a total example of the dangerous drawbacks of these general narratives at humanity.

The plot highlights Howard's ability at brainwashing citizens; therefore, the plot reflects people's admiration for the representation of media and propaganda as he utters, "As a spy of the sort he described, I would have an opportunity for some pretty grand acting. I would fool everyone with my brilliant interpretation of a Nazi, inside and out. And I did fool everybody. I began to strut like Hitler's right-hand man, and nobody saw the honest me I hid so deep inside."

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(41). It explains one of Jean Baudrillard's stages of reality as he described people's shift towards the representation of reality more than the original. In this matter, Campbell's pretending (representation) of the Nazi's beliefs has manipulated people. Therefore, it is his talent at broadcasting that caught the interest of the audience more than the idea or the beliefs.

The power of propaganda echoes the power of knowledge. In this regard, it is adequate to follow Michel Foucault's ideas that entail that power is knowledge; in this case, the Nazi's propaganda generates a powerful ideology that influenced people. Campbell's ability at pretending and convincing caused the death of millions. As Campbell confesses, "That government was now requesting that the United States release me to Israel for trial. What did they want to try me for? Complicity in the murder of six million Jews." (114). Campbell succeeded to wedge the interest of his audience through influencing instead of threatening; furthermore, he achieved to obtain power through words.

VII. The Protagonist's Masquerade Identity: The Evil Nazi Vs. The American Hero

Howard Campbell starts his memoir entitled *Mother Night* by the statement which concludes mostly what the whole novel is about. "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." (5) It documents his journey along the other characters where each of them pretends to be someone she/he is not, reflecting major identity issues in the attempt to construct new identities while keeping their genuine selves in the shadows. The prime character undergoes severe identity issues as he is stuck between his dual identities, which make him struggle to have a clear essence or intentions. The latter is questioned later on for the fact that Campbell grew up in Germany adapting to the German societal, cultural norms, and political stands erasing any attachment to his American nation; yet, it is confusing to understand the

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reason behind becoming an American spy and risking his own life and blurring his true simple identity especially that he had gained nothing in return. Campbell's dual identity challenges his beliefs, though he had never had an interest in politics nor in conflicts, it eventually led to him taking a stand with a side he probably never belonged to. The mystifying part is that the reason beyond his falsification of identity never seems to be fairly convincing or rather worthy, except that his love for acting as a playwright was beyond description. At first Campbell seems to wear the fake identity of the evil Nazi so perfectly that most people were convinced. Even so, towards the end he completely loses the motive and the will towards anything in life. It could be the feeling of guilt for all of the crimes against humanity he had partaken. The following passage portrays the character's uncertainty

I froze.

It was not guilt that froze me. I had taught myself never to feel guilt

It was not a ghastly sense of loss that froze me. I had taught myself to covet nothing.

It was not a loathing of death that froze me. I had taught myself to think of death as a friend. It was not heartbroken rage against injustice that froze me. I had taught myself that a human being might as well took for diamond tiaras in the gutter as for rewards and punishments that were fair.

It was not the thought that I was so unloved that froze me. I had taught myself to do without love.

It was not the thought that God was cruel that froze me. I had taught myself never to expect anything from Him.

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What froze me was the fact that I had absolutely no reason to move in any direction. What had made me move through so many dead and pointless years was curiosity. (100)

It is more puzzling to attempt to differentiate whether Campbell was the evil Nazi or the good American or even both. For it does not seem that any of the guilt, fear, nor nationality were valid reasons for him to pretend to be the vicious Nazi so as to construct a new identity. Consequently, Campbell's conflict between evilness and goodness is prominent. Although it was not a physical shape of harm, it was of a moral form according to Wilhelm Leibniz's three forms of evil of the world⁸ which can be supported in his claim that he had no idea what type of harm he was doing by his actions: "I do not know to this day what information went out through me. From the simplicity of most of my instructions, I gather that I was usually giving yes or no answers to questions that had been put to the spy apparatus." (20) Hence, he proceeds to contradict his own self by admitting that it was curiosity that had made him go after what the blue fairy godmother offered him.

VIII. The Protagonist's Identity Formation: A Freudian Perception

According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory regarding the development of identity and personality, there is a balance between reality and the human mind. It is a complex concept that has three components known as the Id, Ego, and Superego. His theory is based on his observations of his patients and their behaviours depending on their personality formations. It suggests that the mind works between conscious and unconscious levels and shapes the personality of individuals in which their decisions and values are formed accordingly as they

⁸ According to the German philosopher Wilhelm Leibniz there are three forms of evil in the world moral, physical, and metaphysical

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mature. The Id, being the first part of personality to emerge, is motivated by the pleasure principle. Whereas the ego is guided by the rational principle, it operates to guide the Id to express socially accepted behaviours; although it is based on rational secondary thinking, it still seeks pleasure in attempt to match with reality. Regardless of what is right or wrong, it is the closest representation to the self-image that individuals reflect. At last, the superego is the moral compass of each one's personality that upholds the senses of right and wrong. It initially starts developing values taken from the parents up until one is able to develop her/his own, the superego operates through two more aspects that are responsible for the feeling of guilt and pride, which are respectively the conscience and the ego ideal.

The healthy version of personality is the outcome of the balance between all these components, which means any lack of balance or stability would lead to inconveniences and issues related to how the self reflects and behaves overall. If a person's Id dominates her/his personality, it would lead them to act upon their impulses that can go against societal norms or even worse scenarios of committing acts against humanity like in some cases of psychological disorders. Imposing this psychoanalysis on the protagonist's nature and self-image can reveal where lies the issue of Howard Campbell's psyche as well as what could be the reason why he chose to be the evil Nazi. Howard Campbell's Id dominating his identity shows throughout the novel in many scenes, initially when Campbell deliberately submitted to what satisfies his need for becoming an actor. This is seen within his confession:

He didn't mention the best reason for expecting me to go on and be a spy. The best reason was that I was a ham. As a spy of the sort he described, I would have an opportunity for some pretty grand acting. I would fool everyone with my brilliant interpretation of a Nazi, inside and out. And I did fool everybody. I began to strut

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like Hitler's right-hand man, and nobody saw the honest me I hid so deep inside.

(24)

This passage exhibits how the Id component of Howard Campbell dominated his personality concealing his sense of guilt. In fact, it is not only the part where he accepts to be a spy that is wrong, but it is the fact that he has not even considered the consequences of becoming someone that promotes propaganda and spread hatred speech against the Jews as well as the rest of the races. Furthermore, observing Howard Campbell's display of emotions shows that at the beginning he feels no such feelings of remorse or guilt up until he loses his wife and is caught that his conscience part of the superego awakens. In contrast, the protagonist seems to undergo the feeling of guilt for two possible reasons, it is either after realising the atrocious crimes he is part of while his position as a spy, or that the tremendous feeling of failure that has caused him to rationalize that there is not a single thing he is left with; not even his love for acting and inspiration for masquerading. In this claim, he confesses:

I committed high treason, crimes against humanity, and crimes against my own conscience, and I got away with them until now. I got away with them because I was an American agent all through the war. My broadcasts carried coded information out of Germany. (20)

Campbell's conscience has overwhelmingly operated causing him to punish himself right at the end committing suicide, at least which is the scene that readers are left at.

IX. The Main Character's Identity Crisis According to Erik H. Erikson

The theorist Erik Erikson proposed a theory of psychological development named psychosocial development. It is likely to emphasize how the relationships one may have with

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others influence the development of her/his personality and essence. This, however, is perfectly seen in the formation of their identity. Erikson's theory is given credit for its first attempt to understand the human psychological development throughout their life span from birth to death. The process consists of eight stages and each stage contains a crisis that Erikson believes is natural for each one to go through. The stage that is mostly concerned with personal identity formation is the fifth stage known as identity vs. role confusion; this stage is significant for constructing a positive identity, as it is the stage where an adolescent would discover who he/she is while trying to understand their role within society. The most important thing during this stage that extends from 11 years old till adulthood is the nature of the relationship with parents and friends, and any conflict within this stage could either result in a strong identity to become a weak identity which falls into the category of role confusion.

Applying this psychological analysis onto understanding the protagonist's identity formation and its crisis must be traced back to the adolescence stage and examining the nature of the identity vs. role confusion stage. First, it appears that certain incidents at the protagonist's early age may have been stuck into his memory and that could be traumatizing other than witnessing the terrors of war. To support this claim, he describes the scenes of war as follows:

He never told me what the book meant to him, and I never asked him. All he ever said to me about it was that it wasn't for children, that I wasn't to look at it (...)

So, of course, I looked at it every time I was left alone. There were pictures of men hung on barbed wire, mutilated women, bodies stacked like cord-wood — all the usual furniture of world wars. (18)

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This passage shows Campbell writing his memoir as he speaks of the war and the traumatic scenes in a manner that is casual and well-preserved, as if it was not horrifying enough while these scenes would make any witness hysterically remember how bloody and scary the war was. As he claimed, his curiosity had always been his motive to try things; therefore, it is the reason he pretends to be someone he is not. In this sense, it is clear that the conflict partaken during the process of forming Howard Campbell's identity failed resulting in major role confusion, thus, a never-stable identity.

I remember a time when she filled a saucer with a mixture of rubbing alcohol and table salt. She put the saucer on the kitchen table, turned out all the lights, and had me sit facing her across the table. And then she touched off the mixture with a match. The flame was almost pure yellow, a sodium flame, and it made her look like a corpse to me, made me look like a corpse to her. 'There — ' she said, 'that's what we'll look like when we're dead.' This queer demonstration not only scared me; it scared her, too. My mother scared herself with her own queerness, and from that moment on I ceased to be her companion. From that moment on she hardly spoke to me — cut me dead, I'm sure, out of fear of doing or saying something even crazier. (18)

Furthermore, as a sequel to the precedent events that has an impact on the young Campbell, his relationship with his mother takes a wrong turn once the mother started showing symptoms of unstable mental health which created mistrust and a gap that only widened with time; until the day both his parents left Germany where he refused to join them, for Campbell never belonged with them. The past experience Campbell has gone through with his parents as well being a

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lonely child in addition the terrors of war have led to his role confusion which resulted in the formation of a troubled weak identity, as Erikson describes it as a “weak personal identity.”

X. The Protagonist as the Great Actor

The confessions memoir of the main character Howard Campbell Jr. exhibit how passionate he was for acting and the stage-life as a playwright; however, he does not seem to be devoted to acting only in theatre, but also in real life. Erving Goffman suggests a contemporary psychology theory denoting that all humans are actors and that life is their huge stage; while interacting with other humans they are on the front-stage, whereas, when they are alone, they are on the backstage. The psychologist Erving Goffman believes that humans have no individual personal identity, but rather they have a selection of identities that are displayed in the form of masks. As he states that, “Choose your self-presentations carefully, for what starts out as a mask may become your face.” (Goffman 234). His theory implies that the identity or face one would wear is based on the way they feel or belong to a certain group and accordingly they would behave.

Howard Campbell had been exposed to the Nazi German social setting at a young age as well as marrying a Nazi actress in addition to serving the Nazi Germans. While adopting their ideology and incarnating the best version of a Nazi one could ever be, he wore one mask that was not naturally related to his interest nor that represented his true self. However, Campbell wore the mask perfectly so that it became his permanent face while his genuine self-remained beneath. “And I did fool everybody. I began to strut like Hitler's right-hand man, and nobody saw the honest me I hid so deep inside.” (24). Ultimately, Howard Campbell could not take off the mask even whilst his safest place on earth; even in the nation of two he and his wife created.

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XI. The Social Identity Crisis of Characters

Howard Campbell's identity is questionable as no one seems to distinguish his real self as well as the other novel's characters that seem to pretend in front of each other; therefore, the character's connection with each other has a huge reason behind their identity crisis. In this regard, it is mandatory to explore the reasons behind their identity crisis from a sociological perspective.

Howard Campbell claims that the only thing that he believes is his love for Helga. Everything seems meaningless to him. In the sense, even his masquerade as an American spy and a Nazi propagandist is pointless. His true self comes from interacting with Helga as he expresses: "No matter what I was really, no matter what I really meant, uncritical love was what I needed—and my Helga was the angel who gave it to me." (44). He finds his true identity only around his wife as he says, "And when that nation ceased to be, I became what I am today and what I always will be, a stateless person." (45). After the death of Helga, Howard turns into an empty irrational soul. It shows that Helga's interaction caused the loss of his identity as it seems that his self has been deconstructed due to the relationship; therefore, social associations affect his identity. This could also be applied to Resi's identity crisis for being a Russian spy and "her sister"; therefore, due to her relationship with Campbell, she deconstructed her old identity to become Helga, hence social relationships and interactions provoke the character's identity crisis.

Steph Lawler suggests that people's identity comes from their pretending. The mask that they wear has a part of shaping their identity. Hence, Campbell's pretense allows him to practice his own self as long as the masquerade act continues. This, nonetheless, explains the reason behind his suicidal attempt even after clearing his criminal past from court.

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Another character who pursued masquerading by the name of Kraft is also attached to his acting as a Russian spy regardless of his old identity as a man of art, he continues to work for the Soviets to capture Campbell as he utters, "It was typical of his schizophrenia as a spy that he should also be a true friend of mine, and that he should eventually think of a way to use me cruelly in advancing the Russian cause." (52). He suffers from identity crisis between being both Campbell's good friend and enemy; nonetheless, he leans towards his identity as a spy over his old one due to his attachment to that mask.

All of the three characters believe that they were pretending to be something that they were not, which either caused their death or identity crises. Their real identities are, in fact, the roles they were playing as they view life as a stage where acting is acceptable. They subconsciously are attached to the representation of themselves as for Campbell's obsession with theatre, he finally admits: "I'm damn sorry I didn't," I said. "You would think that a man who's spent as much time in the theater as I have would know when the proper time came for the hero to die—if he was to be a hero." (Campbell 141). He lived and died for pretending as he creates a perfect playwright at the extent of his own life in order to leave behind him an artistic autobiography.

Conclusion

Identity in the novel's plot is regarded as fluid. However, the protagonist and the characters are depicted to have no original identities, for the latter is considered as a performance rather than a crucial essence. Vonnegut wants to show that life is meaningless through portraying that the human identity is an issue where people attempt to find a solution to fix it on the big stage of life. Additionally, he believes that people tend to season the stories they narrate about themselves with flavors and "lies" to give the impression that they are original, and they have a

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purpose. At last, if performing stops, life loses its meaning, for this is what the postmodern epoch imposes: the absurdity of life, fluidity of identities, and lack of the absolute truth.

Chapter Three

Scrutinizing Free Will in Kurt Vonnegut's

Mother Night.

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Introduction

The problem of free will is a crucial subject to be tackled as philosophers tend to construe it differently. The recent contemporary post-war studies escalate the necessity of intensifying the issue of free will and determinism. The latter is depicted in some of Vonnegut's novels; mainly *Mother Night* as he interrogates the extent to which characters attain their will. For such a purpose, this chapter exposes the problem of freedom of will and its relation to fate and determinism.

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I. Exposing the Issue of Free Will and Fate

The novel unfolds the character's journey to find their freedom of will. During the period of war, society is pressured to follow authorities in order to survive; thus, the war has affected people's freedom as it forces them to commit inhuman behaviors which increase their sense of evilness. Characters seem to resist determinism by pursuing their own desires and decisions, but perhaps their decisions turn against them, especially during the war. This is seen when Frank tells Campbell that no one is safe after the Nazis held power, arguing: "I wish you all the luck in the world, Mr. Campbell,' he said, 'but this war isn't going to let anybody stay in a peaceful trade. And I'm sorry to say it,' he said, 'but the worse this Nazi thing gets, the less you're gonna sleep like a log at night.'" (23). Frank highlights the danger of war; however, Campbell seems to admire the idea of being a spy when he declares "He didn't mention the best reason for expecting me to go on and be a spy. The best reason was that I was a ham. As a spy of the sort he described, I would have an opportunity for some pretty grand acting." (24). Readers, therefore, can sense Campbell's desire for joining the Nazis to pursue his acting skills; however, one cannot assure since he is a German immigrant, he is already influenced and manipulated by their ideology.

The affection of fate is present in the novel. The death of the protagonist's wife has decreased his will to live as he seems to have rebuffed her death. The latter is seen when he admits "when I had to suppose that my Helga was dead, I would have liked to mourn as an agonized soul, indivisible, but no. One part of me told the world of the tragedy in code. The rest of me did not even know that the announcement was being made." (81). Campbell seems hopeless after the tragedy of his wife.

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The antagonist Resi Noth is a hopeless character who seems dismissed to her fate. In other words, life is pointless and inane. Interestingly, her vision clarifies that everything is beyond her will and war is determined to happen as she clarifies:

You'll die,' she said. 'So I hear ' I said. 'Maybe not.' 'Everybody who isn't dead is going to be dead very soon now,' she said. She didn't seem to care much. 'Not everybody,' I said. 'I will be,' she said. 'I hope not,' I said. 'I'm sure you'll be fine,' I said. 'It won't hurt when I get killed,' she said. 'Just all of a sudden I won't be any more,' she said.' (48).

Resi, in this scene, appears to be pessimistic about her fate and does not believe in free will as she seems to be dismissed to warfare and careless about life as death signifies nothing.

It is worth pointing that the issue of the free will is tackled differently. The characters suffer between finding the right decision and facing unexpected events. They are hardly trying to escape certain fatalist moments in some scenes, whereas in other scenes they seem to be amenable to their fate. The characters want to play with identity, fate and choices, but they are hopeless to achieve it. Kurt Vonnegut perceives life as a big stage where actors can pick any role and follow their will blindly; however, the realization of this fictional stage is mandatory. In other words, he highlights the fact that people's desires are free unlike the consequences of such freedom.

II. Evilness by Choice, Goodness by Nature

The dichotomy of good and evil has constantly been a conflict for as long as humans questioned their nature and constructed concepts such as morals. Thomas Hobbes states that both concepts of good and evil are merely related to what is desired and what is hated. For instance,

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the human behaviours that are hated and not accepted by the majority are considered evil. Regardless of the act itself, it is based on the consequences of the act. Hence, if these acts are undesirable, the action is naturally classified as evil. The novel's character falls into the dilemma of good and evil where the protagonist and other characters seem to undergo the battle of good and bad deeds for distinct reasons. Prominently, the prime character Howard Campbell is visualised as a vicious Nazi criminal who resembles evilness. This idea is described as follows:

He took a step toward me, his eyes wide. 'Here I come, Campbell, out of the past'

'How do you do?' I said.

'You know what you are to me, Campbell?' he said.

'No,' I said.

'You're pure evil,' he said. 'You're absolutely pure evil.'

'Thank you,' I said.

'You're right — it is a kind of compliment,' he said. 'Usually a bad man's got some good in him — almost as much good as evil. But you — ' he said, 'you're the pure thing. For all the good there is in you, you might as well be the Devil'

'Maybe I am the Devil,' I said. (108)

Campbell practices moral evil, unsympathetically, at the beginning as he willingly aspires to serve himself only and looks after his welfare at the expense of other individuals and principles. Campbell appears to be the perpetrator at first sight rather than a victim for the sole reason of participating in the holocaust, while admitting that his need for acting is the main reason that is urging him to pretend to be a Nazi and to commit those atrocious crimes. This idea is portrayed as follows:

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One thing I did hear that impressed me was their use of my last name, the sound of my last name.

'Kahm-boo,' they said again and again. That was Campbell to them.

That was the undiluted evil in me, the evil that had had its effect on millions, the disgusting creature good people wanted dead and underground —

'Kahm-boo.' (110)

Furthermore, when the war was over and all of Campbell's acting came to an end, he begins to realise that the reality is far different from his alleged stage-acting and that he played an evil role that impacted the lives of millions. In fact, he has ended their lives where his Nazi alter ego grew considering that he went after his love for acting as a playwright. Moreover, he realises his inhumanity and hatred towards ethnic Jews and that he loves Helga only of all humans.

On the other hand, Campbell gives the impression to be devilish and predisposed for the decisions he had taken all along his participation in the war. First, he does not seem to believe in the vicious acts he commits while pretending to be a Nazi. As he articulates:

I would prefer to dedicate it to one familiar person, male or female, widely known to have done evil while saying to himself, 'A very good me, the real me, a me made in heaven, Is hidden deep inside.'

I can think of many examples, could rattle them off after the fashion of a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song. But there is no single name to which I might aptly dedicate this book, unless it would be my own.

Let me honor myself in that fashion, then:

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This book is rededicated to Howard W. Campbell, Jr., a man who served evil too openly and good too secretly, the crime of his times. (8)

Howard Campbell dedicates this passage to himself in his original memoir showing that he was good beneath all his injustice and evil acts and that he was a man of peace; at least when he was not willingly delivering anti-Semitic coded messages in every radio broadcast. It almost seems that Campbell is schizophrenic as he appears to be an atrocious war criminal. Most importantly, he is fully convinced he was a good man that had no link to war as he behaved well while being alone and only desired love. Ostensibly, Campbell had schizophrenic loyalties to both his good and evil sides.

III. Frank Wirtanen: The Will to Serve Evil.

There is a mysterious character in the novel by the name of Major Frank Wirtanen. His identity seems to be ambiguous as the only information that seems to be revealed about him is his association with the American authority as a secret agent. Although there is not enough description about him, he makes several appearances to save Campbell from troubled situations, for this reason he is considered as the blue fairy God mother who saves the protagonist; however, this is not the essential reason for calling him blue fairy God mother, but the real reason, according to Campbell, is the uncertainty of his existence. Campbell claims that no one believes that he exists, for this purpose he calls him his blue fairy God mother.

The mystery of Frank's does not rely only on his identity, but the mastery over Campbell's decisions is what makes him an absorbing character. From their very first meeting, Frank seems to plan for Campbell's fate as he states:

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'That's a great coincidence. I was sitting over there wishing I could write, on account of I've thought up what I think a pretty good spy story.' 'That so?' I said. 'I might as well give it to you,' he said. 'I'll never write it.' 'I've got all the projects I can handle now,' I said. 'Well — some time you may run dry,' he said, 'and then you can use this thing of mine. There's this young American, see, who's been in Germany so long he's practically a German himself. He writes plays in German, and he's married to a beautiful German actress, and he knows a lot of big-shot Nazis who like to hang around theater people.' He rattled off the names of Nazis, great and small. (23).

Frank is a powerful and a devious secret agent. His request's manner caught the attention of Campbell when he mentions his favorite hobby which is playwriting; therefore, not only that Frank has already planned Campbell's fate, but also made his offer attractive as it is presented in this passage:

Let me finish my story first,' he said. 'So this young man knows there's a war coming, figures America's gonna be on one side and Germany's gonna be on the other. So this American, who hasn't been anything but polite to the Nazis up to then, decided to pretend he's a Nazi himself, and he stays on in Germany when war comes along, and gets to be a very useful American spy.' 'You know who I am?' I said. 'Sure,' he said. He took out his billfold, showed me a United States War Department identification card that said he was Major Frank Wirtanen, unit unspecified. 'And that's who I am. I'm asking you to be an American intelligence agent, Mr. Campbell.' (23).

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It explains Frank Wirtanen's desire to own Campbell's free will. By serving Frank as a Nazi, Campbell has already sold his freedom just to satisfy his egoism and pleasure as he confesses, "You make it sound very attractive,' I said. I think there's a chance I've made it attractive to you,' he said. 'I saw the play you've got running now, and I've read the one you're going to open.'" (24).

The relationship between Frank and Campbell resembles the folk legend of Faust with the devil. Their similarity is not a coincidence because Vonnegut has already left a clue for readers reflecting the title's inspiration from Faust's legend. The latter has various versions, but the accurate one pointed by Vonnegut is the one of the German author Goethe which elucidates the manipulation of the devil for Faust to sell his soul. Arguing from this resemblance, Campbell has agreed to sell his freedom to Frank by serving the Nazis just like how Faust sold his spirit to serve the devil "Mephistopheles".

One can also outline the similarity between Frank Wirtanen and Mephistopheles for they both are manipulative characters who want to control other's free will in addition to their double-standard egos between evil and goodness. Although they rescue their serves, they tend to control every alternative. Taking a closer examination at Mephistopheles, he sacrificed his position in heaven just to prove human's nature as pure evil by misguiding their choices as he utters "I am a part of the part that at first was all, part of the darkness that gave birth to the light, that supercilious light which now disputes with Mother Night." (Goethe 55). It also reflects the devil's awareness about human's free will to choose between good and evil. The character Frank has a similar characteristic with the devil as he seems to be already controlled by a higher authority and wants to test Campbell's state of evilness; furthermore, he is almost confident about Campbell's approval when he states, "we will see,' he said. 'That's why I said you wouldn't give

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me your final answer today. You'll live your final answer. If you decide to go ahead with it, you'll go ahead with it strictly on your own, working your way up with the Nazis as high as you can go." (23). It is a proof that everything is planned for Campbell to write this confession.

The story of Faust reflects the morality of *Mother Night*. Faust's legend proves that decisions could play a significant role in shaping one's fate, for this matter it is important to choose wisely. Frank's authority over Campbell's free will has a massive effect on Campbell's choices. It is safe to say that Campbell indeed sold his free will to Frank for self-satisfaction; however, he does not expect that such decisions would later confirm his identity as a criminal and evil, as he says:

'You think I was a Nazi?' I said. 'Certainly you were,' he said. 'How else could a responsible historian classify you? Let me ask you a question' 'Ask away,' I said. 'If Germany had won, had conquered the world — ' he stopped, cocked his head. 'You must be way ahead of me. You must know what the question is. (82).

Furthermore, it is difficult for him to accept his criminal identity, but fairy God mother's manipulation has convinced him that he is indeed an evil Nazi like what Mephistopheles did to Faust. Campbell feels responsible for his actions as he decides to surrender and attempt suicide to prove that he is a victim of war and politics as it is represented in this passage "Classify me as a Nazi,' I said tiredly. 'Classify away. Hang me, if you think it would tend to raise the general level of morality. This life is no great treasure. I have no postwar plans.'" (83).

According to Campbell's confession, he is a victim of politics as the influence of words affects his destiny; thus, selling his free will means selling his identity, his dreams, his goals and purpose. For this reason, he served Frank as Faust served Mephistopheles.

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IV. Predetermination and the Eccentricity of Free Will

In *Mother Night*, the struggle between choosing what is morally right and wrong is reflected through the characters; to each her/his battle: the freedom of choice, commitment, and the selection of identities that represent them. It should be acknowledged that the protagonist appears to be distressed with his identity in which it appears through his major masquerade during the World War II, pretending to be someone that is hateful towards Jews by choice while undergoing the racial battle and influencing a whole Nazi nation that believes him. However, the choice that Campbell takes concerning his identity is highly questioned. The reason that it all seems like Campbell indeed freely chooses to become the evil Nazi since he wants to fulfil his wish of acting, but there is more depth to this claim for it is further complicated to assume that one's actions and behaviours are a result of free will. By contrast to free will, the determinist stand explains how life events and behaviours are all determined by causes. Thus, there is no room for coincidences nor free will and whatever seems as if free will was merely an illusion that is constructed to maintain the impression that individuals have got the upper hand over their lives and desires.

According to Sigmund Freud's 'psychic determinism', human behaviours and decisions are neither random nor pointlessly free. But rather, they are caused by mental, internal, and external causes. For Freud, a person becomes who she/he is as a result of events outside of her/his control. By this scope, the main character in *Mother Night* would be seen differently in which his identity falsification and the choices he had made all along the war and following it would have a whole different interpretation. Campbell does not seem as if he was fully responsible for the outcomes of his pretence since it could be traced back to when he first met the Blue Fairy Godmother. As he refers to himself as Major Frank Wirtanen, he represents a major external

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influence on Campbell's perception of what a hero is, which manipulated Campbell into immediately accepting to become a spy.

Additionally, the way the external factors work is that the surroundings of the individual and environment impose certain influence on his/her decisions. Similarly in the case of Campbell who is convinced to submit to the commands of a higher authority and to pretend to be the Nazi propagandist that commits tremendous crimes resulting in the killing of millions of Jews. Above and beyond the huge role the external factors played to shape a predetermined outcome, Campbell had been surrounded with the Nazi ideology supporters at a young age. As a consequence, he has adapted to certain views while he attempted to blend into the German society and into the nature of the individuals around him.

The secondary element of the external factors, that predetermined the decision that Campbell chooses to construct an identity and identify by it rather than standing by his original essence, is the mass exposure to the media and the influence of the Nazi Germany that spread through propaganda broadcasts which not only impacted Campbell's decisions unconsciously, but most of Germany; therefore, Campbell unconsciously acted according to the effect of the Nazi media and developed the false identity as he became the Nazi hero.

Lastly, the fact that individuals' choices depend on prior causes does not imply that the choice itself does not matter. In fact, it is still significant regardless of its causations that make it seem psychologically predetermined. However, the outcomes of the decision seem not to fall within the determinist approach as it remains unpredictable. In Campbell's situation, the outcomes he has reached as a result of his decisions led to a huge shift in his sense of meaning and purpose that he had previously. This, nonetheless, could be seen as one of the reasons behind

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Campbell's failure to sense his identity as the American spy or the evil Nazi. Thus, his essence was troubled, which made him feel confined and no longer willing to live. At last, Campbell had taken a decision, and for the first time, it was as he claimed to be by his own free will. This idea is spotted through the confessions of his memoir:

So here I am in Israel, of my own free will, though my cell is locked and my guards have guns.

My story is told, and none too soon — for tomorrow my trial begins. The hare of history once more overtakes the tortoise of art. There will be no more time for writing. Adventuring I must go again.

There are many to testify against me. None to testify for me.

The prosecution intends to begin, I'm told, by playing recording of the worst of my broadcasts, so the most pitiless witness against me will be myself. (113)

Eventually, Howard Campbell realised that he must be executed for the war crimes he committed, as it seems that he willingly took the decision to surrender to the Israeli prosecution at the end. According to the principle of alternative possibilities that was presented by the American philosopher Harry Frankfurt, an individual is morally responsible for a certain decision only when she/he could have done it. In other terms, the protagonist actually had no other options the whole time and even the decisions he had taken at certain fragments of time were imposed on him either unconsciously or consciously starting from his departure to Germany, choosing it as his permanent residence, becoming a spy, turning himself in for the war crimes, and eventually hanging himself.

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V. Endorsing Compatibilism

The character's own will is depicted between being free in certain situations and determined in others. Furthermore, their free will is compatible with determinism. It should be noted that Compatibilism adheres that freedom of choice exists; however, the consequences of such choices are beyond the individual's control. Taking this perspective on characters, they indeed seem to be free to choose what they want, but not free of the drawbacks of such a decision.

Howard Campbell's free will is compatible with determinism. Perhaps the past and background of his childhood affect his behaviors as they resulted in events beyond his will. His refusal to leave Germany with his parents reflects his attachment to the German culture in addition to his pleasure for German language adequacy as he remarks: "I was a fairly successful playwright, writing in the language in which I write best, German. I had one play, 'The Goblet,' running in both Dresden and Berlin." (22). It explains his will to live in Germany as he also admired the idea of joining the Nazi's at Frank's request. The latter indicates his freedom to accept their request to serve evil, which raises the question of whether Campbell would really accept to serve goodness like evilness. It is a proof of the protagonist's capability of adapting evilness to satisfy his egoism as he focuses on playing the role to please his desire towards acting. Due to the severe consequences of serving evil, he moves to New York. Furthermore, hiding in New York is a reaction towards the criminal past outcomes, which confirms that his free will is well-matched with determinism.

According to the philosopher Harry Frankfurt, in his work *Moral Responsibility* theory, any decision made by someone has a certain impact on his/her future. What is more, one should

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hand the responsibility for each act as he states, "A person may well be morally responsible for what he has done even though he could not have done otherwise. The principle's plausibility is an illusion which can be made to vanish by bringing the relevant moral phenomena into sharper focus." (829-830). Viewing the protagonist from the lens of this theory, he has chosen to commit the crimes by being a Nazi and a spy using the power of words. Nonetheless, the tragic consequences of such crimes have raised his morality; therefore, Campbell decides to be responsible and surrender to the Jews and later be executed as he confesses:

So I am about to be a free man again, to wander where I please I find the prospect nauseating. I think that tonight is the night I will hang Howard W. Campbell, Jr., for crimes against himself. I know that tonight is the night. They say that a hanging man hears gorgeous music. (115)

The novel proves that certain events are meant to be done; nonetheless, Howard could have prevented himself from being a criminal spy, but he did not otherwise. The path that the character decides to follow shapes his fate. Conversely, Resi Noth is a nihilist that appears as a hopeless character with an empty soul. Nihilists usually hold no significance towards the existence of free will as Campbell utters "home of Werner Noth, of the home where my Helga had been raised as a good German citizen, of the home where I had said farewell to a ten-year-old nihilist named Resi." (50). The nihilistic thought in Resi also appears when she addresses death, pointing: "I hope not,' I said. 'I'm sure you'll be fine,' I said. 'It won't hurt when I get killed,' she said. 'Just all of a sudden I won't be any more,'" (Resi 48). She, therefore, seems to be pessimistic about life and appears to accept fate; however, her only will is to marry Campbell, as she says:

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Since nobody's going to go on living much longer,' she said, 'I might as well tell you I love you.' 'That's very sweet,' I said. 'I mean really love you,' she said. 'When Helga was alive and you two would come here, I used to envy Helga. When Helga was dead, I started dreaming about how I would grow up and marry you and be a famous actress, and you would write plays. (49)

Resi's masquerading has affected Campbell's will to live. Although she was obliged to serve the soviets as a spy just to capture Campbell, she confesses both her pretending and feelings. Hence, Campbell appears to love life again by having Resi's care as Frank says: "Her mission was to make me love her?" I said. 'Yes,' said Wirtanen. 'She did it very well — ' I said sadly, 'not that it was hard to do.'" (86). Through her fate as a soviet, she reaches her will to be with Campbell; nonetheless, for the first time, by her own choice, she commits suicide for the love of Campbell after he discovers her betrayal. For this reason, Resi decides to be morally responsible for her evilness.

Another character by the name of George Kraft has also served the soviet government as a spy. As he is pretending, he gets attached to his friendship with Campbell. The latter is mentioned when Frank warns Campbell about Kraft's nature saying: "'You've still got a friend,' said Wirtanen. 'What do you mean by that?' I said. 'He's like you,' said Wirtanen. 'He can be many things at once — all sincerely.' He smiled. 'It's a gift.'" (86). Regardless of Kraft's friendship with Howard, he remains a spy; therefore, he was viciously irresponsible for his alternatives.

One can outline that the character's fate in the novel is compatible with their determinism. Most of the cases, characters meet unexpected events that they cannot control. The morality of the novel adjusts that freedom of choice could be attainable despite the fact that people must be

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meticulous about their alternatives. This resembles what Ezra Taft Benson believes "You are free to choose, but you are not free to alter the consequences of your decisions." (Benson). What Vonnegut tries to outline is that though humans seem to have a few controls over their actions, yet they must be careful about the outcome of such acts.

VI. The Protagonist's Struggle between Fate and the Will to Live

Howard Campbell junior has documented his life describing his struggle with depression and suicide. The protagonist shows that he is optimistic around his beloved wife Helga and writing plays. Furthermore, this engagement is what pushes his will to live more as he is gratified with pleasure. Fate changes his pleasure by taking his wife who lowers his will to live, as he utters:

You would think that a man who's spent as much time in the theater as I have would know when the proper time came for the hero to die — if he was to be a hero.' I snapped my fingers softly. 'There goes the whole play about Helga and me, "Nation of Two," I said, 'because I missed my cue for the great suicide scene.' (81).

He utters that he is waiting for a good reason to die as a hero; additionally, he is still curious about what fate still holds for him.

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer decodes the concept of the will to live. He explains that the will to live is an instinctive aspect in human beings which drives them to face the struggles of life and motivates them to pursue their goals. As well, it raises their desire for life; nonetheless, Schopenhauer thinks that the extreme pain and suffering could decrease the human's will to live. In defining the basics of willing, he says:

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The basis of all willing is need, lack, and hence pain, and by its very nature and origin it is therefore destined to pain. If, on the other hand, it lacks objects of willing, because it is at once deprived of them again by too easy a satisfaction, a fearful emptiness and boredom comes over it; in other words, its being and its existence itself becomes an intolerable burden for it. Hence life swings like pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom, and these two are in fact its ultimate constituents. (Schopenhauer np).

The curiosity of the protagonist is the only aspect that motivates his will to live as he is curious to know what fate holds for him when he states “What froze me was the fact that I had absolutely no reason to move in any direction. What had made me move through so many dead and pointless years was curiosity.” (99). He explains that curiosity is the only motive behind his will to live. The latter ends when Frank announces that he has cleared his past as a Nazi from court. At this moment, his fake identity has been deconstructed and his inquisitiveness has been clarified as he knew that he survived. However, his will to live stops the moment he decides to hang himself because he knew he became an empty soul with no identity and purpose.

VII. The Will to Be

It is challenging to distinguish if the prime character believes in the state of his freedom. Initially, he assumes that he was a man with a free will, up until the day he is recruited as a spy. Campbell admits to be responsible for the consequences of his action. However, he does not believe that he is free when constructing his false identity. This is seen in these lines “So I am about to be a free man again, to wander where I please.” (115). Campbell realizes he is only free when he is not the evil version of himself, the same version that was determined for him by fate.

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In the attempt to establish a link between the identity construction that the characters undergo and the capacity to own total freedom of will, it is explained as both components are interrelated within the human perception, chiefly, within the levels of consciousness and unconsciousness of the mind. To illustrate, theologians attempt to trace the nature of the impact that free will has on the self-images and identity formations of individuals. The impact lays within the fact that the unconscious aspect of the mind operates through the components of personal identity, precisely, the Id and the Super-ego. Additionally, the sense of free will collides with the unconscious level of the mind. Differently said, when individuals take certain decisions, they are most likely driven by their unconscious. However, cognitive science declares that the conscious level operates after the decision is made.

Psychological research, on the other hand, investigates the consequences of free will on the formation of identity through one's behaviours and self-reflection. It is argued that the individuals who strongly believe that they have free will are psychologically stable and able to construct a healthy personal identity. Additionally, they believe that they are morally responsible. By contrast, individuals who assume that they do not have free will owing that everything they decide is determined, actually tend to develop weak and troubled identities resulting in them to evolve aggressive behaviours such as racial prejudice and selfishness.

The interrelation between the identity formation and the ownership of free will is manifested in the novel through Campbell's sense of restriction and determinism, as it results in the absence of his moral responsibility as well as selfishness. He thinks that his identity masquerade that led to horrible consequences is predetermined, and that he is not responsible over constructing his identity, his behaviours, and impulses. As he states: "I shouldn't be held responsible for my acts, since I was a political idiot, an artist who could not distinguish between

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reality and dreams.” (113). Thus, Campbell's shaken belief in free will decreases the control he could have to construct a genuine identity and self-reflection that matches his rational ego.

Conclusion

Kurt Vonnegut portrays the long-lasting issue between the dual psychological opposites in *Mother Night*, visualising the characters struggle to either act upon their biggest drives or act upon what must be done in critical times of war. Although Vonnegut's beliefs are quite distinct than the recent claims about the issue of free will, he attempts to involve the reader in questioning the extent to which the main character is held accountable for his crimes, especially that the story is mainly his own alleged honest confessions. The issue of free will is introduced in contrast to its antipodal that seems to be the dominant of the novel. On the other hand, determinism as a psychology approach is viewed through the character of Howard Campbell, Resi Noth, Arpad Kovacs, and others in which the actions and identity falsification they endured could mainly be explained through tracing the extent of free will they own. In consequence, the compatible approach is offered for this purpose. The latter explains how consistently free will and determinism can be compatible while analysing the instances when the characters were seen as free and where they were enduring events that are predetermined by natural external law.

General Conclusion

The question of identity construction is quite challenging for modern psychosocial studies. As contemporary theologians attempt to explain how this concept evolves within human beings, they offer a variety of fundamental theories stating that it is a crucial process of developing one's self-image in order to achieve social and personal stability. Thus, the postmodern quest endeavours further depths into the evolution of the essence of the nowadays individuals. However, it emphasizes on the conceptual transition of the notion of identity and considers it a social construct that is re-defined according to the historical and cultural contexts. Furthermore, identity is tied up to the component of free will in order to achieve full understanding of the process of identity formation, its consequences, and its fluidity. Thus, it is necessary to establish the correlation between the issue of identity and the problem of freewill in a psychological context.

Mother Night narrates the characters journeys with their troubled essences and freedom restrictions in times of war. Kurt Vonnegut portrays the protagonist's struggle because of his fluid and fragmented identity, which appears to make him lose the senses of his life purpose and humanity. He throws light on each of the characters' masquerade, in which almost each one of them is forced to conceal her/his true self and pretend to be someone else to serve a particular mission. Furthermore, the protagonist seems to perform his masquerade and deceive Nazis for his great acting skills; however, he slowly starts losing purpose and showing symptoms of an identity crisis. He endures an inner conflict when he realises that he committed crimes against humanity including him. Additionally, the novel depicts how guilt deliberately ruins a criminal's essence, principally after losing people he loves, and therefore having no purpose to serve. Finally, the major issue that Kurt Vonnegut explores throughout the characters' psyches is the fine line between good and evil in the world. Principally, he examines the characters' capacity to be good

and evil at the exact time and place, similarly in the case of Campbell who is both a war criminal and a good artist.

The study of this novel endeavours to explore the factors that affect the characters' psyche and nature resulting in their identity formations and crises in a postmodern setting. It further elucidates the impact of the belief of free will over the decision-making process by the characters, which tests whether or not evilness is a matter of free will or determinism.

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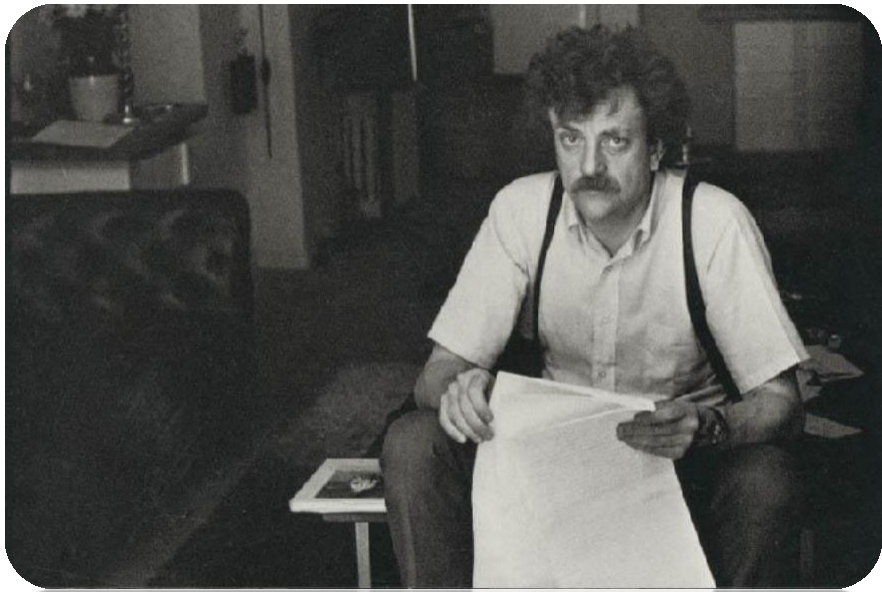
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Appendices

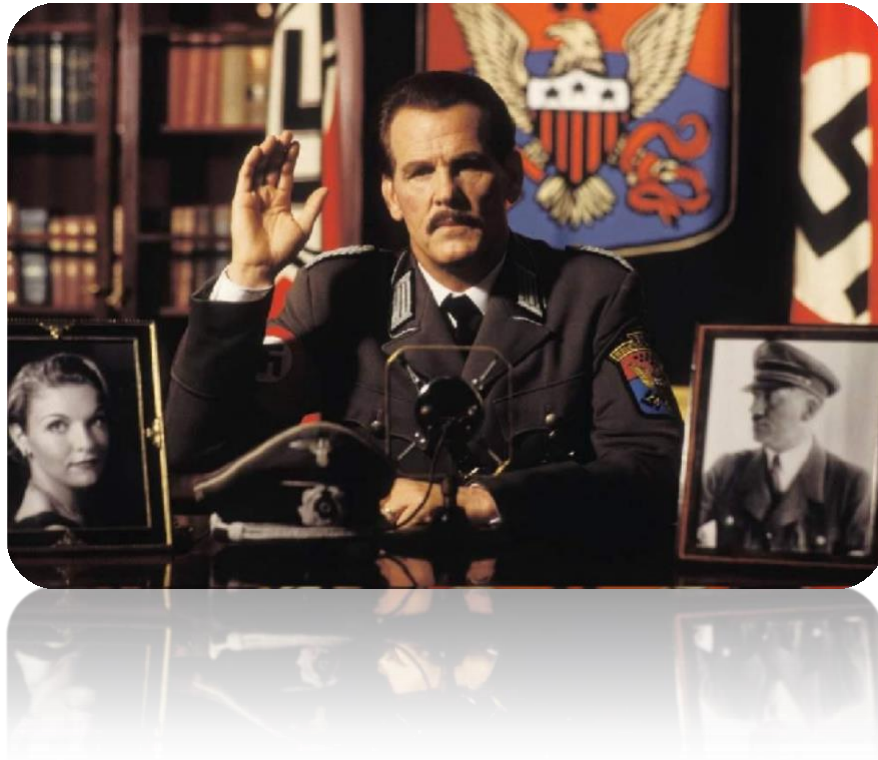


Appendix A

The Biography of Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut Jr (1929/2007) is a dark humourist author who published several respected novels during the postmodern epoch. In the span of a 50 years career, he published over 14 novels, his well-known work is *Slaughterhouse-five* which is considered as one of the bestselling novels of all times. Vonnegut is dedicated to depict themes of war, individuality, prejudice, and liberty through his writings and drawings, for his experience at serving the American army during the Second World War as well as witnessing the Dresden bombing; that gradually inspired him to write novels such as *Mother Night*. Additionally, he has a talent for his use of the unique satirical and minimalistic styles, in combination with several science-fiction figures as he created unusual story settings and characters such as Tralfamadorian Aliens in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In spite of his success and originality, Vonnegut endured several personal struggles including a severe depression that led to his attempt to commit suicide in 1984. Having to fight his own inner demons, he shifted his trapped emotions and traumas and reflected them into his art. Kurt Vonnegut's journey ended on April 11, 2007, due to battling with the aftereffects of his head injuries resulted by a fall days before his death

Appendix B



Synopsis of *Mother Night*

Mother Night was published in 1962 as one of the earliest works for Kurt Vonnegut. The plot has been inspired by Vonnegut's personal life during the Second World War. His name is Howard W Campbell Jr, he is an American spy and a Nazi propagandist. The plot covers his autobiography confession from the prison of Jerusalem in Israel admitting that he did serve evil during the Second World War. Campbell has grown up in Germany before the war arrives as he was a romantic playwright who wrote for his wife, Helga. Campbell easily fell for the demands of Frank to join the broadcast of the Nazis. He later confesses his intuition to become a successful playwright through manipulating people without realizing that his talent as a propagandist has caused the death of millions. As he becomes a world-wanted criminal, he hides in his apartment in New York. When he later assures the death of his wife Helga, he becomes hopeless as if all his

achievements have gone. He kept living for the purpose of curiosity until he knew that both his best friend Frank and Resi (Helga's sister) were both working for the Soviet's union to capture him. It was the moment that Campbell felt the meaningless of life as he decided to surrender to the Jews; however, after receiving an email from his fairy god mother Frank clarifying that they cleared all his criminal past, that he decided to attempt suicide for the crimes he committed against himself. The novel covers the character's pretending through faking their identities and the failure to escape their past as they either committed suicide or got prohibited due to the deconstruction of their fake identities, thus they lost their real essence. Vonnegut summarizes the morality of the plot stating, "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." (01) The novel has been represented as a movie later in 1996.

ملخص

بعد الحديث لطالما كانت مسألة بناء الهوية ومشكلة الإرادة الحرة موضع تساؤل في السياق الما بعد الحديث. فيعكس الأدب الما لتصوير فوضى بناء المفهوم على أنهما بنيت اجتماعية. كيرت فونيغوت هو من بين مؤلفي ما بعد الحداثة الذين يكرسون جهودهم الرحلة الحاسمة نحو تشكيل • من خلال خياله؛ الهوية وعلاقتها بالمجادلة اللامتناهية عن مصداقية الإرادة الحرة. يصور فونيغوت صراع البطل مع عواقب تزوير الهوية واستجواب الإرادة الحرة والمصير؛ خاصة في كتابه 8. «اع:11: 1006/1 تجسد هذه الرواية النفسي على نفسية الشخصيات؛ وبشكل • عملية تنكر الهوية وتأثيرها هويته خلال الحرب العالمية الثانية. تبين هذه المذكرة؛ بالتالي الإرادة الحرة والتشكيك في العلاقة الرابطة ما رئيسي حالة الهوية المضطربة لبطل الرواية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك؛ فإننا نتحدث في صحة إجراؤه يعتمد بشكل عام على النهج التحليلي النفسي بين الإرادة الحرة وعملية تشكيل الهوية. وبناءً على ذلك؛ فإن البحث الذي تم على ذلك؛ يتم تطبيق نهج إنساني من أجل تحقيق تفسير شامل للتدقيق في العوامل النفسية والاجتماعية التي خدمت أزمة الهوية. علاوة أن الهويات المضطربة للشخصيات يمكن تفسيرها بحالة عدم الاستقرار للمتغيرات المختارة. ونتيجة لذلك؛ كشفت التوضيحات النهائية مفهوم الإرادة الحرة هو مفهوم مبني على المعرفية البشرية يتم تحديده مسبقاً التي ميزت الحقبة الما بعد الحديث. إضافة لذلك؛ فإن بواسطة مجموعة من العوامل النفسية الخارجية/الداخلية.

Résumé

Le problème de la construction identitaire et le problème de la volonté propre est considéré comme un questionnement majeur dans un contexte postmoderne. La littérature postmoderne reflète équitablement cette combinaison à travers la tentation d'interpréter les deux concepts en tant que construction sociale. Kurt Vonnegut est parmi les auteurs postmodernes qui se sont dédiés à dépeindre la lutte narrative de la crise identitaire qui en relation avec des arguments infinis sur l'authenticité de la volonté propre. Vonnegut, à travers sa fiction a dépeint sa voie cruciale vers la formation de l'identité en opposition à la déconstruction identitaire dans un cadre après-guerre aussi que les problèmes qui entravent son authenticité, ainsi l'interrogation de la volonté propre et du destin principalement vu en *Mother Night*. Ce postmoderne roman incarne la lutte protagoniste avec des conséquences de la falsification identitaire durant la deuxième guerre mondiale. Pour cette raison cette dissertation élucide le processus de la mascarade identitaire et son impact psychologique sur le psychisme des caractères, notamment le cas de l'essence troublée des protagonistes: il enquête alternativement l'authenticité de la volonté propre en l'associant de son impact sur la formation identitaire ainsi que le dernier impact du pouvoir décisionnel, qui illustre l'influence profonde des évènements prédéterminés et ses conséquences sur les le caractères en plus de leurs responsabilités morales et leurs sens du devoir. Ce travail de recherche est purement psychanalytique qui a pour but d'analyser les facteurs psychologiques et sociologiques des troubles identitaires et leurs rapports avec l'authenticité de la volonté propre dans le processus de la construction identitaire: donc, une approche quantitative est convenable pour effectuer une étude, afin d'atteindre une interprétation compréhensible des variables sélectionnées, la méthode de recherche appliquée a servi l'analyse mené à travers l'application d'un ensemble de théories utiles. Ces théories ont servi à atteindre une interprétation concernant les résultats de la première problématique qui résumant la fluidité du l'identité du caractère.