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The Post-modern Anxiety of Existence of the Individual in Ali Smith's *There But For The* (2011)

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the existential dimensions of postmodern individuals' quest for existence through their attitudes in the novel of Ali Smith *There But For The* (2011). In an attempt to achieve this aim, we can raise the following assumptions. First, *There But For The* is a postmodern novel as it embodies postmodern techniques such as fragmentation and temporal distortion, second, the novel's main characters represent a strong embodiment of a postmodern individual through their attitudes and behaviors. In addition, the main characters are revealed in such a condition through their existential struggle with the absurdities of the modern world. In addition, thematic and stylistic analyses are adopted to depict the characters as postmodern, and examine their existential condition. In addition, we adopted a philosophical approach which puts the novel in a critical context supported by different existentialists' perspectives. Finally, this study supported by the thematic and stylistic analyses revealed that the characters of the novel present a paradigm of postmodern individuals in an existential condition.

Keywords: existential condition, postmodern society, fragmentation, Maximalism, postmodern individual

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General Introduction

General Introduction

The modern world has witnessed the appearance of a huge number of philosophical inquiries about the human existence and his relation with the world. However, the answer itself is still obscure and the enigma of being is still an unresolved puzzle. This is because the philosophy of seeking a meaningful existence is one of the intricate issues that human beings have ever faced. Existentialism, as a school of thought, deals with such questions from a philosophical perspective.

Several thinkers, philosophers, and writers have tried their best to provide a precise and response to the quest of a purposeful existence such as Heidegger, Sartre, Baudrillard, and Kierkegaard. Indeed, the answer has never been authentic and convincing. Even though human curious by nature, which leads to question the essence of human existence, it is hard for individuals to have an idea about his true existence especially in a postmodern world of uncertainty. A true existence makes a more justified controversy from an existential view. Occasionally, postmodern writers employed such philosophical dimensions in a literary context and merged postmodern thoughts with existential ideas in one literary work.

Basically, the philosophy of existentialism and the theory of postmodernism are divergent philosophies. The former is a philosophy of individuals while postmodernism is a theory which addresses society instead of emphasizing the individual life and existence. As literature reflects the social life of individuals, postmodern literature adheres to concepts aesthetically and rhetorically in all modes of literature. Postmodern prose writers usually tempt to use distinctive postmodern aesthetics emphasizing utterly existential themes. The present work inquires into a contemporary work which emerged between postmodern features with existential ideas, and which invites us to understand the postmodern life and society of the individual through philosophy.

There But For The (2011) is one of the prominent novels of the postmodern writer

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Ali Smith who is best known for her creative language, distinctive style, and narrative framework, such as merging between Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness, Shakespeare's humor, and both modernist and postmodernist techniques to introduce characters as prominently reflecting modern and postmodern man life conditions. Smith's works usually make the reader in quest for many issues, and attracts them to survive the obscure and ambiguous life of characters.

There But For The (2011) accounts the story of a man who locks himself for months in the room of guests in a dinner party he attends coincidentally. This incident is one of the enigmas in the novel, as the title itself is a riddle that hooks the reader and makes him curious to know more as the composed phrase, *There But For The*, drives the reader into the obscure. As the reader goes deeper into the novel, he realizes that its chapters are divided according to the four terms in the title, and are told from different characters' views. This makes him more excited to find out the enigma that these words constitute together, and the relation between the characters in the novel.

As the reader engages with reading, they feel as if the writer is leaping from one character to the other, spatially, and from one place to the other. They feel that there is a main narrator, but the reader cannot recognize him, because the narrator is each time in one character's head. Sometimes, Smith even leaps into the head of the reader. In a way, the reader starts filling the gaps, relating incidents, and describing the ambiguity of the characters. Finally, Smith elucidate no comprehensive ending, introducing the protagonist's story a secular story that makes the reader puzzled with the basic question of why does a man lock himself in a spare room for months?

Smith's work has a wide stimulation of research about the themes in the current novel. In addition, modern and postmodern features incorporated in her unique narrative style. Nonetheless, although there were some researches that deal with the novel from the

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philosophical perspective, we tempt to examine the characters as postmodern individuals in an existential condition.

Kateřina Štruncová conducted a research about alienation and identity in Ali Smith's Novels in 2013. Among the novels her work focuses on is *There But For The* (2011). She examined other themes in the novel such as presence and absence, borders and divisions, the strangeness of the unknown future, and incompleteness. She also emphasized on the characters' identities and analyses some of their actions and behaviors but not rigorously.

Although she exploits how the novel has an existential mode, Smith just may be only detecting the apparently plain questions: Why are we here? What is the point of us?" (Smith, 56) This perspective is not presumed precisely for each character. Her work is merely a thematic analysis that disputes the novel as a whole not each character individually.

Another research is a BA thesis of Meike Kersten entitled: "A celebration of our existence: The reception of two novels by Ali Smith as modernist" (2015). In this work, the researcher discusses two of Ali Smith's novels, *There But For The* (2011) and *How To Be Both* (2015) as modern works, and he attempted to analyze five reviews of each novel.

With reference to these reviews, he picked out modernist characteristics in each novel. Concerning *There But For The*, he discusses social satire, unreliable characters, and fragmentation. He admits that these characteristics are not discussed explicitly as modernist in the reviews, and that the term "modernist" was hired by none of them. In addition, their re-existence in these reviews even though implicitly can be used as an evidence to obtain *There But For The* as a Modernist novel.

However, the researcher proves that in some of these reviews, there are indications in which the novel was characterized as postmodern. He explains that we cannot classify a work as modern or postmodern definitely because on the one hand, the features of both interfere. On the other hand, a novel can share features from both. Therefore, these terms

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should be used to refer not to the features of the whole work which allow for reading the novel from both modern and postmodern perspectives.

Concerning Smith's unique writing style and techniques, Gezels's study (2016) entitled "Time Perception and Stream of Consciousness in Ali Smith's Fiction", is one example which explores the stylistic features of Smith's works. It investigates how Smith discusses the theme of time, in a formal way in her novels *Hotel World*, *There But For The*, and *How To Be Both*.

The above work emphasizes the way Smith employs time to explain her characters consciousness, and how this affects and attracts the reader. This study offers analysis of using time as a theme externally and internally, and what techniques are used to spur stream of consciousness. It concludes how Smith, though mostly identified as postmodern, succeeded in reclaiming and incorporating modern features including stream of consciousness into contemporary fiction.

In Ben Davies work "The Complexities of Dwelling in Ali Smith's *There but for the*" (2017), dwelling is explored as an abstract thing that stimulates thinking about the relationship between language, time, space and thought. The researcher refers to dwelling in this novel as a term related to the individual in a contemporary society.

This idea is stimulated from the novel's main story which is Miles locking himself in the spare room of his guests. He discusses how Smith uses tenses and narrative time to make her readers think pointedly, and try to engage more with the story. Referring to Heidegger's idea of being and time, the potential in this study integrates two concepts as time and dwelling into smaller pieces investigated in a story's details to allow us create deeper abstract concerns, can be viewed as an existential study even not announced explicitly. It offers a constant base for further studies which share the same way.

Nonetheless, the current study tries to examine the relation between the existentialist

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features and postmodernist features through the analysis of the protagonists of the novel. It aims at emphasizing how the protagonists represent the postmodern individual and what are the situations which put them in an existential condition. To achieve this aim, this thesis seeks answers to the following questions:

- What makes the protagonists in the novel postmodern?
- What makes postmodern individuals live in an existential condition?
- What are the stylistic features which signify existentialism in the novel?

Subsequently, we have suggested the following hypotheses:

- *There But For The* represents postmodern characters through fragmentation, temporal distortion and futurism.
- The novel's protagonists represent a potent manifestation of postmodern society through their attitudes, actions, and behaviors.
- The protagonists are depicted in an existential condition through their existential struggle in the absurdities of the modern world.

In order to validate and prove the aforementioned hypotheses with assumptions, this research is divided into theoretical and analytical parts. The first chapter is devoted for the theoretical part, and gives a theoretical background of the theme under investigation. Emphasizing on implications of the philosophy of existentialism, we tempt to familiarize the reader with the frequent ordinary themes and concepts which reinforce this philosophy. Besides, a general overview of postmodern tendency will be depicted with emphasis on the features of the postmodern individual, and the conditions in which this individual live and adapt with, which led to the constitution of postmodern characters.

The next two chapters are concerned with stylistic and thematic analyses of the novel in relation to the research questions. The second chapter tempts to depict the postmodern

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features in the novel and explaining their meanings. Then, it emphasizes the postmodern actions and attitudes the characters of the protagonists as postmodern individuals.

Finally, the third chapter investigates how the protagonists are depicted as postmodern individuals in an existential condition, by analyzing their attitudes, dialogues, and actions throughout the story, with an existential interpretation. Ultimately, this chapter will portray how the protagonists, due to particular postmodern conditions, take over existential themes such as absurdity, authenticity, and anxiety.

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Introduction

Recent philosophers and critics have managed to introduce a set of concepts regarding the existence of truth, reality, and explanations for the life of human beings. With each generation of thinkers and philosophers, new explanations appear whether to prevail over former thoughts, rely on them, or prove them still adequate to the contemporary time. At times, thinkers of the same period convey contradicted views regarding the same matters. Existentialism and postmodernism represent this perspective and reveals the existential state of the human being in a contemporary era.

Existentialism and postmodernism are interrelated directions, as existentialism focuses on the society and individual while postmodernism introduces the individual as ambiguous and living only in the present. As significant as these two directions can be considered, postmodern society has been explored within an existential dimension which depicts the philosophy of existentialism in a postmodern society.

This chapter introduces a theoretical background of the study, it identifies existentialism and postmodernism, also explores the perspectives of postmodern theories and philosophers particularly, existentialist philosophers. Also the chapter provides an overview about postmodern society, and existential individuals from the perspectives of prominent existentialists. Finally, a brief depiction of Postmodernism and its relationship with existentialist philosophy is considered.

1.1 Post-modern Theory

Postmodern philosophers have pioneered a set of concepts such as the floating truth, science fiction, and world of illusion. For instance, Jean Baudrillard and Friedrich Nietzsche both denied the existence of the truth as long as it is closely related with language, exaggeration, and

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metaphorical imaginative rhetoric. Thus, Baudrillard assured that the concept of “hyper reality” where something is real only when it moves within the media. Baudrillard’s nihilistic works such as “The Illusion of the End” (1992) have received harsh criticism, claiming that the Gulf War (1991) was a media event; it was not real and was without the symptoms of war. (Carter)

Jacques Derrida also is one of the prominent philosophers of postmodernism. He has criticized Western metaphysics which represents the language and voice signifier. Hence, he pioneered a series of prevailing concepts such as identity, essence, and meaning, the phenomenon, intelligence, sensitivity, realism, truth, and certainty, culture, and speech (Thompson). Michael Foucault also is one of the pioneers of postmodernism, who emphasized the concepts of discourse, power and strength, as he believed that the speech is effectively associated with scientific knowledge (Eribon). Foucault also calls for human liberation from the institutional power of the state (Foucault).

Philosophies of Postmodernism have been striving for setting off the main arguments of western thought. They tempted to undermine questioning, dispersion, and demolition for the sake of building new values. The risks of postmodernist philosophy started to reject the ultimate right and then led to the overlooking of the distinction between religious matters and beliefs. Also considering the philosophy of the religious diversity, this indicates that there is no true religion or belief. Therefore, there is no pretension that someone’s religion is right rather than other religions. Another protest is that postmodernist values consider God as no longer the source of truth, but in humans, as Descartes believes “I think therefore I am.”

Along with philosophy, social, political, and literary theories have emerged to uncover diverse domains such as aesthetics, architecture, sociology, communication, and psychology (Mahboob et al.). Therefore, one of the appealing literary movements which came to existence is Postmodernism which brought an absolute new paradigm in both theoretical and conceptual thought. Postmodernism confirmed the breakdown of certainty and proved the fact that there is

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no entire truth as Farhangpour and Abdolsalami believe that human being is the output of history, society and rationality instead of being a natural donation and cultural outcome.

1.1.1 Definition of Post Modernism

The shift from modernism to postmodernism is a result of a reasonable cultural change and instant development in technology, especially digital communication and electronic negotiation, which massively have contributed to changing society and culture (Kumar). Postmodern theory pioneers, however, assured the advanced media, emergent processes of change in a new postmodern society, and confessed that the era of postmodernism comprises a considerate stage of history and sociocultural evolution which constitutes new concepts, notions, and theories.

More importantly, postmodern theory provides a critique of representation of the modern belief that theory mirrors reality, emphasizing on perspectivists' arguments and affording partial perspectives on their objects. Also, all cognitive representations of the world are historically and linguistically treated (Lyotard). Samuels considers the notion of postmodernism as a culturally prevailing concept, which permits for the coexistence of other disparate attributes to exist synchronously within the core of postmodernism.

Postmodernism emphasizes the idea that social realities are functional, creating and recreating in response to environmental stimuli (Brown). The reintegration of different aspects of different cultures is typically portrayed as aesthetic expression of postmodernism and may be reflected in media content (Brown). The discourse of postmodernism also manifests itself in the discipline of theory, and emphasizes the critique of modern theory and arguments for a postmodern split in theory.

Indeed, modern theory deriving from the philosophical ideas of Descartes, through the Age of reason, to the social theories of Marx, and Weber, is criticized for its search for a creation of knowledge, and for universalizing pretensions. In contrast, advocates of modern theory

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attacked postmodern values and relativism, nihilism, and irrational values.

1.1.2 Postmodern Society

Postmodernism has emerged in the field of painting, and architecture, before moving to philosophy, literature, art, technology, and knowledge. Postmodern theory has occupied all the disciplines along with literature, criticism, art, philosophy, ethics, education, sociology, anthropology, culture, economics, politics, and architecture (Carter).

Postmodernism involves a set of perspectives such as philosophical perspective which proves that postmodernism is an evidence of space in the absence of modernity itself. The historical perspective, which shows the postmodern withdrawing from modernity, or of a denial of some aspects. The political and ideological perspective which depicts the postmodern illusions of Western ideology, the strategic perspective which shows that the approach to the texts of postmodern era does not adhere to methodological criteria, which emphasizes open and multiple readings (Alruwaili).

In this vein, the modernization of western society, for all its industrial, bureaucratic, and secular features has contributed not only to a restrained turn down in morality, spirituality, humanity and the sense of community, but an inescapable rise in crime, drug abuse, mental illness, and alienation (Brown).

Postmodern texts often emphasize both the author and the reader. Nevertheless, postmodernist writers tempt to pull the voice from the author to allow the readers to interpret texts. Rosenau argues that “no longer is the reader a passive subject to be entertained, instructed, or amused. S/he is given the freedom to attribute meaning to the text without consequence or responsibility” (25). This doesn’t mean that the reader’s voice is prosperous, as the reader interprets the same literary dialogue differently. Even though the author’s voice has been taken away, he is not released to write a text; even his text is individually interpreted by multiple readers.

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Lyotard admits that scientific knowledge never represents the entirety of knowledge, and also society and culture, because culture does not represent the integrity of communities. According to Rosenau, the postmodern being has an anonymous and ambiguous existence. As “S/he will not be held accountable for events, actions, and outcomes; nor will s/he be the author of “caring” relationships (humanist) or creative individualism. S/he will be so independent of all identifiable truth seeking perspectives that s/he is, in short, no subject at all” (53).

Postmodern society represents individuals who are satisfied with their own lives, but are not interested in social matters like marriage, family, church and nation and are associated more with their personal needs, beliefs, and values. They also long for achieving a meaningful life simply because they are uncertain about what is meaningful in life and what is real (Reichenbach).

Postmodern society allowed individuals to embrace new values, beliefs, and attitudes (Inkeles et al.,). Postmodern individuals are highly subjective, and they support secular-rational authority and neglect traditional authority. As they made a shift from traditional authority, they favored independence and freedom. Inglehart points that behaviors and attitudes might be influenced by material conditions, provided that they manifest a wider social environment. Occasionally, Bauman argues:

Postmodernity does not seek to substitute one truth for another, one standard of beauty for another, one life ideal for another. Instead, it splits the truth, the standards and the ideal into already deconstructed and about to be deconstructed. It denies in advance the right of all and any revelation to slip into the place vacated by the deconstructed/discredited rules. It braces itself for a life without truths, standards and ideals. (ix)

Spurrett denied the fact that natural science is a barrier to the philosophy, and believed that science is at the heart of the postmodern condition. The postmodern individual does not prefer

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one absolute truth, but instead he believes that the truth may not always be perceived and existing ideals should be examined (Smith). Although postmodernism manifests itself within an unreal standards and ideals, the postmodern society follows the same direction.

Lack of truth makes the individual unable to set absolutes which certainly makes them less confident in considering truth in the future while living the present (Steiner). Some philosophers are explicitly skeptical about truth-related progress in philosophy. As Kenny states:

Philosophy is not a science, because progress in philosophy is not a matter of expanding knowledge, of acquiring new truths about the world. ... It is indubitable that we know some things that the great philosophers of the past did not know. But the things we know that they didn't know are not philosophical things. (16)

These philosophers agreed that philosophy neither compiles entire knowledge nor reveals any propensity to combined convergence. Dietrich argues that "philosophy is, except for some modernizing, exactly the same now as it has ever been. It has not progressed one iota. (333)

1.2 Philosophical Theories

Philosophy is a cognitive discipline which evokes that it is not the role of philosophers to establish theories of perception, theories of action, theories of consciousness, theories of personal identity, theories of freedom, theories of meaning, theories of knowledge, theories of normativity, and theories of truth (Hacker). Discontent with traditional philosophy as superficial, and far from real life lies within existentialism which is immortal vulnerability which can be distinguished in the past and present, but it is only in recent times that it has consolidated into endured objection and preoccupation.

1.2.1 The Philosophy of Existentialism

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The notion of Existentialism first appeared with the works of the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Later on, the name “existentialism” was given by Kierkegaard who was a Christian existentialist; he was the founding father of this movement with his existentialist fellow Friedrich Nietzsche.

Existentialism is a Western philosophy which appeared in the mid 19th century, after the Second World War. It came as a reaction to the two world wars turmoil. Solomon identified Existentialism as “the by-product of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the growth of science, the decline of Church authority, the French Revolution, the growth of mass militarism and technocracy, two world wars, the ‘triumph’ of capitalism, and the sudden onslaught of globalism and its consequences” (xii). Existentialism came as a result of subsequent historical events which occurred in the Europe.

Through Existentialism, individuals who have witnessed hideous atrocities seek answers to questions which pervaded their minds, such as: what is the purpose of life? Why is there God? Why we die? Are we actually free? (Cogswell). However, existentialists tempted to answer these questions which neither religion nor science could answer them. Indeed, the modern individual seems less interested in the integration of his social roles and experiences into a unity, but rather, they calls for them, as there is no purpose unless the being creates it (Hume).

A part from all the empiricist and capitalist notion that threatened the way of thinking of the Western world, existentialism provided a better perception of this messy world, and help people find their own purpose in this life as Sartre views it as “a doctrine which makes human life possible” (32). Panza and Gale identify ‘Existentialism’ as a doctrine that revolves around human experience as the following:

Moreover, existentialism is the study of human existence. If someone takes existence to be everything that exists such as chairs and tables, people, all philosophy, science, and religion

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would appear to be the same subject (Hume). However, existentialism is not the study of everything that exists; it is the study of existence itself, the study of what it means for something to exist at all in contrast to not existing (Kornblith).

Existentialism explains the meaning of something, in opposition to nothing to exist at all. Its major emphasis is on existence, the kind of existence that involves existing things like individuals, because they are aware of their existence and are able to question it (Peacocke). Ultimately, existentialism does not literally mean for beings and objects to exist, but rather to be conscious about their existence (Panza and Gale).

1.2.2 Existentialist Dimensions

Like any other school of thought, existentialism has a set of concepts and notions. They represent the output of various philosophers' endeavor to introduce existentialism from their own perspective such as Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Friedrich Nietzsche. Despite that, they still tended to come up with different ideas that revolve around the main idea of existentialist thinking.

1.1.2.1 Self-consciousness and Creation of Essence

Jean Paul Sartre is one of the early existentialists who established the basis of the existentialist thought which proclaims that existence precedes essence or substance. Sartre believes that "what all existentialists have in common is the fundamental doctrine that existence precedes essence" (Para 04). This proves that individuals are conscious beings who cannot be speculated and who are not directed by any system or generalization, therefore, they are nothing but their own conscious existence (Bourget and Chalmers). In Sartre's essay *Existentialism is Humanism*, he created the first basic principle of this doctrine, which refers to the major claim of the individual's ownership of *essence* which is existent before existing.

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Essence enables beings to consider who they are, and what they want do. Sartre explains: “A man is nothing but a series of enterprises, and that he is the sum, organization and aggregate of the relations that constitute such enterprises” (38). Ultimately, beings are nothing other than what they make of themselves (Sorell).

Existentialism also puts the emphasis on the idea that an individual’s identity is not created by his culture, because what creates an identity is to exist. In this light, existentialist beliefs including facticity, predominance, and authenticity needs to be comprehended (Loyotard). Facticity uncovers physical appearance, social attributes including race and class division, psychological, and historical traits such as past events and family background. Individuals are not conscious about their facticity from a third-person perspective; however, all this appears as a burden of having to be (Critchley).

1.1.2.2 Anxiety and Absurdity

Anxiety is the sense of uneasiness, and it is not only attributed to particular objects like fear, that is usually related with something such as a fear of heights or closed places. Anxiety is not a tribulation that is directed by something specific, but rather, it results from nothingness of human existence (Critchley). Indeed, Panza and Gale emphasize that fear is a usual feeling, while anxiety is an existential feeling or mode.

Kierkegaard considers the feeling of existential fear as a “*dizziness of freedom*”, which he explains as a feeling resulted from the unlimited potentials of human experience. Kierkegaard also believes that *anxiety* or *sorrow* is the intrinsic and universal condition of human existence. (Kurtz). Individuals feel this fear not as a result of having an unlimited set of options, yet as a result of their freedom when they decide to make choices. Existence of beings is committed to sin, guilt, and anxiety. This condemned fate of human nature pushes existentialists to neglect

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notions such as hope and joy, as they only reflect a superficial perception of what life really is as opposed to the unsophisticated way of rejecting the tragic fate of human existence. (Gordon).

The authentic self, according to Heidegger appeared in anxiety and it is subsequently a rare mood to occur. He believes that individuals often find themselves in a world that is fascinating and full of meaning. When the mood of anxiety occurs, everything becomes meaningless and actions will be illegitimate activities that the individual observes them from afar. Heidegger argues that “Dasein finds ‘itself’ proximally in what it does, uses, expects, avoids—in those things environmentally ready-to-hand with which it is proximally concerned” (155). He proclaims that “Dasein is individualized and becomes self-aware” (323). By the word *Dasein* he means to be in the world, which refers to what occurs during the feeling of anxiety; the human conscious becomes self-aware and individualized.

Therefore, Zimmerman admits that “the resolute person faithfully holds himself open for the moment of truth, although he cannot know when it will come” (98). Anxiety is to be free from the concrete world, being separated from everyone and everything reaching a level of freedom to only think about ourselves (Critchley). For Heidegger, another concept that is linked to anxiety is death. Beings become worried when they realize that death is an expected potential, and not an experience that is felt by others. This anxiety, however, is constructive as it guides individuals to live in real world, and become free and confronting with life possibilities, as they accept death as a possibility that is predetermined (Heidegger).

The other main theme of existentialism is absurdity, which evokes that the existence itself is absurd. According to Sartre and Kierkegaard, the absurd is linked with individuals’ measures and their choices, as they result from their freedom. These measures are limited to the personal experience of beings and its relation with absurdity. If these measures are excluded from the

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individual situation, they cannot be rationally justified (Michelman). Moreover, in the light of his explanation, the French philosopher Blaise Pascal admits the following:

When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, and the little space I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of space of which I am ignorant, and which knows me not, I am frightened, and I am astonished at being here rather than there, why now rather than then (cited in Ryken, 175).

The above explanation reflects how meaningless a life can be in such existence, the absurdity of the individual's existence and the persistent uncertainty about individuals' purpose in this life; also the constant emotion of anxiety that comes along with this questioning. Camus states:

The feeling of the absurd can arise in many ways from the perception of the inhumanity and indifference of nature, from the realization of man's temporality or of death which reveals the uselessness of human life or from the shock occasioned by perceiving the ultimate pointlessness of daily life and its routine (22).

For Albert Camus the absurd is not only human's actions and choices, it shapes all what exists, and everything is going without a goal or plan and everything is unjustified. Camus is perhaps the best one who examined this perception explicitly. In his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), the absurd is depicted as the result of the human's intrinsic need to make sense of everything around, when the individual feel the world as meaningless. Camus states that: "man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (20).

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Copleson considers the world as irrational and emphasized Camus perception on absurdity, that the world and existence are seen as absurd meaningless, and irrational. Michelman confirms the existence of the absurd as the fundamental question of philosophy, and that life is free of its illusions, and it is still worth for individuals to live, even if they feel that life is absurd. The end of the absurd is death, therefore, the absurd lies within the carelessness of the universe while individuals face distress, the meaninglessness of human actions, and the inevitability of death. Camus believes:

Absurdity as a confrontation, an opposition, a conflict or a “divorce” between two ideal, having specifically defined the human condition as absurd, as the confrontation between man’s desire for significance, meaning and clarity on the one hand, he concludes that recognition is the only defensible option (34)

Camus emphasizes that suicide is equal to surrendering to the absurdity, and that the only solution to win over the absurd is to rebel against it even though we know we are not up to it. He also admits that the best way to face the absurd is embracing it by accepting the fact that we are living a meaningless life. According to Camus, this is the only way humans can find happiness.

1.1.2.3 Authenticity and Existence

Individuals live within society and adhere to principles, although they feel comfortable and satisfied, they are prevented from getting their freedom to choose how to live better and take responsibility for their choices (Golomb). Therefore, authenticity involves feeling existence, and being independent and free entities responsible for the individuals’ personal lives.

Authenticity is a dimension of existentialism which involves life and death. As Kierkegaard believes that individuals go through three life stages in this life, the first two stages are

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inauthentic, through which individuals live without paying attention to their existence or the amount of freedom they own, they only live a life in which they are not self-reflective (Gordon). The final stage in the individual's lives is authentic, in which beings become faithful and aware of their existence.

Since life is absurd and cannot be explained through the rules of one system, meaning is only found in one's relationship with God, not in the world, this allows individuals to survive the last authentic religious stage of life. They take responsibility for their lives and face the absurdity of existence with God's faith, not with worldly ethical rules; they become authentic (Panza and Gale). This can be achieved only by embracing death as one's personal experience and extreme potential which requires confronting anxiety (Heidegger). Hence, authenticity, according to Heidegger is found in the individual's understanding of his relation to death and his existence in the world as a being into death (Michelman).

Heidegger emphasizes that authenticity is related to death. By embracing death as a potential and an experience which involves coping with the anxiety, authenticity will stay in the individuals' understanding of their existence in relation to death (Michelman). Sartre's view on authenticity is yet different since he believes that presuming freedom is necessary for individuals to become authentic (Gordon).

The individual is performing an inferior faith which involves escaping oneself and neglecting the reality of one's freedom of choice and responsibility. Basically, human beings are living according to outside recognition and roles, not according to their actual selves. Each individual is escaping his real life, and embracing an illusion, just to neglect the responsibility which results from being true to who they are. That's what Sartre refers to as "*bad faith*" and that is what means to live inauthentically (Flynn).

For Camus, the only way to live authentically is to accept the absurdity of life. This

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embracement is not an act of resignation, but of revolution. It is a heroic act of creating one's own meaning to life, and defending it at the expense of a meaningless world. Camus explores his prospection on authenticity, although infrequently attributing the concept, through the Myth of Sisyphus.

Camus advocates that since the moment Sisyphus believes in the meaninglessness of his repeated action of rolling the rock to the top of the mountain, then having it rolling down to start all over again, he rebels against the fact that it is a punishment. He creates his own meaning of this act by bravely embracing it. Subsequently, he starts to live authentically. Camus thinks that the attitude of Sisyphus is the only authentic attitude one can proudly take in revolt against the absurd life; as a result, attains happiness (Golomb).

Illusions represent a state of existence where the individual represents his being. Binswanger views the relation between illusions and existence as "the nature of poetic similes lies in the deepest roots of our existence where the living, spiritual form and the living, spiritual content are still bound together" (81). He also believes that poetic language cannot be interpreted to its full meaning, and that metaphors are more than just linguistic integration, and they are integrated conventionally. Therefore, Binswanger states that gathering form and content is vital for literary language, and results in something crucial to beings' existence.

Further, the experience of the illusion is somehow demonstrative. For Walker it is "Just as the form and content of poetic language are bound together, the imaginative quality of the dream experience is as vital as the meaning that can be drawn from it, and the structures of dream and literary language the same" (499). On his essay *Dream and Existence*, Foucault believes that if experiencing a dream is a means of *being*, as in literature also: "Language, the imagination of the poet, and above all the dream, draw from this essential ontological structure" (83). Walker emphasizes that "the stuff of dream and the stuff of literature are similar; both

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take their nature from existence itself and, consequently, they are vital to hermeneutics of Being” (499).

Binswanger confirms the ontological inference of dream to an inquiry of existence and anxiety. This is a fundamental ontological constituent of all dreaming and its relation to anxiety. According to Binswanger, to dream means, we don't know what is happening to us. “from the I and the Me there again emerges, to be sure, the individual ... in no way, however, does the individual emerge as he who makes the dream, but rather as the one for whom ‘he knows not how’ the dream occurs” (102). Indeed, the ‘I and the Me’ of the dream situation applies to treat the apparently divided self, and the dream is an experience of existence itself.

1.3 Existentialism and Post-modernism

The term postmodernism first appeared in the 1960s, and it brought a new mood in the literature which rejected modernist features and changed some traditions. In the coming eras, postmodernism became attributed to other academic fields, such as social theory, cultural and media studies, aesthetics, philosophy, and history.

In the same vein, postmodernism rejects formal aesthetics in favor of minor designs. It also embraces movements such as post-structuralism, deconstruction, multiculturalism, neo-relativism, neo-Marxism, gender studies, and literary theory. On the other hand, postmodern philosophy uses a set of contemporary approaches to criticize Western thought, along with historicism and psychoanalytic theories. Flynn argues that “postmodern philosophy is criticized for prizing irony over knowledge and giving the irrational equal footing with the rational” (33).

Philosophy like all disciplines has been influenced by postmodernism. Postmodern philosophy as it is said or claimed by some theoreticians appeared beginning in the 1950s. Positivism, Social Darwinism, materialism and objective idealism are the principles that are

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denied by postmodern philosophers. Any sort of insight and truth and their construction are exerted by power relationships, personalization and discourse (Cogswell).

Postmodernism is an interference with the philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment, which is a search for an identifiable and more widespread arrangement of aesthetics, ethics, and knowledge. Postmodernists are extremely concerned with the language of written works. Deconstruction is the term defining the major literary methodology associated with the work of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. It involves reading a text to search for its indirect and concealed or several meanings.

Modern theorists such as Foucault and Derrida view emphasize the ways in which society, discourse, or ideology attains the matters they need (Foucault). Postmodern philosophical thought yet responds to the dilemmas posed by modern education, such as the ways it might influence minority communities in society affording their ideation of knowledge and truth. Postmodernists generally reject claims to absolute truth that is, unchangeable and/or universal truth in social contexts. Occasionally, Nietzsche emphasized this perspective which might be taken as implicit of any postmodern position. Some truths are more significant and coherent with perception than others.

One of the themes of postmodernism is the rejection of universal objective truth which is apparently identified by (Lyotard) as “incredulity towards metanarratives”. According to Postmodernists, there is no universal “*truth*” instead there are only “*truths*” that are special to a certain society or group of people and restricted to individual perception. (Smith)

Postmodernism shapes new ideas about history, in a particular time and place. It basically seeks to reduce the significance of history paying less attention to its value and role as regarded as a witness to what is going on and recording facts. However, stories may be wrong and the witness always testifies the strong side. It considers the pursuit of the ultimate truth as rather a

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mistaken claim and Postmodernism basically calls for the impossibility to reach the truth (Kornblith).

Conclusion

This chapter examined the necessary surrounding information and theoretical concepts needed to inquire in this research. It investigated the existentialist philosophy, its beliefs and main concepts, and its pioneers. The aim was to establish the common ground between the two directions of thought, existentialism and post-modernism, in order to point out their mutual themes so that we are able to analyze them together later on as this research extends further.

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Chapter Two

An Aesthetic Portrayal of *There But For The* as a Post-modernist Work

Introduction

In her postmodernist novel *There But For The*, Ali Smith amalgamates her distinctive literary style and language with the insightful use of diverse postmodernist features. This amusing mixture between both turns her novel to an outstanding postmodernist work both structurally and thematically. Accordingly, she incorporates postmodernist features in an implicit manner that embellishes her work, and thematically she represents the postmodernist attitudes in her characters throughout the whole novel. This current chapter comes up with precipitating details about Smith' works, language and style, and emphasizes the way she incorporates postmodernist features and the way the protagonists are depicted as postmodern individuals.

2.1 Biographical Overview

Ali Smith is a Scottish writer who was born in Inverness, Scotland, 1962 to an Irish mother and an English father. She is the youngest in her big working-class family (Begley). She received her education from the University of Aberdeen. She, then, studied at Newnham College, Cambridge for a PhD in American and Irish Modernism. She worked as a lecturer of Scottish, English, and American literature at Strathclyde University, but she quit the job after a one-year illness of chronic fatigue syndrome to devote her whole time to writing.

Smith's works vary between short stories, plays, and novels. Her very first writings were plays during her PhD enrollment that she dropped because of her devotion to writing. Her first published work was a collection of short stories entitled *Free Love and Other Stories* (1995)

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for which Smith won the Saltire Society Scottish First Book of the Year Award and a Scottish Arts Council Award. It was followed by her first novel in 1997. In 1999, she published her second collection of short stories *Other Stories and Other Stories*. Two years later, Smith published her second novel *Hotel World* (2001) which was a great success, for which she won the Encore Award and the inaugural Scottish Arts Council Book of the Year Award.

This novel was selected for the Orange Prize for Fiction and the Booker Prize for Fiction. Many successful works followed later varying between short stories, novels, and plays such as *The Whole Story* and *Other Stories* (2003), *The Accidental* (2004), *Girl Meets Boy* (2007), *The First Person and Other Stories* (2008), *There But For The* (2011), *Artful* (2012), *How to Be Both* (2014). Her most recent works are her seasonal novels *Autumn* (2016), *Winter* (2017), *Spring* (2019), and *Summer* (2020).

Ali Smith is best known for her “*daring*”, “*unconventional*”, “*playful*”, and “*highly experimental*” narrative style. The way she builds her narratives makes the reader feel puzzled. Many of her novels are divided into sections accounted from different points of view, which at the first glance seem unrelated. However, Smith always succeeds in designing that magical direction between them. She plays with words and statements and uses language in her characters’ grace leaving the reader confused with making connections. Therefore, she provides the reader some space to intervene by the gaps she intentionally creates in her narratives. She acquaints her readers with her characters using the close-third-person style and writing about contemporary issues (Winterson).

Wood states that words are not stable in Smith’s fiction, as in Shakespeare, everything is mutable. He argues that even though the influence of the satirical style of Muriel Spark and Virginia Woolf’s interior monologue can be seen in Smith’s writings, her passion of Shakespeare is highly noted. Smith’s language is embellished with jokes and puns, allusions

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and compound meanings, irony and satire making her readers confused with associations, seeking for what is there but cannot be observed. Most particularly, her books are alive with puns that Wood describes her as “*the most pun-besotted of contemporary novelists*”. (Review: ‘Winter,’ by Ali Smith). *There But For The* is a good example of her obsession with wordplay where all characters use them intensely, Miles, Anna, and even the nine year old girl Brooke.

Speaking about Ali Smith’s characters, Wood estimates, “*if all of Dostoyevsky’s novels could be called “Crime and Punishment”, all of Ali Smith’s could be called How To Be Both.*” Indeed, her characters are always double-faceted struggling between how to live according to who they are or to how others see them. In *There But For The*, it even goes beyond repeating selves. She presents her protagonist, Miles, from four different views which you do not even know whether to trust or not (Thursfield).

One is an old friend he met thirty years ago for few days in a summer vacation, the second is a man he met at the theatre by coincidence, the other is an old lady hallucinating in a hospital whose daughter is his girlfriend during high school, and the last is a nine year old girl whom he met only in the dinner party. Regardless of these different testimonies from seemingly untrustworthy characters, readers all along the story feel as if Miles is the one speaking to them through those different people.

The themes of Smith involve death, guilt, grief, time, and relationships between couples and generations, and most particularly, she writes about love. Indeed, she always has got her personal view concerning these themes (Thursfield). In *There But For The*, for example, she emphasizes on death from a different way by portraying characters haunted by the dead who keep communicating with them, and influencing their lives. In addition, time for her is easy in which her characters keep travelling, mostly to a past they are always nostalgic for. She is as

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well highly engaged to her environment's social and political issues, which is a current theme in her writings. In *There But For The*, for the aim of recalling her society's current struggles of different generations and races coexistence, she gathers characters from different backgrounds around one dinner table, and acquaints the reader with their clashing discussions.

Thursfield declares that Smith's writing is full of mysteries and unresolved puzzles that attract the reader's role in interpreting the story. She leaves gaps in her stories allowing her readers to add parts from the real world or from their experiences to resolve the final puzzle of the story. This makes her stories more evocative, and with her distinctive narrative style, Smith succeeds in transforming her characters' personal stories to universal stories. In *There But For The*, Smith tells the story of a man who locks himself in the spare room of his hosts and stays there for months without any explanation.

The novel starts with this mysterious event, describing that tricky guest through other people who dealt with him at some point in their lives. It is divided into four sections according to these people testimonies. Each part gives the reader an allusion to complete the ambiguous puzzle of this awkward guest. At the end, the reader does not reach the end of the story and culminates in unresolved puzzle which can only be figured out by answering the question why would a man lock himself in a room for months? All Smith's novels involve interaction from the part of the reader to give meaning to the text. This is the principle quality that appends Smith's novels, particularly *There But For The*, into postmodernist literature.

Although Modernism can be perceived in Ali Smith's scripts, postmodernist features empower her works as many critics describe her novels as postmodern. Smith's passion of portraying single moments within a range of less important attributes makes some consider her fiction as modernist. However, she is against calling her writings modernist (Akbar). Among those who consider her writings as postmodernist, there is Emma Higginbotham who

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refers to Smith's novels as "deliciously quirky postmodern", Nina Sankovitch who describes *There But For The* as "a kind of postmodern ode to life", and Raoul Eshelman who considers *Hotel World* as "an extremely postmodern novel" (Germanà and Horton, 04).

Smith's writings are identified as postmodernist since her novels integrate the real with the unreal to set more dimensions to ordinary subjects as truth and desire, and to characters with unsteady selves. She mobilizes social conformist ideas and boundaries, and strikes her readers with the unexpected (Germanà and Horton, 04). Hence, the aim of this chapter is to trace postmodernist features in her novel *There But For The*, as well the qualities that make her protagonists postmodern individuals.

2.2 Postmodern Aesthetics

Unlike the traditional novel, the postmodernist novel goes beyond the mainstream literary policy which constitutes plot, character, settings, point of view and theme. Indeed, postmodernist writers look for inciting the reader's imagination and curiosity through mysterious expectations and unconsciously marginalizing the current literary conventions in order to have their own version of creating an aesthetic postmodern piece of writing full of puzzles. Subsequently, Ali Smith resort to hide details and circumstances through presenting an ordinary postmodernist fragmented and mosaic literary fragment.

2.2.1 Stylistic Analysis

Through *There But For The*, Ali Smith creates a postmodern title that embodies words mysteriously set together to represent a postmodern fragmentation as a potential component in her postmodern novel. Lewis defines fragmentation as "Another means of allowing space for the open and inconclusive [that is] to break up the text into short fragments or sections, separated by space, titles, numbers or symbols" (174).

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Accordingly, the novel's title is extracted from a famous proverb which says, "*there but for the grace of God go I*" in which Smith intentionally drops the rest of the proverb to keep her readers' eyes extensively open out of the suspense and the gaps she creates. *There But For The* is a fragmented puzzled title in which Ali Smith ironically uses its meaning to prove that the postmodern individual has his fate in his hands as stated by Sharma and Chaudhary "it's common for postmodernists to treat serious subjects in a playful and humorous way" (193).

Smith does not follow a simple story line that attracts the readers from the start to the end. Instead, she emphasizes on all the characters to give their own views and present their own backgrounds and circumstances in relation to the protagonist. The novel is divided into four chapters and each chapter is proficiently entitled according to the title's four words *There But For The*. It means that each word, from the title, is used to refer to a whole different story related to the protagonist Miles Garth, the thing that makes the entire plot a fractured and fragmented one.

Hence, the reader does not receive enough information to get the whole picture of the story, but rather bits of information that are not always relevant to the story. Such a fragmented style of a text and its characters entails the readers' involvement in order to understand the Postmodernist literature (Lewis).

Through the course of each chapter, Smith frequently discusses one part of the title through repeating it in order to emphasize its meaning, where she evokes her readers attention to guess the links and get the right interpretation, simply because they are no more passive consumers of her product (Rosenau). In the first part Anna Hardie, who met Miles when they were young in a journey to Paris as a prize for a writing contest, quests the meaning of being "*There*". The second section describes how Mark Palmer and Miles met at the theatre and the way he invites him to attend the dinner party where Mark does not want to go "But" he does.

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Regarding the third part, it is narrated from the perspective of May Young, an old woman with dementia who is in the hospital and speaks only “within the confines of her head” (Smith, 98), who is stuck in the past memories of her daughter who died as a teenager. Her daughter is Miles’ girlfriend Jennifer who keeps asking “what are human beings for?” (122). The last chapter puts emphasis on the nine years old girl Bayoude where she exposes her notebook entitled “the fact is notes” in which she indicates that the fact is never an absolute truth.

2.2.2 Hyperreality

It is claimed that in the postmodern world, people have experienced a comprehensive integration of technology which has gained a major focus in their lives where almost everyone uses it, the thing that makes postmodern writers incorporate it in their writings. This kind of literary technique is called “*hyper-reality*”. Barry describes hyper-reality as “within postmodernism [as the collapse of] the distinction between what is real and what is simulated: everything is a model or an image, all is surface without depth” (89).

In the context of postmodernism, hyper-reality is a prevailing literary technique throughout the whole novel. Indeed, in chapter one entitled “*There*”, Smith describes one summer evening when Anna, who is Miles’ friend thirty years ago, was sitting in front of her laptop where she gets exposed to a huge mass of information through technology, though she is home:

One summer evening with the noise of Wimbledon coming from neighbours’ TVs through the open windows of the houses all around. Wimbledon was on her own TV too. Her own TV’s sound was turned down. It was sunny in London and the Wimbledon grass was still bright green, only a little scuffed. The TV screen flickered away by itself beyond the laptop screen. Pock noises and oohs and ahs,

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strangely disconnected from their source, accompanied the little noises she was making on her keyboard. It was as if the whole outside world was TV soundtrack. Maybe there was a new psychosis, Tennis Players' Psychosis (TPP), where you went through life believing that an audience was always watching you. (13-14)

In the light of the aforementioned lines, Smith depicts the compelling portrayal of hypereality, through which she seeks to reveal how reality and fiction are overlapped that one finds it confusing to distinguish between them.

Ideally, the four chapters are full of a considerable use of irony and black humor that is considered to be an exceptional postmodernist feature (Sharma and Chaudhary). For instance, in the second chapter, Smith's narrative frequently embodies irony, especially, when she introduces the dialogue of the guests of the Lees' dinner party. The Lees' annual tradition is made to gather strangers from different origins. Hannah, who is one of them, ironically asks the Bayoudes, who are blacks, "if they've ever seen real tiger at home" (Smith, 66), though they have been living in England for years.

Smith ironically creates such a dialogue to explain that people of the time are superficial and racist and refuse to tolerate differences. Another example in the last chapter in which the Smith criticizes the way postmodern individual looks at religion as he becomes incurious and careless. In an ironic way, she portrays Brooke, as a child who belongs to the second generation and enters the church "*just*" to borrow a pencil, rather than worshipping God, revealing that the church is empty. It clearly shows that the postmodern being is no more interested in religion as a sacred issue: "Brooke knew a pencil would be here. It is why she came into the church. There is nobody else in the church: "she is just borrowing it" (149).

In *There But For The*, fragmentation involves all elements of the novel: the plot, setting, characters, themes and even at the syntax as it is intensively used in the second chapter "*But*"

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by Mark Palmer. He is haunted by his mother's ghost who died when he was a child. His mother constantly communicates with him through rhyming fragmented sentences "For every new bud there'll ever be / all the old leaves get shunted off the tree / say it's a kind of spooning—with a knife / this merciless merciful newness of life Mark sat, now, on The circular bench not far from the gate of the park" (87), which Smith includes said by his dead mother Faye. These lines are introduced, with no smooth transition compared to the previous dialogue, with the form of separate sentences to indicate how the language of the dead affects the way sentences are structured and fractured.

Fragmentation is also used at the level of the novel's setting, particularly time, through the use of temporal distortion, not only throughout the whole novel, but also at the level of sentences, where Smith uses multiple tenses in one context. For example, in the first chapter, Smith writes, "This story is true and happened once in the future long ago" (44), and in the third chapter she also writes "May Young was old. You'll always be "young" now you've married me, Philip had whispered in her ear at the altar, June 7, 1947" (98). The quotes depict the way Smith smoothly shifts from one tense to another in her narrative past, present and future.

Accordingly, secular disorder is strongly present throughout the course of the novel as a potential postmodern feature in postmodern fiction (Lewis, 172). According to Lewis, secular disorder is a postmodern component that means "postmodernist fiction did not just disrupt the past, but corrupted the present too. It is disordered the linear coherence of narrative by warping the sense of significant time" (172). Such a technique is extensively used throughout the whole four chapters as Smith goes back and forth in time to narrate the events of her novel. Therefore, a linear time line is absent as the writer tends to mention events in a disordered time sequence.

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Accordingly, Smith writes “there was once a woman who had met this man thirty years before, had known him slightly for roughly two weeks in the middle of a summer when they were both seventeen” (12). It explains how Miles and Anna have met in the summer of 1980. Then, the author moves to describe an event that happens recently when she says, “Anna sat on a wall in Greenwich nearly forty years later in the summer of the year 2009 and looked down at her shoes” (35). After that, Smith goes back in time to narrate past events particularly in 1981 “she had seen him again, the next year, 1981, was it?” (38). These examples clearly depict temporal distortion as a predominant Postmodern component throughout the narration of Smith in *There But For The* as a whole structure.

2.2.3 Maximalism through the Characters

Levey defines mximalism as “the writing that values the pursuit of detail, specificity and comprehensiveness above other functions novels might be thought to have” (02). This evokes that maximalism is a scrutinized narration where the writer takes into consideration the very details of the dialogue. It is considered to be an outstanding postmodern feature in postmodern fiction.

Maximalism is a crucial postmodern element in *There But For The* as the novel contains a rigorous use of this element such as in the first chapter when Genevieve Lee sends an email to Anna Hardie to seek help for the trouble she was put in because of Miles’ weird act. Smith puts the same exact words with the exact email form instead of providing only the summary of the email, which is a clear embodiment of maximalism (Smith, 14).

Moreover, when Anna comes to the Lees’ house, they bring her his jacket, inside it a wallet. When she opens it, she gives a full description starting from the outside to the inside though the information seems unnecessary detail, “she put her hand back in and felt for the wallet. Vera Pelle, Made In Italy. Three credit cards, two debit cards, Royal Bank, a card with

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his name on it and the word Roadside. Six first-class stamps. A membership card for the Tate. Three twenty pound notes” (37). Another example, in chapter two, is a phone message the writer includes, written in the same exact way as it was sent. It was written in contracted form that is used in, “even if she did iwoulntanswrblve me lfs so much bttr without it U R INSANE mark well sposiveknwn *that * snce I sw u that brkfst tm whniws 7 & u wr 12 & u apolgizd 2 th *toast * cz u hdchsn *cornflkes* ! ;-)” (48).

Furthermore, a medical file of May Young is provided with a detailed description in the third chapter:

May Violet Young (née Winch) (F) (84) (widow, husband dec. 20.7.99) admitted to IC 6/09 with general collapse / delirium / high fever / UTI, passed for rehabilitation 7/09 to Wd 7 then 8/09 down to Wd 5 (Geriatric) (slated for closure in 2/10 as per new NHS guidelines whereby future chronic-convalescence elderly: reallocation to community / family care). Post 7 months UTI MRSA cycle: advisory meeting with NOK allocated “palliative care only”. (100)

According to what has been tackled above, *There But For The* is a Postmodernist novel as it conforms to most of the Postmodernist literary components that make a work a typical Postmodernist one.

2.3 The Postmodern Condition through Modern Artistic Innovation

There But For The, as a literary postmodernist work, marks the depiction of postmodernist characters based on the postmodern thoughts and attitudes they hold. Each character represents his own version of being a model of a typical postmodern individual. To begin with, Miles Garth is the man who is the pillar upon which the whole novel revolves around.

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He is the protagonist who is considered to be one of the significant postmodern characters as he portrays most of the postmodern attitudes and beliefs affected by the postmodern condition. At the very beginning, Miles seems a quite ordinary man who holds no suspicious acts exactly like the rest of the guest. Suddenly everyone is shocked by what he has just done when he locks himself in the spare room. Actually, it is the epiphany moment when everyone realizes that he almost knows nothing about which he really is, even his party partner Mark Palmer who met him by a coincidence at the theatre.

The whole scene symbolizes Miles' anonymous existence (Roseneau), for no one could supply enough information about him as their relationship with him is just a superficial acquaintance "How long have you two been together? she says. About three and a half hours last Saturday and (glancing down at his watch) twenty minutes tonight, Miles says. Oh no, we stayed and had a drink last Saturday too, four and a half" (61). This unpredictable action shows that the Postmodern being is the kind of flexible and welcoming individual (Roseneau), who prefers spontaneity over planning "I'm an interloper, happy just to eat salad to atone. Happy not to eat at all if it's a problem, happy just to have an enjoyable evening sitting here" (64).

Another scene that reflects his flexibility is the fact that he is a vegetarian which prevents him eating from what is served by the Lees in the dinner party. So, he prefers to eat salad only in order not to make the Lees think for other alternative meal for him. Moreover, when Miles manages to go to a party with a man he barely knows, and then barricades himself in the Lees' house; the whole act is out of spontaneity and coincidence. However, his actions are unexplainable and still an open puzzle throughout the whole novel.

2.4 Searching for Truth

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As a postmodern character, through his contingency, Miles expresses his indifference and carelessness to the governmental punishment and even to the people around him when he shuts himself in strangers' house against their will. In fact, subjectivity in terms of self-interest, self-satisfaction and self-promotion is the driving force of Postmodern individuals' attitudes (Roseneau).

Anna Hardie is another postmodern paragon; she is Miles' thirty years ago friend. When he locked himself in the spare room of the Lees' house, he had left his jacket and his phone inside it. Genevieve Lee finds her email address in his phone which she uses to ask her for help thinking that she is Miles' intimate friend. Anna answers the call to offer help though she does not remember him.

When she comes, she acts so flexible and relaxed even though she is in strangers' house and the whole story seems suspicious, because her email address was found in the phone of an anonymous man "Anna spoke soothingly and kept her arms uncrossed" (21). Anna depicts an outstanding postmodern character, who seeks to raise personal questions for meaning (Roseneau), questioning Miles' inexplicable weird action:

What would happen if you did just shut a door and stop speaking? ...Would words just stop being useful? Would you lose language altogether? Or would words mean more, would they start to mean in every direction...Would the inside of your head overgrow with every word that has ever come into it, every word that has ever silently taken seed or fallen dormant? Would your own silence make other things noisier?

Would all the things you'd ever forgotten, all layered there inside you, come bouldering up and avalanche you? Did he want to know what it felt like to not be in the world? Had he closed the door on himself so he would know what it feels like, to be a prisoner? Was it some

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wanky kind of middle-class game about how we're all prisoners even though we believe we're free as a bird (39).

As it is noted before, postmodern being tends to ask personal questions to search for truth which is what Anna does through her several questions. "be-yourself attitude" (Roseneau) is typically applied by Anna Hardie, especially when she quits her job simply because she does not like it though she is successful in it "Because I didn't like this job, I told the people I worked for that I was going to leave. But they told me how good I was at the job, then they gave me a promotion which meant I made a lot more money" (34). Self-promotion and self-satisfaction are her core concern rather than being successful and earning money without enjoying what she is doing. As she favors spontaneity over planning, Anna gives up her job without even thinking about the outcomes of being jobless.

The postmodern individual is known to be less interested in religion, the thing that is reflected in Anna's attitude when she describes the church as a place for tourism and beauty instead of being a place where God should be worshiped "It is amazing here. I am so lucky. We eat in hotels every night. I saw the Eiffel tower and a really beautiful church" (26). It, actually, reflects the superficiality of the postmodern individual towards religious sacred issues (Roseneau).

Genevieve Lee is the house owner where Miles Garth barricades himself in its spare room. Miles' contingency reveals her postmodern attitudes and behaviors towards his case, as so subjective and indifferent to people around her. Miles' incident proves that Genevieve is a self-interested woman and she does not care about others' feelings. For example, when she sent an email to Anna to ask for help, the email reveals how subjective she is "our spare room door, in fact all the upstairs doors in our house are believed 18th century although the house itself dates from the 1820s you can understand my concern and the hinges are on the inside

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side, I have reason to believe he has jammed one of our chairs under the 18th door handle too” (14-15).

Genevieve Lee is less interested in what Miles has been through and what really matters for her is the safety of her deep-rooted house that reflects her implanted postmodern behaviors and beliefs. (Inkeles et al.). Another scene that demonstrates Genevieve’s publically subjectivity is when she acts rudely with the child and welcomes only Anna because she thinks she is the salvation for the bind that Miles has put her in “She pushed the child to one side and held her hand out to shake Anna’s hand” (17).

2.4.1 Existential Life as Mirrored by Absurd Individuals in *There But For The*

The postmodern individual is longing for the acceptance of differences. Each individual should be proud of the person he is and of the culture he holds (Lyotard). It is the case of Genevieve when she proudly declares in a newspaper article that the Lees family is famous for its hospitality “I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that among our friends we’re renowned for our hospitality” (54) thanks to their annual tradition dinner party to invite people from different identities and backgrounds “Last year they had invited a Muslim couple; the year before they had had a Palestinian man and his wife and a Jewish doctor and his partner” (18).

Through throwing annual parties, the Lees want to show that they are embracing the Postmodernist motto that calls for tolerating cultural differences. When individuals welcome strangers regardless to their origins, Mark Palmer who is a gay and his friend who is a vegetarian are described as “the fact that he was a vegetarian, though it was a surprise, was absolutely no problem” (55), and the Bayoudes who are blacks. Moreover, serving potent cocktail of meals such as couscous, tagine and omelette reflects the fact that they are culturally open-minded.

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Mark Palmer is a person who is haunted by his dead mother Faye. He is a postmodern character who holds postmodern attitudes as it is shown throughout the course of the novel. As the Postmodern being is considered to be a flexible, relaxed and spontaneous, Mark Palmer typically depicts those postmodern beliefs. For example, when he goes to the theatre, he meets Miles Garth. They both discuss what they have seen in the theatre and they went to drink together even though no one really knows the other “How long have you two been together? She admits. About three and a half hours last Saturday and (glancing down at his watch) twenty minutes tonight, Miles says. Oh no, we stayed and had a drink last Saturday too. Four and a half” (61). Although both men accidentally met at the theatre, they went together to the dinner party as friends for a long time.

“Be-yourself attitude” is a vital postmodern element embraced by Mark when he publically declares that he is a gay “But of course you must have seen some terrible times yourself, Mark, if you were gay before it was legal to be gay, were you? Oh yes, I was, Mark says. I was gay all along” (77). Notably, postmodern individuals pay less attention to social institutions such as the government.

Smith sheds light on such an issue through her postmodern characters’ dialogue. For instance, when Caroline asks him how he manages to be a gay though it was illegal, Mark replies, “Oh, it was all very jolly, Mark says. We all hid everything. All very exciting. Very stimulating” (78), as if they are enjoying to be secretly gays showing no interest to social conventions at that time, the thing that turns them typically Postmodern characters.

The third chapter starts with Jennifer who is Miles’ adolescence girlfriend. She died when she was a teenager. Her story is told by her mother “May Young”. In this chapter, Ali Smith tends to shed light on the huge gap and the clash between old and new generation. It is

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apparently shown when May young addresses the new generation, “They were all mad as fox bitten dogs, the girls of today” (99).

She criticizes the postmodern attitudes embraced by the new generation who are affected by the exposure to technology. Further, this chapter includes personal question for meaning raised by Jennifer “What’s the point of human beings? I mean like what are we for? she says. Um, May says. The point of human beings” (122) is a prominent postmodern element that Smith focuses on throughout the narrative.

May Young is an old lady whom Miles used to visit. She belongs to the first generation far from all modern aspects compared to the second generation who witnesses radical changes because of technology. This second generation is famous for the extensive use of technology as a focal postmodern theme throughout the whole novel. Therefore, Smith presents another anonymous postmodern character, from the second generation, who she intentionally names the girl. This girl is the Lees daughter who comes to visit May Young under Miles’ request “Who was she, then, that girl? She wasn’t family, she was just some girl” (99).

Correlatively, as the girl belongs to the second generation, May describes her as a person who is extremely exposed to technology to the extent she does not differentiate between reality and fiction. She represents a postmodern modal character who celebrates the use of technology in everyday life “though she might, the girl, be wearing one of the things they wear, in their ears, they all wear them now, so they can’t hear anything but themselves and their insides, and even then they can’t hear themselves think” (99). That is to say, she is physically present but absent-minded and this is how technology turns postmodern individuals.

The girl also portrays another postmodern theme, which is demonstrating no interest to social conventions when she dares to get rid of the smoke alarm in the hospital in order to

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smoke. The action describes how subjective postmodern people as they follow their interest even if at the expense of governmental punishment: “don’t suppose I can smoke in here, can I. The girl stood up and went and had a look at the smoke alarm in the ceiling. Could maybe get the cover off, she said, if it’s worked by a battery” (109).

Ali Smith in her last chapter highlights the core postmodern concept that truth is relative and what may seem a truth for someone is not a truth for another. Indeed, Brooke Bayoude is a clever child who depicts a typical postmodern character who wittily raises philosophical quests for the meaning of “fact” as she always writes her stories in her “the fact is notes” notebook.

Ali Smith admits that truth is seen from different angles which ascertain that truth is not absolute and no one should take it for granted “imagine if your whole body was covered in butterflies and the butterflies were eyes, opening and closing their wings like eyelids and all seeing at the same time at different heights and angles. Would we see things from all their different sides at once? Would that make what we see have a different dimension inside our brains?” (134).

Therefore, truth, according to postmodern beings, is never absolute since it is seen from various perspectives, and each has his own way of interpreting it (Veerachary). The events take place in a modern world where truth becomes even more sophisticated and hard to believe in, due to the emergence of technology. Therefore, one finds it, seriously, difficult to believe what may seem a truth “the problem with reading facts on the internet and sometimes in books, is that sometimes you might not be reading the true facts” (134).

Indeed, Smith emphasizes the relativity of truth via an outstanding postmodern narrative “But the fact is, how do you know anything is true? Duh, obviously, records and so on, but how do you know that the records are true? Things are not just true because the internet says

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they are. Really the phrase should be, not the fact is, but the fact seems to be” (134). That is to say, Smith evokes the reader’s attention through questioning facts instead of taking them as ready-made social conventions, and reducing the significance of history simply because our life is worth being history itself (Elaati).

The writer depicts postmodern individuals as beings who appreciate the life they are living now, rather than celebrating previous conventions, like religion, as it is ironically mentioned in this small passage “Brooke knew a pencil would be here. It is why she came into the church. There is nobody else in the church. She is just borrowing it” (149), when she goes to the church, Brooke finds it empty, which reflects that postmodern individuals are no more interested in religion.

In *The But For The*, Smith depicts postmodern characters from different ages and gender who give various segments of truth about the protagonist. Therefore, the novel is intentionally divided into four chapters in order to depict the core concept of Postmodernism, which is the relativity of truth. Further, the novel as a postmodernist masterpiece is deliberately kept open to confirm that truth is never absolute, but rather each one has his own version of it.

Conclusion

In the light of the previous analysis, *There But For The* is believed as a postmodern example that reflects almost all the postmodernist features. Among these features is fragmentation which is a main technique throughout the whole novel involving title, plot, setting, characters, themes and sentences as well. Smith also includes other postmodernist features such as irony, techno-culture, temporal distortion and maximalism.

As the writer adopts these techniques, it marks a clever depiction of postmodern characters who typically reflect the postmodern attitudes, anonymous existence, subjectivity,

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spontaneity, indifference to social institutions and the personal version of reality, they hold. The following chapter sheds light on the way postmodern behaviors affect the postmodern characters existential crisis through analyzing existential themes such as existence, authenticity, and struggle for freedom in the main characters, Miles, Anna, Mark, May, Jennifer and Genevieve.

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Chapter Three

The Existentialist Quest in *There But For The*

Introduction

As we explored in the previous chapter, *There But For The*, is a postmodern work which, portrays the protagonists as ordinary postmodern individuals through postmodernist literary traits. Those protagonists represent the postmodern life, as their own concerns and prompt pleasure, go after their own reality, act spontaneously, and refuse to comply with social life rules. As a result of acknowledging their subjectivity and personal investment, their actions shape the absurd and meaninglessness of life.

Throughout her work, Smith used a peculiar style which authorizes readers to get into the inner state of the characters. Also, it explores the various existential patterns individuals hold to survive the agonizing conditions of the postmodern society. She uses one individual's experience to depict different elements of the modern society, emphasizing those who flutter with the absurdities of culture, and who struggle in their will for authenticity. Therefore, the current chapter uncovers an existential outlook into the understanding of the novel's characters as individuals in a post-modern society.

3.1 The Existential Struggle of Individuals in *There But For The*

Throughout the obscure title of the novel which extends over throughout its chapters, the existential quest of protagonists is apparent. The first chapter, entitled *There* revolves around the idea of being 'there', and this signifies one's existence. It is accounted from the perspective of Anna Hardie whose life has recently become a journey into finding an answer to this question. The second chapter, at the end of it, induces the dispute about the word *But* which points the idea of limited freedom of the individual taking action based on to the social norms and rules of

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society. This chapter focuses on the character Mark Palmer whose life is about absolute decisions, which ends with the word *but*. The third chapter entitled *For* is turned around memories about the dead teenager Jennifer who asks the existential question “*what are humans beings for?*” (Smith, 122) and who receives multiple responses from people around him.

The last chapter is overstrained with the tales of the nine years old girl Brooke, as she embraces a historian role. It is entitled *The* and discusses the idea of individual’s existence throughout history, why some individuals are still recognized in the present just because history voiced them, along with others. Does this evoke that these individuals did not exist just because we did not confront them? Subsequently, the little girl decides to type her own history in order to prove some incidents and the existence of beings such as the story of the life of Miles in the novel.

3.2 The Protagonist’s Dimension of Existence

As the novel progresses, Miles, the protagonist, as a paragon of postmodern being, embraces a series of spontaneous and voluntary actions, which culminates in locking himself in the extra room of strangers’ house for months. It all starts from the moment he decides to go to a dinner party organized by people he barely knows, with a person he knew only for few hours as they met coincidentally at the theatre. His unmatched absurd action puts people around him in confusion and mess, and becomes everyone’s rumors and gossip.

Nonetheless, as absurd his action might seem, it was the act that disclosed the absurdity of all people around him, and the entire modern society. In the following lines, the absurd will be revealed in the characters’ lives as Sartre believes that the absurd is human beings’ uncertain actions and choices, as they result from their freedom, which cannot be reasonably justified outside of the individual situation. Also, the actions of the individuals result from their unparalleled comprehension and reflection about their life experience (Michelman).

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As people hear the news of Miles, they start gathering in Greenwich in a large queue outside Miles' window, executing all varieties of absurd behaviors which depict the profundity and meaninglessness of the modern world. Smith ironically compares the dimension of this queue, in the words of the little girl Brooke, to the dimension of the queue of people who wanted to see the dead body of the historical hero Admiral Nelson (Smith, 143). This proves the plausibility of modern individual, as they stand outside the Lees' house just to see the blind at the window, behind which Miles probably be located. Behaviors of the crowd become even more insane that the newspapers refer to it as "*Milo Madness, Milo Mania, [and] Milo Mayhem*" (143).

Outside the Lees' house, people camped and installed food stalls. Some made "the Milo Merchandise" which sells t-shirts, badges, and flags that say "*Milo-High Club and Smile-O For Milo*" (144). TV cameras situate there all the day for any newflash. There were those who pretended they are Miles' wives, and the man who gives people the Milo messages. Someone even performed a play entitled "*Miles to Go before I Sleep*" that probably informs what is happening in the room (135). More sarcastically, there were banners of "*Milo For Palestine*", "*Milo For Israel's Endangered Children*", "*Milo For Peace*", "*Milo For Troops Out Of Afghanistan*" (144).

3.2.1 Anxiety of Existence

Miles' story became a widespread story, while most if not all of those individuals, and may not even recognize his last name. They may not be aware that his name is Miles not Milo, which makes the whole matter a mere metaphor for absurdity. Those people's lives were empty and meaningless, the fact they waited enthusiastically for the "*one o'clock basket*" every day to be delivered to Miles hoping for seeing the glance of his hand, "*Just the hand!*" (93). Even when Miles leaves the room, the attendees continue believing in the Milo imagination behind the window, just because Mrs. Lee keeps moving strictly the blind, pretending Miles' presence in

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there. As absurd those individuals' lives were, they desired whatever thing, even if it is a ghost of a man in a room, to give meaning to their lives, no matter how empty of meaning this matter was.

As one of the attendees, Genevieve Lee embraces meaninglessness in her behaviors and choices. She is perhaps the most contradicted character in the novel with her absurd behaviors as she dives in the shallowness and hypocrisy of modernity. She is the owner of the house that Miles obstructed himself in one of its rooms, and the one who organized the dinner party he attended with Mark. This dinner party is an annual tradition her husband and she organize, for a long time, as an attitude of generosity and acceptance of people from different cultures including Muslim, Christian, and Jewish.

Nonetheless, at this special dinner party in which they invite a gay man and a black family, Lees' and their friends' behaviors and dialogues do not evoke friendliness and accepting others' differences. They apparently contradict with the way Gen describes them delightedly to the newspaper.

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that among our friends we're renowned for our hospitality. Until June this year we were forever having people round for interesting soirées and sending them home happy after a meal I'd have taken great pains to cook to perfection each time (Smith, 54).

During the whole dinner party, Gen authorizes and even participates in mocking and underestimating her guests, Mark, the gay man, Miles, and the Bayoudes, the black family. This behavior makes her an operator of the absurd as she unpredictably does contradicting things with what she proclaims. Further, Caroline refers to Mark as "*stereotypical gay man*" (81), whereas, Hannah contradicts with her based on her prejudgments about gay people saying:

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He didn't comment on my clothes at all. They're supposed to comment on your clothes... And he's not as neat and clean as they usually are. They're usually more pressed or ironed or something (81).

Hannah ironically asks the Bayoudes “*if they've ever seen a real tiger at home*” (66), reminding them of their origin. Later on, this point is pointed up again by Gen herself as she describes the action to Anna, “[*the bayoudes*] *had recently moved here not from anywhere in Africa but from Harrogate*” (19). Along this debate, she also keeps on admitting that Mark is a gay, although both this admission and the Bayoudes' origin are of no significance to be told to Anna. This evokes that she did not accept these differences, and she is irritated by them and makes her party a gathering of exclusion, not inclusion as she asserts.

Hannah's ordeal with differences portrays more in her aggressive reactions to Miles authenticity. For the newspaper article, she writes that “*the fact that he was a vegetarian, though it was a surprise, was absolutely no problem*” (55). However, at the dinner party, Miles “*vegetarianism*” (66) becomes not only “*a bit of problem*” (63) but a part of joke. The fact that “*he wasn't drinking*” is “*another thing about him*” (19) she distrusts and shows up as she speaks with Anna about him, just because they were all drinking except for Miles.

All those events reveal how contradicted are Gen's behaviors and choices. She freely chose to organize those friendliness parties, as they culminate in meaninglessness and absurdity eliciting a group of foreigners who keep annoying others' differences in a judgmental manner. This freedom that she allocates to herself as a postmodern being makes her life an evocative paradigm of the absurd with her unpredictable behaviors and choices.

Her behaviors are also absurd, as she presides over getting herself out of the dilemma because of Miles' behavior in blocking himself in her additional room. Instead of trying an alternative way to get him out of the room, she meaninglessly checks out a newspaper to write dramatically

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about the event “*an uninvited stranger lives in my spare room*” (54). As postmodern beings surpass celebrating their subjectivity overtly and publically, instead of focusing on the event, she grabs the opportunity to tell non requisite details about her warm reception, the meals she “*cooks to perfection*” in her reception such as “*seared scallops with chorizo starter*”, “*lamb tagine*”, “*crème brûlée*”, and “*home-made chilli-vanilla ice cream*” (54).

Then, she keeps on describing her valuable ownership in the room, “[*her*] *rowing machine and [her] husband’s wine-making kits and DVD collections of sci-fi classics of the fifties and sixties*” (55). Even her rejection to use force to get him out runs out to be a safety measure for their “*beautiful and authenticated door*” (56) behind which Miles keeps being against their will. This proves how digested into the absurdity of the modern world she is, as she judges Miles’ event by the value of the room ownerships.

3.2.2 The Absent Presence

All along the time Miles spends in the room, Gen tries all the meaningless actions to get him out like, seeking help from a friend he met thirty years ago, speaking to the news, and even selling t-shirts that hold his name as a brand. So far, she has never thought of doing the simplest action of trying to open the door ordinarily which actually “*hasn’t been locked for months*” (153).

Even when he leaves the room peacefully, Gen does not respect the fact that she has finally restored her precious room, instead, she cries over:

All the badges and the T-shirts and the caps and key rings and the inscribed Easter eggs that she organized and invested thousands and thousands of pounds in will soon maybe not be worth money anymore (145).

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Being unaware about her personal interests of modernity, she even contemplates about creating her own version of reality about Miles' existence in her house after he left "*no one can see by looking, can they? ... No one can tell from the outside, can they?*" (145). Indeed, no one outside of her situation can reasonably understand the absurdity of her actions and choices, as she manages to solve the absurdity of Miles' behavior and actions.

Anna Hardie is another character in the novel whose actions and choices embrace the absurdity as a result of the stress of modernity. Affected by the quest of what it *means* "*to be there*", Anna relates her life with absurd spontaneous behaviors regardless of the consequences. She leaves her job at Senior Liaison, the job she was "*good at*" that "*they gave [her] a promotion*" (34), and becomes unemployed with no plans for future. As she detests the place she works in, she ridiculously calls it "*the Centre for Temporary Permanence*" (13) a contradicted name that reflects the absurdity of her job which was:

To get people to talk to [her] about about stuff that had happened to them, which was usually pretty horrible? That's why they had to tell [her] it in the first place, so that [she] could help them. Then, because there was pressure on [her from those she works for], [she] had to put pressure on them, to fit these true stories, their whole life stories in some cases, on to just two-thirds of one side of...[an] A4. (34)

Before recognizing Anna's decision leaving a job, she earns her a lot of money which seems absurd. Here after, considering her personal situation and the fact that this job compels her to act brutally against her beliefs makes it reasonable. However, her decision cannot be taken as a general rule; everyone in a similar situation would comply with, because it is generated from her own beliefs and reflections upon the case (Kierkegaard).

3.3 The Absurd and Postmodern Society

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The postmodern being as affected by the Second World War, industrialized society, and technology, is found in a meaningless life in which he lost his identity, feels foreigner and alienated. As the individual tries to withdraw from the destruction of modernity and find out his real self, the mission becomes much harder, as he must bear the society pressure while taking responsibility over his life. Therefore, most people desire to follow the rules of society to avoid these burdens of living. According to the Existential terminology, the individuals are living in inauthenticity, while, the ones who decide to embrace their freedom and their real selves are those presiding over authenticity (Golomb).

In the novel, most of the characters fall into the first assortment, while, Miles is perhaps the most authentic character as he encompasses his individuality and freedom of choice to live the reality of his life throughout the whole novel. More than that, he is the one who takes on his behalf the responsibility of instructing people how to live authentically. However, fed up with the judgments of the society he lives in, the dinner party as a part of it, Miles decides to lock himself in the room of his hosts' house, and takes a different way of his existential question for authenticity, the Sisyphean one.

Miles becomes a typical absurd hero who acknowledges and accepts the absurd and rebels against it by finding meaning in the struggle itself, as a result, lives authentically and happily. Since he was a teenager, Miles searched for his personal meaning of life, a typical quality of postmodern individuals that allowed him to feel other people's immersion in inauthenticity. In the story he writes as a teenager, for which he wins a trip to Paris where he first meets Anna.

Miles describes a guy who keeps looking at other people's eyes for hidden incidents. This story worthily mirrors back his own self with its continuous quest for meaning and authenticity in the world of modernity. He describes the boy as a "*paragon of modernity*" (42) as he adopts

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all the aspects of modernity in which everyone around him delves in losing their real selves that become only stories of the past hidden in their eyes.

One of these stories is the man the boy sees in his mother's eyes, who is not his father. This man had once in the past "*whistled a tune every time he passed underneath her chalet window all that summer fortnight to let her know he was there and he was waiting for her*" (42). She clearly had never answered his call, and never been her authentic self and kept living possessed by a past story that does not match her present life.

This is what Sartre considers as falling into poor faith, as one does not embrace his freedom to choose living correctly to who he is. As he looks in the eyes of other people and finds only past stories in them, the boy condenses that "*there was once, and there was only once*" (42) when everyone had the chance to be his authentic self but they did not take it.

As for his friend Jennifer, who inefficiently wants to look at her eyes but cannot because she died before she was "*onced by life*" (43), it was not poor faith what prevented her from being her authentic self, but death, which human marks individuals' freedom, which is the substantial step towards authenticity. (Sartre). Lastly, he looks at his grandfather's eyes while he pertains his nice day out like a child, not as a sad pensioner, and sees "*something amazing*" (44) in them. "He didn't yet know it but he would spend the rest of his life looking back and looking forward in search of it, the still-unpolluted source that feeds into every ruined river" (44).

3.3.1 Authenticity

Sartre admits that to live authentically, one must not deduce that his real self is the role that society assigns him. Rather, one should only play this role. This is what that old man did and perhaps what made the boy see authenticity in his eyes "*the still-unpolluted source*" (44). The boy, or Miles, as he captures that glance of authenticity, goes on in life sharing it with others to help them restore their real selves.

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This is why Smith uses him as the center around which all other characters' stories are woven. For example, Anna, as they meet in Paris, he is the one who encourages and persistently helps her to get her passport to go back home from this trip in which she feels and was treated as a "*total outsider*" (25). The passport was the barrier in her path into authenticity; it was her freedom as per Sartre's thought. She needed that passport, her freedom, to stop falling into 'bad faith' by being the role of a "*total outsider*" others assigned her. "*I penetrated to the heart of the forest, sacrificed myself, and brought back you*" (31)

Miles says to Anna as he holds her passport. Indeed, he did literally brought her back because from the moment she gets her freedom, her passport, she starts to live authentically. She starts feeling "*like she belongs, like she has never been there*" (30) and even "*joins in with a couple of the conversations*" (30). The place in which she feels a stranger is the same where she recognizes her existence.

What changed is that, before, Anna did not have the choice to be there, her freedom was taken from her. Now she has the total freedom to choose whether to stay or not. Her decision was proudly and courageously to stay, regardless of the meaningless fact of being treated as an outsider, which, as Sartre believes, is not what she really is, but merely a role she plays.

Thirty years later, as she stays at the door behind Miles, Anna asks the question "*are you there?*" (12), both to Miles behind the door and to herself. This question has recently been her anxiety, to what extent she was there, at her job, with her conversances, and even the one she sees in the mirror. Smith depicts Anna's existential quest for authenticity, again by reference to Miles, as Anna's reflections about her life calls up from her contemplations upon his ambiguity of locking himself in the room of other people's house "*Miles Garth, whoever he was, was making her join in all over again*" (39).

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As Anna “[sits] on a wall in Greenwich” (36) after being called by the Lees as Miles’ friend who can potentially get him out of the room, she behaves absurdly when she puts Miles’ jacket over her head and waving in the air strangely:

Film that, you cameras. Let’s see how much it’s possible to know about what’s really happening by filming me sitting here today. Go on, prove I was there. Show us what it meant, that I was. Anna stood up. She faced one of the CCTV cameras. She put her fist in the air (38).

3.3.2 Sense of Identity

In the story, Anna was only fed up with “*this mad filming of ourselves all the time*” (37) that modernity embedded in their normal life, treating them as anonymous existents, a superb feature of the postmodern society. Ultimately, as Anna sits there, she was deeply sank in her existential thoughts, as she wonders about what it means to “*be there*” which Smith with her peculiar style and language, shows worthily as she makes the reader aware about the limits of Anna’s head. She writes about the stories of the people Anna recorded in her job, as they stand one after the other in Anna’s memory, to prove them as reliable or not as part of her job.

As Anna recalls those memories, she consents to her decision of leaving the job that was nothing, but absurd and meaningless and a fearless behavior of embracing freedom, and living authentically. In her job, Anna was fed up with the fact that they only relied on “*detect[ing] whether someone was breathing*” (36) to prove her existence, not even caring about all the stories and backgrounds they carried all inside them. As if individuals’ existence is plainly proved by their physical presence.

Even when individuals account for their stories, what attracts them is only writing it “*in as shorthand a form as possible*” (36). Anna drops out from the job because it treated people as anonymous existents according to only their heartbeats, and stimulated the workers as they are

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“the kind of absent presence persons” (37) they are inauthentic. Anna no longer belongs to that kind of individuals, and she plainly chooses to run an authentic life where she really feels *“there”*.

Genevieve Lee is also an example whom Miles’ behavior made her aware about the life of inauthenticity she lives:

It is strange having a stranger in the house with you all the time. It makes you strongly self-aware, strange to you. It is literally like living with a mystery. Perhaps in some ways metaphorically we are all like this man *“milo”* all of us locked in a room in a house belonging to strangers (56).

Miles’ existence in her house made her feel alienation in her life and to herself. Lee’s life, which was a series of contradicted and meaningless actions and choices all to satisfy the modern world standards, prevented her from embracing her real self which makes her a prototype of inauthenticity as identified by Heidegger. Subsequently, as she reflects upon the tentative state of peculiarity Miles has placed her in, Miles discovers her peculiarity all along. Even the house she has always proudly complimented, *“our gracious old historic Greenwich town house”* (54) she did not feel belonging to and becomes a mere symbol of alienation, the sense of peculiarity one senses as he discovers the absurdity of his life.

Miles was also present in May Young’s life, the mother of his deceased friend Jennifer. We recognized Jennifer only through her mother as she recalls memories about her as she lays in her bed at the hospital, and speaks only in the confines of her head. Years after her daughter’s sudden death, May recognizes what this little girl was trying to teach her with her seemingly revolting behaviors. She was trying to teach her what it means to live authentically. Since she was a child, Jennifer inquired about human existence:

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Jennifer comes into the kitchen. She is nine years old... Mum, she says. ... I need to ask you this question. What are human beings for? Jennifer says.... What's the point of human beings? I mean like what are we for? She says. Um, May says. The point of human beings. Well. It's, it's for looking after each other. We're here to look after each other (121-122).

The little girl did not rely only on her mother's answer; she asks more others about it and receives definitely distinctive answers: "*for having a good time RICK, for making the world a better place NOR, For looking after each other MUM, For building things that will last DAD*" (122). This clue to the existential view that everyone has his own meaning of existence; he is the only responsible for creating as by the virtue of freedom (Sartre). Jennifer also has got her own meaning of existence, the one her mother grasps only years after her death. It was being-towards-death, the virtue Heidegger believes as the source of life meaning and the necessary step towards authenticity.

Jennifer, as an eight-year-old child, asks her mother why do people "*suddenly burn to death ... for no reason*" (104). She wonders what if this occurs to one of her family members. As a young child, she does not take death as a personal possibility, for when her mother tells her, "*there is no way in a million you're going to burst into flames*" (104), she answers "*It's not me I'm worried about*" (104). This mood of ignoring death as one's personal possibility is what Heidegger refers to as falling into inauthenticity. Jennifer was only a child striving for the natural path into authenticity. Nonetheless, as her mother convinces her that she ought not think about these things and be anxious about them, she leads her into the wrong path towards authenticity.

On the other hand, growing older, Jennifer sticks more to her beliefs. She sarcastically tells her mother as she asks her to straighten her back, "*yeah, because I'll need a straight back when we all die in a nuclear holocaust*" (117). She is now aware about the possibility of death and even

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becomes more rebellious against societal norms striving to live her life authentically. She dresses differently, hangs around with girls not her age, and spends a lot of time with Miles.

All this did not satisfy Jennifer's parents especially the time she spends with Miles whom they think was her boyfriend. "*She is too young to have a boyfriend*" (117), they believe that they prevent her from meeting him. As an objection to this decision, Jennifer rebels through embracing silence all the time. This is the case of individuals who manage to live authentically but others misunderstand them. They alienate themselves and embrace isolation, the same as Miles who locked himself in the room. Perhaps, Jennifer is the female reflection of Miles as they hold the same beliefs, and consider the same path in their quest for authenticity. However, Jennifer dies before she reaches eventual authenticity, before her mother understands her.

3.3.3 Struggle for Freedom

Throughout the story, May stands next to the hospital, and starts recalling her daughter's memories. She reflects about death and appreciates that death comes with a different look in the eye, the look she witnessed in the "*about-to-die rabbit*" and in her children, as they were first raised (102), or it will disguise in the body of a man in a suit, that man both her mother and husband saw as they were about to die (107). Regardless of these distinctive potentials, May could finally embrace the fact that "*we've all got to go in the end*" (99).

May finally could enfold death as her personal possibility; she could perceive authenticity as a "*being-into-death*". She could realize her daughter's anxiety about death, and could explain Miles recurrent visits to her. Every time he visited her, he reminded her of her dead young girl that he becomes for her an analogy for death. May be all those recent years he wanted to teach her how to live authentically by accepting her daughter's death in one hand, and embracing death as her potential on the other hand. Every visit by Miles was a reminder of death as he was in the suit who symbolizes death "*See those windows? See that one in the middle? He's in there, she*

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said. The man in the suit? He's not in a suit, not as far as I know, the girl said. Well, I'm not dead yet, then" (127).

Another character haunted by the dead is Mark Palmer, a gay man with whom Miles attends the Lees' dinner party. He is haunted by his mother's ghost who died when he was a child, who keeps communicating with him through rhymes, the same as she used to do when she was alive. She comments about everyday experiences he goes through that her comments become part of his life. His mother's ghost becomes the haven in which he alienated himself and escapes from the modern society judgments.

By this, Mark falls into what Sartre calls "*bad faith*", he escapes the senses of anxiety urged on him by the society as he tries to live true to who he is, a gay Jewish man who likes musicals. He does not take the responsibility of the outcomes of embracing his freedom of choice; he takes the escapist path most modern man take to avoid the pressures of the world of modernity.

Miles through many incidents tries to convince Mark that he is not living authentically. One of them is when he discusses with him the meaning of the word "*but*". Miles draws Mark's attention to the fact that his "*sentences all sound like they have a 'but' attached*" (86) as if he wants him to realize that his decisions do not reflect what he really wants, which means his authentic self. "*You've been invited to this dinner party, but—you don't want to go. You don't want to go, but— But I can't really get out of it. You can't really get out of it, but*" (87). These "*but(s)*" at the end of Mark's sentences are the result of the spontaneous adopted behavior of postmodern individuals, which results in his immersion in inauthenticity as he follows what the individuals want.

Later, in a letter, Miles explains the meaning of "*but*" as a link that accomplishes "*connection, union, [and] combination*" (95). As if he wanted him to know that this "*but*" at the end of his sentences marks his differences from the society, however, should not separate him

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from the society, as this contradicts its original function of connection. Mark has always used these “*but (s)*” against his will, and even he participated with the society, his presence was always absence as he hid in his talks to his mothers’ ghost.

Subsequently, Miles wanted him to stop his illusionist behavior and engage overbearingly and courageously with the society with these “*but (s)*” as a connection to his authentic self. At the end of the debate about the use of “*but*”, Mark uses Miles’ game against him “*but it depends on whether this man I’ve just met will accept the invitation and come with me*” (87) leading Miles to go with him to the dinner party, at which his quest of authenticity takes a different path.

As Miles locks himself in the room of the Lees’ house, he becomes the absurd hero Camus describes through *the Myth of Sisyphus*. At the dinner party, his vegetarianism, the nature of his job, and the fact that he was not drinking were all a butt of the joke of the other guests (Smith, 67). He was served as a foreigner just because he behaved authentically regarding who he is. Thus, he decides to alienate himself and separate his loneliness from the absurdity of the modern world which provides no meaningful answers to his existential questions, as a result he intentionally isolates himself in the room.

The same as Sisyphus spends his time spinning a rock to the top of a mountain, then having it spin down to begin all over again, Miles spends his time in the room exercising on a bike. This repetitive behavior is what his life becomes as he quits the modern life condition behind the door of the room. For Sisyphus, this tedious action was a punishment by God as he rebelled against them to live as he desires.

Equally, Miles also rebelled against the social norms of the modern world and did what he desires for. Nonetheless, no one punished Miles as he intentionally chose to lock himself in the room to escape from reality, alienation and sorrow. For Miles, society could not adopt his unique ideas as he opted for living true to who he is. He rather was perceived as absurd just because he

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did not adapt to the logical order of the society. His action of locking himself in the room of other individuals' house was rather a punishment for those individuals as it made them feel strangers in their house.

Miles perhaps at first wanted them to realize the absurdity of their life, but what happens is that they immerse more in it. On the other hand, Lee initially handles the strangeness of her life as she lives with the ambiguity of Miles but only temporarily. She then joins the masses again and immerses more in absurdity. Therefore, Miles realizes his inability of finding meaning to the absurd society, no matter manners he tries. Ultimately, Sisyphus embraces the meaninglessness of his repetitive behavior of rolling the rock, and he decides to give it his own meaning as there was no way out. There was no way out for Miles too from his absurd society, not even locking himself in a room.

Camus admits that Sisyphus obtains authenticity and becomes the absurd hero as he confesses the absurdity of his repetitive behavior, and bravely decides to continue doing it. Miles, in one of the endings of Brooke's story for him:

Just carried the bike through the door and down the stairs and out of the front door and on to the pavement and got on it and cycled out into the road and away among all the other people who are the general traffic of the city of London (160).

Miles bravely decides to enfold the absurd of the modern society, he leaves the room and joins in again, however, this time as the absurd hero “ *the first word the man on the bike sees ...[is] the word hero* ” (08).

Conclusion

There But For The is a contemporary work which informs the reader that disconnection means getting involved, and how can being abnormal drives to engagement. Ali Smith with her

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distinctive style invites her readers into the dingy side of the unconscious of individuals in her novel. Through the novel, Smith portrays the inner existential conflict of the postmodern individual in his society. She uses one character's story, Miles, as an allegory for modern society condition, by diplomatically relying other characters' stories to it. Those characters typically reflect the absurd with their behaviors, usual actions and choices as they reside over the aggressive and materialistic modern society.

Most of the characters in the novel adapt with life reckless by the absurdity and meaninglessness of modern life. While, only some are aware about their inner existential quests, such as Anna, Jennifer, and Miles who are aware about taking responsibility over their lives. These characters decide to be isolated from the modern world, such as Miles who locks himself in a room for a long time, and subsequently, this incident makes everyone asking questions about his ambiguity and about their own lives. Eventually, as Miles leaves the room and joins the society again, he becomes the absurd hero who distorts from the society norms, at the same time he engages authentically with society.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This work has examined a literary work that integrates two interrelated movements as the perspectives to analyze a contemporary paragon written by the Scottish writer Ali Smith. In *There But For The* (2011), Smith displays an outstanding literary work which reveals the way postmodern individuals request to what has long been considered as a belief or even a faith, framed by an existential mean.

The individual is facing many uncertainties where his mind starts to question almost all the mainstream compacts, regarding all life aspects in a modern world full of contradictions and disparity, as they presume the essence of their existence. Therefore, postmodernism and existentialism, as directions of thought, tempt to offer a convincing explanation to the modern beings' attitudes and thoughts.

This thesis aims at analyzing the state of postmodern characters in *There But For The* from an existential perspective. For achieving the aim of this study, the thesis has given a theoretical framework of both existentialism and postmodernism as literary dichotomies. It started with explaining existentialism. In addition, existential themes have been also addressed including the absurd which is based on two main concepts, one is based on the idea that individuals choices come out of freedom, while the other one explains absurdism as the unplanned, the purposeless and the unjustified world.

Anxiety is another existential theme which is the feeling human beings encounter as they sense their freedom of choices. To end with, authenticity is a state human beings reach as they live according to their personal choices away from systems and rules. This theoretical background has included postmodernism as well, in which definitions are introduced. It has stated the common themes embodied in the postmodern individual such as anonymous existence, subjectivity, spontaneity, indifference to social institutions and the personal version of reality.

General Conclusion

The analysis chapter has been divided into two parts. The first part has provided a glimpse to the writer's works, language and style, analyzed postmodern features in *There But For The*, and depicted the postmodern characters in the novel. Ali Smith's writings are famous for the ironic use of puns and puzzled plots where she playfully manipulates time and structure. Several multi-layered sections, which are written according to the characters' narration, turn the plot into a mosaic-fragmented one where each segment carries a bit of content.

There But For The is a postmodern work which embodies a number of postmodern characteristics supported by examples from the novel. Among these characteristics, there are techno-culture, irony, fragmentation, temporal distortion and maximalism. Further, it has given an analysis of the postmodern attitudes like anonymous existence, subjectivity, spontaneity, indifference to social institutions and the personal version of reality, in the postmodern being in the novel, namely Miles, Anna, Mark, Genevieve, Jennifer and Brooke.

Therefore, the analysis has proved that the first and the second hypotheses are evident: the first hypothesis that states that *There But For The* is a postmodernist novel as it embodies postmodern techniques such as: fragmentation, temporal distortion, and maximalism, and the second that says that the novel's central characters represent a strong embodiment and reflection of a postmodern individual through their attitudes and behaviors in the society they act in.

In parallel, the second section analyses existential themes in the postmodern characters of *There But For The*. First, they have been perceived as representatives of the absurd as they run their lives with spontaneous actions irrespective of the outcomes. As a result, their lives become meaningless and hollow. However, not all the characters surrender to the absurdity of life. Some strive to find meaning for their lives, as a result, experience existential feelings such as alienation and anxiety. The second point in this section has tackled; it described those characters' existential quest for authenticity.

General Conclusion

This analysis has adopted different existentialists' views namely: Sartre, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Camus to reflect upon the characters' actions and choices. Thus, the analysis has proved the third hypothesis that states that the central characters are depicted in an existential condition through their Existential struggle in the absurdities of the modern world.

According to the deep thematic and structural analysis of *There But For The*, the current study has proved that Ali Smith's novel is a postmodern masterpiece as it contains various Postmodernist features. It also depicts the postmodernist individual from an Existential background through examining both postmodern and Existential themes in the characters.

To conclude, *There But For The* is an outstanding novel that combines excitement, skillful language use and fascinating embodiment of themes. Ali Smith's writings artistically reflect these key elements, the thing that makes her works open to several literary interpretations. Therefore, we highly recommend people to critically read her literary works and discover their insightful contributions in the world of literature.

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Appendices

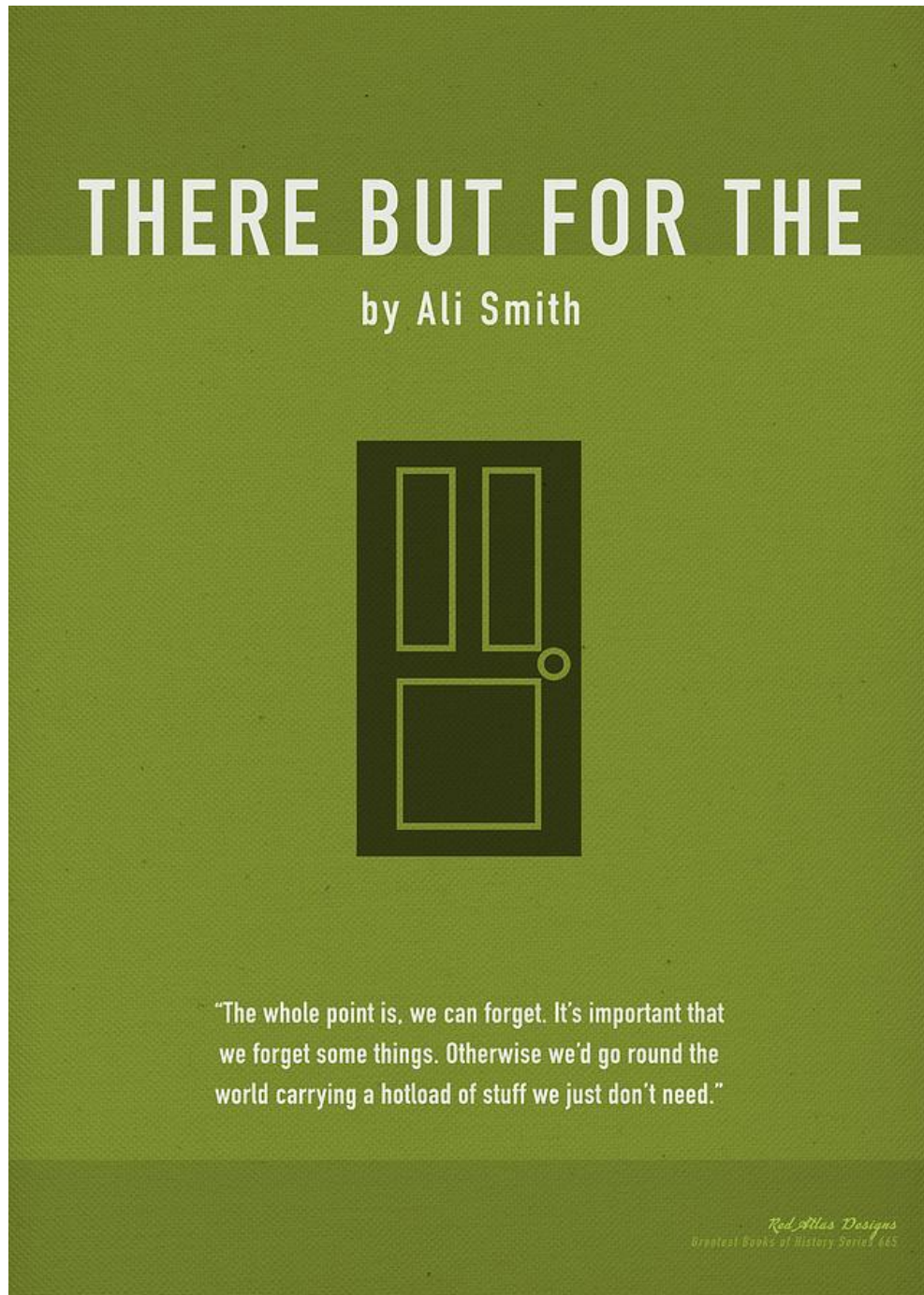
Appendix I

Biography of Ali Smith

Ali Smith is a Scottish contemporary writer. She was born in Inverness, Scotland, 1962 to an Irish mother and an English father. She is the youngest in her big working-class family (Begley). For her education, she has an MA degree with honors from the University of Aberdeen. She, then, studied at Newnham College, Cambridge for a PhD in American and Irish modernism which she has never finished (“Smith, Ali 1962”). She worked as a lecturer in Scottish, English, and American literature at Strathclyde University, but quit the job after a one-year illness of chronic fatigue syndrome to devote her whole time to writing, her passion (“Ali Smith”). She is openly gay, and has been living with her partner Sarah wood since 1993, to whom all her books are dedicated.

Smith’s works vary between short stories, plays, and novels. Her first published work was a collection of short stories entitled ‘*Free Love and Other Stories*’ (1995) for which Smith won the Saltire Society Scottish First Book of the Year Award and a Scottish Arts Council Award. It was followed by her first novel ‘*Like*’ in 1997. In 1999, she published her second collection of short stories ‘*Other Stories and Other Stories*’. Two years later, Smith published her second novel ‘*Hotel World*’ which was a great success, for which she won the Encore Award and the inaugural Scottish Arts Council Book of the Year Award.

This novel, as well, was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and the Booker Prize for Fiction. Many successful works followed later notably : ‘*The Whole Story and Other Stories*’ (2003), ‘*The Accidental*’ (2004), ‘*Girl Meets Boy*’ (2007), ‘*The First Person and Other Stories*’ (2008), ‘*There But For The*’ (2011), ‘*Artful*’ (2012), ‘*How To Be Both*’ (2014). Her most recent works are her seasonal novels: ‘*Autumn*’ (2016), ‘*Winter*’ (2017), ‘*Spring*’ (2019), ‘*Summer*’ (2020).



THERE BUT FOR THE

By: ALI SMITH

Appendices

Appendix II

Synopsis of *There But For The*

Genevieve (Gen) and Eric Lee live in Greenwich, just outside London, in a posh house. They like having posh dinner parties. However, every year, they have an alternative dinner party, when they invite a few close friends but also various people whom they would not normally invite. At the latest one, Miles Garth came with Mark Palmer, a friend of a friend. During the meal, Miles got up to go to the toilet but did not return. He seemed to have locked himself in the toilet and would not come out or explain himself. They left him there and when they went up later, he seemed to have gone.

However, the next morning, their daughter pointed out that the door of the spare room was locked and Miles had left a note. It seems that he had locked himself in the spare room (which, fortunately, was en suite) and asked to be given food (vegetarian). All that would fit under the door were turkey and ham slices so that is what he got. He did not respond to repeated knocking and entreaties. The police advised caution. The door was eighteenth century so Gen did not want to damage it.

Miles had left his jacket downstairs and his phone was in the pocket and, seemingly, not password-protected. She found an email address for someone called Anna K on his phone and contacted her. Anna knew Miles many years ago, when they both won a prize as teenagers for a bank-sponsored European trip. They had not seen each other since and Anna was surprised that he had her email as there was no email then. Nevertheless, she tried to help but he would not respond to her, either.

The book is divided into four sections. These are called There, But, For and The, each of these words being the first word of the first sentence of the appropriate section. We are presumably meant to think of the phrase There but for the grace of God go I which is

Appendices

somewhat appropriate when it comes to guests overstaying their welcome. As the phrase is incomplete we are presumably also meant to think of unfinished business, which is fairly relevant to this book.

The first section – There – is devoted to Anna Hardie. Anna K is what Miles had called her and one of the clues that Smith gives us as to whom she likes (and whom she does not) is that the good guys play word games, use puns and tell silly jokes. Miles does and this is one of them. Anna soon meets Brooke Bayoude, a ten year old girl who lives nearby and whose parents are close friends of the Lees. Brooke will turn out to be the most important character in the book after Miles. Though we meet her in each section, the The section is hers. She likes terrible jokes and puns as well. Anna tells her story. As mentioned, she met Miles as a teenager on a European holiday. Anna is the only Scot on the trip and felt a bit left out of things till she met Miles. They had briefly kept in touch but had had no contact for many years.

Source: Hamish Hamilton (2011)

Resumé

L'objectif de cette étude est d'examiner les dimensions existentielles de la quête d'existence des individus postmodernes à travers leurs attitudes dans le roman d'Ali Smith *La mais pour le* (2011). Pour tenter d'atteindre cet objectif, nous pouvons soulever les hypothèses, *la mais pour le* est un roman postmoderne car il peut soulever des techniques postmodernes telles que la fragmentation et le maximalisme. En outre, les personnages principaux du roman représentent une incarnation forte des individus postmodernes à travers leurs attitudes et leurs comportements. De plus, les personnages principaux se révèlent dans une telle condition à travers leur lutte existentielle dans les absurdités du monde moderne. Afin d'approfondir l'étude, des analyses thématiques et stylistiques sont adoptées pour dépeindre les personnages comme postmodernes et examiner leur condition existentielle. De plus, nous avons tenté d'adopter une approche philosophique qui place le roman dans un contexte critique soutenu par différentes perspectives existentialistes. Enfin, cette étude appuyée par les analyses thématiques et structurelles a assuré que les personnages du roman présentent un paradigme d'individus postmodernes dans une condition existentielle.

ملخص

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في الأبعاد الوجودية لسعي أفراد ما بعد الحادثة إلى الوجود من خلال مواقفهم في رواية الي سميث هناك لكن من أجل ذا (2011). في محاولة لتحقيق هذا الهدف، يمكننا طرح الفرضيات بان هناك لكن من اجل ذا هي رواية ما بعد الحادثة لأنها تجسد تقنيات معاصرة مثل التجزئة والتطرف. إلى جانب ذلك ، تمثل الشخصيات الرئيسية بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتم الكشف عن الشخصيات .في الرواية تجسيدًا قويًا لفرد ما بعد الحادثة من خلال مواقفهم وسلوكياتهم الرئيسية في مثل هذه الحالة من خلال صراعاتهم الوجودي في عبثية العالم الحديث. من أجل مزيد من الدراسة، تم اعتماد التحليلات الموضوعية والأسلوبية لتصوير الشخصيات على أنها ما بعد الحادثة ، وفحص حالتها الوجودية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، حاولنا تبني نهج فلسفي يضع الرواية في سياق نقدي تدعمه وجهات نظر وجودية مختلفة. أخيرًا، تضمنت هذه الدراسة المدعومة بالتحليلات الموضوعية والبنائية أن تقدم شخصيات الرواية نموذجًا لأفراد ما بعد الحادثة في حالة وجودية.

الكلمات المفتاحية حالة وجودية ، مجتمع ما بعد الحادثة ، التجزئة ، التطرف ، افراد ما بعد الحادثة