



Existential Meaninglessness and Meaningfulness in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*: An Existential Psychotherapeutic Study

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Abstract

The quest for meaning in life has always constituted a big portion of literature. Having Existential dimensions that investigate the big questions of human existence such as death, isolation, freedom and meaning, some literary works like Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) launch human being's search for a meaning of existence in realm of disorders at two levels; one is internal that comes from amnesia and neurosis, and the other is external chaos that is rendered from war and violence. Written during war and as an exploration of war consequences of familial disorder and psychological disability, the novel sketches Chris as an existential sufferer whose existence, due to shellshock and memory loss of fifteen years, lacks a firm ground and a concrete sense of meaning, therefore gets into trouble from perceiving his social roles in his return to his family from war. As a defence mechanism and a replacement to his existential vacuum that is a painful sense of void and meaninglessness, Chris pleas into indulging with amnesic fantasy and re-establishes a lost relationship with a married lady once over whose love temporally mitigates his suffering. The Existential dimension of the novel comes from Chris's re-embrace of the painfulness of reality by bringing back his memory and living in the temporality of the present being. Therapy in the novel is not too sharp, as it is implied by exorcising the lost dreams of Chris's past life; and based on his acceptance to the reality of his life, amongst it is the death of his son, comes the construction of new paradigms of therapy. This study, entitled 'Existential Meaninglessness and Meaningfulness in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*: An Existential Psychotherapeutic Study' investigates the novel's elucidations of existential vacuum, meaninglessness, and void in relation to memory loss, and then it portrays how human being is capable to make meaning in his own life. The theoretical method of the inquiry in this study is Existential psychotherapy, which is a contemporary approach blended of psychoanalysis and philosophy, mainly inspired by Existentialism. Precisely, amongst Existential psychologists, the focus of the analytical model is thrown on Irvin Yalom (1931-?) who has gained a huge admiration for his scholarly contribution in the field.



About the Journal

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1. Introduction

Before delving into the analysis of the polarity of meaningfulness and meaninglessness in the novel under lenses of Existential psychotherapy, one must grasp a foregrounding of the author's contribution and her legacy in the depth of the novel, and the theoretical background of the methodology of the research.

1.1. Rebecca West's Legacy in *TRS*

Recently, observable light has been thrown on Rebecca West's *TRS* in terms of critical comments and vivid analyses for its profound epitome of human psychology. True that West has written the novel in the same period of time that Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis was at its most popularity during the WWI (Bonikowski, 2005, p. 514), such critical studies have made West recognised for her in-depth and controversial themes that exceed beyond Freud (Straughan, 2019, p. 2) and the novel rejects scientific explorations of human mind as—she 'debunks' and 'subverts' the scientific understandings for human memory and psyche (Borrego, 2020, p. 7) as it provides a portrayal of philosophical themes with Existentialist backgrounds such as death anxiety, isolation, freedom and meaninglessness. Most likely the Existentialist dimension of her writings come from the point that, as Hampson (2014) addressed, West was writing during a difficult phase of human history—after the end of WWI, authors like her grasped images of shocked soldiers of which the war had created. She goes deep in revealing human psychology and 'subverts' the traditions of writing novel (Hershman, 2011, p. 7), hence, the novel can be recognised for its unusual architectural and narrative structure in terms of plot organisation and characterisation, as it carries Modern themes of impotence, sterility and human's internal contradiction and it embraces Modern techniques of narration such as irony, symbols, and satirical tone that encompasses the complex nature of the Modern age (Stoeckl, 2012).

West in the novel, through depicting the disorder of human mental experience, embarks a journey of criticism against the collapse of the social and domestic fabric of British society due to fatal war consequences (Turner, 2018, p. 6). West published an article in January 1916 which was the time of the Great War. The title of her essay is 'Women of England', she writes that 'this life is all gnawed with the war' (West, 1916 p. 1) indicating that war is not only the grotesque of violence, but it also a sceptic notion towards the worth of life. This is the reason why West's literary works can be regarded as Existential in dimension as they tackle bigger issues of human life than domestic ones.

Owing to the novel's in-depth and West's melancholic wit, and dissimilar to previous studies (Kavka, 1998) and (Straughan, 2019), which have focused on the positive and Freudian psychoanalytical perspective of the novel, this study aims to examine the narrative quest of the novel and its implied themes in their relations to Existentialism as philosophy and Existential psychotherapy is a method of investigating human psychology. Existential psychotherapy is a concept that holds deep discussions. Knowingly, the positive psychodynamic theories effort to inspect the human condition with merely examining his/her past timeline, existential psychotherapy is a different approach that has a larger perspective. Existential psychotherapy explores the complexity of human psychology via his temporal 'engagement with existence and the world'. Stimulated by the philosophy of Existentialism, it provokes queries in regards to the purpose of life, its meaning and the variety of human choices where which it reshapes his identity (Cooper et al 2019). Delving into Existential psychotherapy, human anxieties, disorders and neuroses are scrutinised in light of man's potential of accepting death, practising his free will, discovering meaning, and coping with his isolation—these issues come from the heart of Existentialism and have deep universal dimensions (Berry-Smith 2012). One of the concepts largely studied in the field of Existential

psychology is anxiety. To convey the analysis precisely, a theoretical foregrounding about concepts of meaning, meaninglessness, Existential vacuum is thought necessary.

1.2. A Theoretical Glimpse of Meaning and Existential Vacuum

Having or not having a meaning for existence is the biggest concern of Existentialism. This comes on basis of what Heidegger (2001) says that since the meaning of human existence *Dasein* is 'veiled in darkness' and obscure, it stays as a 'fundamental' question that ought to be raised (p. 19, 23-24). Existential psychotherapy is 'an umbrella term' for all the methods of healing mental illnesses based on the big questions and themes of Existentialism such as isolation, death, meaninglessness and freedom (Michelman, 2008, p. 137-9). Existential psychotherapy is established on the belief that life provides no firm system of meaning, therefore man himself has to realise a meaningful interpretation for life by believing in certain cause(s) behind his own existence and dedicating himself to it/them. Finding or constructing meaning for life is a 'fundamental' and 'essential' aspect of *becoming* a human (Reker and Chamberlain, 2022, p. 199). The lack of a prior life-meaning and the human urge for making sense of life by *himself* creates an unrelaxing condition of existence and brings about a constant anguish, of the lack of passion for life, due to having no specific meaning to live for, observably known as Existential Vacuum.

When human fails to establish paradigms of meaning, he is prone to undergo the void of Existential vacuum, which in its broadest sense, is defined to be a condition of 'a loss of interest', owing to tediousness and a 'lack of initiative' that credits in fatigue and laziness (Langle 2003, 110). Existential Vacuum is a sense that an individual fail to find a purpose in life therefore he is disengaged with it. Besides, in case of real impacts and in clinical terms, existential vacuum leads to existential neurosis (Mascaro and Rosen 2005, 987). Philosopher Kierkegaard (1983) asserts, the moment one understands that everyday life is filled with chaos, then life is the anguish 'to see the sword hanging over the loved one's head and yet, find not response in the pain of resignation, but joy in the strength of the absurd' (p. 119). Echoing Kierkegaard, Wrathall and Drefus (2006) assert that 'everyday life is at best banal and at worst absurd' (p. 5) implying that when human being fails to find a reason for his suffering, then life becomes impotent and futile, which is why neurotic people are dominated with senses of absurdity. Patients diagnosed to be existentially neurotic live at the face of the terror of 'the blank page', a feeling that life is composed of measureless possibilities and has no guideline to help them where to go and what to choose because it lacks an essential meaning—in such a life everything is possible to happen without a prior catalogue to rely on. Luckily, existential therapy supports patients to gain confidence so that to face the feelings of absurd and void through building their subjective own meanings (Serlin and Liu, 2020, p. 90).

Existential vacuum and the lack of a given meaning renders anguish. Iacovou and Dixon (2015) observe that 'anguish' is the Existentialist philosophical substitute for wording human *anxiety*, in which man has to come up with establishing meaning amid 'unknown origins and unforeseeable consequences' (p. 43-44). Iacovou and Dixon attribute the initial use of anguish to Soren Kierkegaard. In *The Concept of Dread*, Kierkegaard (1957) maintains that man's existence in all of his activities is bounded to a condition of deliberately making choices to maintain a life-meaning. Man is supposed to make choices amongst different possibilities with regard to responsibility; he calls such plurality 'the dizziness of freedom' (55-56)—having the dread of both the freedom and the responsibility of assigning his own actions with whatever consequences they may be. For Kierkegaard, man is anxious for holding such freedom because human being is at a point to respond to detailed reality by choosing what or how he wants to be, rather than to be already provided with a prior chosen reality. In other words, having responsibility creates him anxiety. Man, Iacovou and Dixon believe, is consciously in assembly with the world around him through a careful act of

‘intrinsic’ meaning-making because there is no established ‘essence’ a head of man’s existence; man fulfils his own essence, all he has is what he makes himself to be (p. 44, 52).

Cooper et al (2019) indicates that ‘man is born out of nothingness, hurtling towards annihilation’ as he has to make sense of ‘fragile fleeting moments of existence’ (p. 1). In this world the humans’ enterprise is to construct meaning, by defining its values and finding a vibrant direction to live fully with ‘authenticity’, for life lacks a given meaning and is prone to quos and meaninglessness (Jacobsen 2007, p. 12, 15). In Existentialism, this issue is labelled as ‘the lack of essence’ (Wrathal and Drefus 2006, p. 4), whereas when it comes to psychology and in existential therapy, it is categorized as the mental ‘dissolution of meaning’ to denote the absence of a coherent sense for life (Yalom, 1980, p. 420). Yalom, who is an American Existential therapist, psychologist and the writer of the book *Existential Psychotherapy*, notes that there is no ‘preordained design’ in the universe, therefore, each individual must ‘construct’ his/her own meaning (9). This implication denotes that since life lacks a given or established meaning, it is the human burden as a process of becoming to create or discover a sense for life (ibid, p. 422). Discovering a meaning for life leads to a remarkable change of personality and worldview for existence. In Yalom’s words, character transformation from passivity into an authentic mode of life that believes in meaningful purposes in life is an important dimension of Existential therapy, is ‘just like an acorn grows to become an oak’ (p. 437) which denotes aspiration and mental growth. That is due to the fact that Existential psychotherapy is an endeavour to engage its patients ‘in the daily search for personal meaning that will allow them to re-connect with their world’ (Iacovou and Dixon 2015, 44). Wrathal and Drefus (2006) comment on the deliberate existential process of becoming by saying that: the full meaning of ‘to be a human is to transcend facticity’ (p. 5) referring to face life with consciousness.

At this point, existential psychotherapy is an emphasis on the balance between spirit, emotion and body to give a full-grasped picture of human definition for meaning (Serlin and Liu 2020, 87), and a full understanding of human situation in existential psychotherapy ‘requires a balanced view of the human yearning for personal meaning’ that takes ‘transcendental’ aspects of man in his emotions into consideration (Batthyany and Russo-Netzer 2014, p. 11).

Wong (1998), an existential psychologist, infers five factors that stimulates an individual to consider life meaningful, they are: achievement, relationship, religion, fair treatment, and self-transcendentalism (p. 25). Jacobsen (2007), an existentialist therapist, mentions a significant paradigm of existential therapy in regard to meaning-making. He states that making life purposeful is rendered in ‘the basic life concepts’ of ‘feeling alive’ in order to prevent being ‘dead inside’; and this can be fulfilled in a paradigm of four points: to be connected with a practical task, positive social relatedness, focusing on inner being, and to be alive spatially (p. 6-7).

It can be argued that, the most perceptible and tangible paradigm that is suggested for existential patients concerning meaning-making is that of Irvin Yalom (1980). He categorizes all the different aspects of human enterprise for making sense of life, under two concepts: cosmic meaning and terrestrial meaning. He means by cosmic meaning an overall universal pattern, a ‘design’, that exists outside humans and works as a ‘spiritual order’, which certainly comes from God (p. 423). Whereas he means by terrestrial meaning some sort of ‘secular’ and ‘personal’ sense of meaning that is earthly, human-based, and individual (p. 423-424). Mascaró and Rosen (2005) use two terms that are similar to those of Yalom and function the same category; they are ‘explicit meaning’, a philosophy for having coherence in life, and ‘implicit meaning’, a subjective and personal outlook for life to strive for (p. 985, 990-991). Another wording for the same paradigm is ‘cosmic transcendence’, which is to be in harmony with the ‘spirit’ of the universe, and ‘ego transcendence’, which is to be able to define oneself again (Reker and Chamberlain 2022, p. 200-202). Either of these terms taken, Existential

therapy upholds the belief that human being has to grip a meaning in life that is either within, from a subjective percept, or external—from an objective and transcendental potency.

It is hard to evoke solid paradigms of meaning in Existential therapy; however, Existential philosophers, thinkers and therapists jointly emphasised the significance of some aspects of human life in the enhancement of making or discovering meaning, amongst them are values. Existentialism, as a philosophy for life, aims to scrutinize the significance and validity of socio-cultural values. Cooper et al (2019) encompasses that ‘how can we do justice?’ is a pillar existential concern (p. 1). As such, when it comes to Existential therapy, Batthyany and Russo-Netzer (2014) demonstrate that understanding values are salient key-factors for achieving the ‘sense of efficacy and self-worth’ as an essential aspect of psychological identity (p. 10). For them, people discover life meanings by belonging to these values and living for them. However, the system of values in existential therapy is different from the traditional moral schools. In existential therapy, man is in touch with moral and conscious codes through experiencing the consciousness of ‘his own being’ by developing ‘life-feeling’ (Jacobsen, 2007, p. 7), in a sense that life-values arise within human self to the outer world, not the otherwise. In other words, individuality is a moral compass.

As Sartre said that ‘Existentialism is a Humanism’ (Kaufman, 1960, p. 287), that which, human interest is put at its centre, in Existential psychotherapy, meaning of existence is based on establishing humanitarian values. Mascaro and Rosen (2005) consider that when an individual believes that he/she ‘strives to make this world a better place’ by ‘sharing intimate feelings’ with people in need, this individual is relieved with the sensation that ‘there is rough justice in the world’. This is a procedure of developing a sort of meaning that is called ‘explicit meaning’ (p. 991). Yalom believes that the value of man’s existence cannot be briefed in his physical enterprise, instead, ‘the individual is motivated by purpose, ideals, and goals’ (p. 20). And for such a vital factor, ‘the meaning of psychic structure’ can be discovered and constructed through human existential fulfilment (Yalom, p. 22). Human beings should make their own sense of meaning on the basis of what Kierkegaard maintained that man ought to ‘create a quality for life’ and ‘to be true to himself’ (Golomb, p. 20). Derived from the Existentialist and human-based notion of subjective morality, that trespasses objective cultural and religious standards, Existential therapy addresses the universal values which man is invigorated to strive for to establish meaning in his life.

2. The Anguish of Existential Meaninglessness in *TRS*

TRS is a novel about a returned soldier from the Great War with shellshock. A pivotal aspect of existential psychotherapy that is rendered in *TRS* is human challenge of encountering the world with no prior ground of a dedicated meaning, pushing him forth to attempt finding or creating one. Such a sense leads to anxiety, and eventually urges him to accomplish his own self-choice. Being a military officer and a high-class man of the Baldry Court, Chris comes back from the Great War with a hazy memory that slipped fifteen years of his domestic life; he remembers only his teenage life when he was in love with Margaret, a middle class lady, and has forgotten his marriage with his high-class wife, Kitty, and has also forgotten his dead child Oliver. After indulging into romantic affairs with Margaret again, his biggest challenge is to fill his gaps of memory with re-learning reality once over through a quest for meaning when everything for him seems uncertain and groundless. In this section, light is thrown on man’s anguish of facing the meaninglessness of existence and fulfilling the process existential meaning-making through a personal quest of understanding reality and determining values.

TRS is an exhibition of many patterns of anguish. It is resulted from a temporal mental condition of meaninglessness as it embarks the quest for a taste of life when it becomes bitter with warfare and pretence. West vocalizes existential anguish in disconsolate expressions attributed to life such as ‘squalid circumstances’ (West 83), ‘these dark days’ (West, p. 40),

'difficult enterprise' (West, p. 40), 'rotten for all of us' (West, p. 60), 'grief' (West, p. 121), a voice 'unfluted with agony' (West, p. 125) and 'tragedy' (West, p. 57). Such well-defined wording, which shaped some of the character's attitude for life, indicates West's awareness about the existential dread of meaninglessness and man's wilful endeavour in absconding it.

2.1. Memory Loss and the Challenges of Self-Definition

This novel opens up a raging debate around what the essence of life is; by stripping a character like Chris from fifteen years' life-memories, which shall be discussed further, he is intertwined with a condition of scholarship and self-discovery, rendering him the curiosity to learn what life looks like and who people around him are after his return from the war: 'the different task of learning to live' (West 14). Chris's discoveries and findings, especially that of his eventual conclusion, help providing insights for the readers to relook at life with fresh perspectives.

Brining him a condition of quos and negligence, and being engaged within memory dislocation after his return, Chris is at the verge of redefining the concept of life similar to a new born infant who has to challenge experiencing what *being* is in the act of being born to the world. Chris embodies the existential concept, of which Wicks (2006) mentions, that the meaning of life is discovered through 'making ungrounded choices' (p. 207). Chris's return is a renewal to living without prior 'grounded' choices; he is making his own choice by the removal of previous social grounds. The novel addresses Chris's condition as an existential transformation: 'you'll find he is altered' (West, p. 114), being exposed to variable possibilities and choices in his encounter with the new world. In status of memory loss, Chris at the hospital yells crying in shock, pain and obliviousness alike to a new born infant crying in a labour hospital for the dread of its first touch with the world: 'I never realized the horror of warfare until I saw my cousin' Jenny intends (West, p. 40). And once the dread of encountering existence weights too much on him to bear, he starts to faint: 'It was almost a relief when he fainted again' (West, p. 39). West draws deep insights out of Chris's memory loss, far from naïve reinforcements; Chis is a complex case to study, underpinning man's anguish in his touch with the meaninglessness of reality disclosed at front after returning from battle: 'A doctor, a very nice man, [...] told me he had known nothing of Chris's delusions' (West 38), opening an entrance to existential therapy to say its word.

Reker and Chamberlain (2022) argue that 'life's transitional points' play a critical role in both abolishing firm meanings and as well provoking the search for new existential meanings (205). Experiencing shell-shock at the war trenches is an existential transformation for Chris that shakes his believes about life; changing him from a conventional person who was always socially 'dependant' (West, p. 164) into 'exclusion from real life' (West, p. 130) due to facing the lack of life coherence and the dread of meaninglessness for the things he meets around him. Chris's disinterestedness in making sense of bridging with people around him, especially his wife Kitty, is embodied best in kitty's nihilistic 'if' statement. Kitty is doubtful of Chris meaning-making; She hypothesise that Chris is at the verge of establishing his own meaning by abandoning the conventional society-based meaning around: 'if he had expanded his meaning and said you are nothing to me' (West, p. 129) denoting that Chris lives in the dread of nothingness which is novel attitude of denial for his previous system of meaning.

Realizing that he is not the same person before the war, and being at the front of making sense of the quos around him produced by amnesia, Chris undergoes the existential dilemma of meaningfulness versus meaninglessness, this echoes Existential psychotherapy that man is in the distress of recognizing that life runs without a plan, point, purpose and sense. Accordingly, here is why Chris is suffering due to his endeavour of intrinsic meaning-making to accept a new form of life that abolishes having Kitty as his wife: 'there's an instinctive kindness in him which makes him wise about all suffering' (West, p. 44).

The major question of the novel rotates around the possibility of a conscious rational living, made of the role of human being, his moral assignment and enterprise that he could carry out amid the bizarre pointlessness of the modern life crowded with a luxurious façade. West attempts to, for a moment, strip her readers from the façade of society conventions regarded as ‘meaning’ of life, in the novel she names them ‘deception carried on for years’ (West, p. 37). Such ridicule to societal life conventions is in order to give a pose to her readers ponder creating their own meanings afresh. The novel emulates the Edwardian era to which what valued most were societal moral standards devoted to patriotism, politics and the moral strata of the community (Mazlin, p. 42). Then man had to be defined in terms of being ‘able, sane and dominating’ (Linett 2013, p. 10) outlining him a perfect duty and purpose to live, strive and die for. Chris, stripped from rational memory, is stripped from all of these devotions and his fingerprints are minimized to pointless ‘queer’ behaviours (West 181) denoting his wonders for pointlessness of life. Nevertheless, Kitty stands for the Edwardian conventions and its sophisticated social manners, as Linett (2013) mentions, she obeys ‘a class-bounded set of normative conventions’ (p. 8) that consider the society’s belief-standards as the centre of its significance.

Chris is emptied from enjoying life in the high class villa of the Baldry Court by being inherently emptied from belonging to it, as discussed in the previous section. And his affiliation to his high-class wife, Kitty, whose fit to his reputation but unlikely to his desire, is at stake. Therefore, his sense of relief and stability is shaken; he is on the threshold of existential anxiety. Amnesia plays a crucial role in this quest for self because if Chris, in his return from war, had not faced memory loss, he would not respond to life with a different standpoint and would repeatedly stick to previous responsibilities that his family obligated on him: ‘business had forced him to return’ (West, p. 183). Memory loss is notable form of dissolution of meaning; also it is a transitional point for Chris for constructing a different matrix of connectedness to the world that is intrinsic in value. It ignites the launching of a new sense for life when there is no fixed meaning he would adhere to since he forgot, or made himself forget, the complex relationships he had in his society. This leads to consider Chris an existential patient whose existence is based on reshaping the self through an act of re-definition to himself and people around him; Jenny, our narrator, at the early stage of the novel discovers that memory loss has gained him some ‘insight’ (West, p. 44). On basis of Existential psychotherapy that an individual’s search for meaning is a dimension of personal fulfilment that reconnects him to the outer world, it is exactly a mission that Chris has to carry out, as a new born human return back from the death trenches into life, in order to discover his identity and what values life gives him. In his return, he is compelled to learn and question the worth of his social relationships. Chris at each pace starts a new stage of re-learning; and the novel records his pace of learning how old he is (ibid, p. 39), where his home is (ibid, p. 28), when his father died (ibid, p. 39), how old Margaret is (ibid, p. 83), what relation Kitty has to him (ibid, p. 38, 45), what the Monkey Island means to him (ibid, p. 65), what happened to his friend Griffith (ibid, p. 54) the change in the appearance of his house (ibid, p. 47), gifts he had given to his wife (ibid, p. 51), and eventually realizing he had a son who died two years ago (ibid, p. 185). Each of these small pieces of knowledge constitutes a bit of his personal quest for meaning in his life and reconnects him to the outer world around him. Each moment of discovery and meaning-making and each step of self-shaping for him is painful. He is ‘weeping over the discovery of any truth’ (ibid, p. 123) in Margaret’s discourse. However, as Chris approaches the facticity of life he gradually gets rid of meaninglessness and progressively fulfils his existential *becoming*, as a reflection of Existential therapy that, in order for human being to actualise himself, he must face reality with full consciousness. In this regard, Chris is an individual sufferer who is compelled to confront the anguish of life through the act of awakening.

2.2. Existential Vacuum in *TRS*

The novel comes in terms with existential vacuum in more than an example. Representing existential vacuum, Jenny, in her long, whimsical and witty speeches, stands an outstanding figure of void and pessimism who questions the worth of living in a world that lacks order and justice. It is significant to regard the question of justice as a very important component of existential therapy. As Existential therapy investigates the human endeavour of attaining justice in life, Jenny echoes such a concern; she grumbles about the woe of human anguish in the world where passions have been dried up: 'No one weeps for this shattering our world' (West, p. 133), a feeling she had is the indifference of the practical life towards the immerse distress that man undergoes. She is conscious of the range of destruction that the violence, dismay and cruelty of the war brought upon the harmony of life: 'I had really heard the breaking of the globe and cried out' (West, p. 133). For her being sensitive in quick responses, Jenny is depicted as a full-alerted human being whose knowledge about the difficulties of life shaped her to suffer; thinking why the reality of life is bitter and people are dissatisfied. She believes that the discovery of any bit of truth is a 'rupture' against our temporary joy: 'Even though I lay weeping at it on the dead leaves I was sensible of the bitter rupture which attends the discovery of any truth' (West, p. 129). Jenny is an existential sufferer whose mental experience has a 'strained mind' and endures existential vacuum due to her inability in finding satisfying human passions. She pronounces: '... a mood of intense perception in which any strained mind settled on every vivid object came under my eyes and tried to identify myself with its brightness and its lack of human passion' (West, p. 121). Jenny suffers from her discontentment with life in her social relationships, especially with the fact that she had wished to accompany Chris (West, p. 124) but Chris's marriage muted this aspiration. This unfulfilled wish produced Jenny anger inside and a sense of void.

Jenny and Chris are two different personality traits. They exhibit dissimilar attitudes towards existential vacuum and therapy as well. Jenny's approach for life's pointlessness is maintained in a serious and bleak sense by repressing her desires and experiencing a sense of self-quietening: 'My spirit was a sleep in horror' (West, p. 182-183). Nevertheless, Chris's existential vacuum is approached by ridiculing social devoir, and is mitigated by fleeing from social convntions.

Jenny has an outlook of 'deep faith in tragedy' (West, p. 98) but Chris behaves in a tomfoolery method, in a cold emotion, with 'trivial toy of happiness' (West, p. 179) disregarding the philosophical wonders that Jenny has. Chris, in Mazlin's point of view (2013), holds a lifestyle conditioned with many absences: 'his reason, his education, his control, and his sense of duty are absent' (p. 43). It is significant that Chris's favourite place, Monkey Island, is described as 'famous for grace and silliness' which the Third Duke had built it for a 'folly' (West, p. 65). The pointlessness and ridiculousness of the Island signifies the novel's approach to ridicule at human enterprise, in a sense that life looks like a joke, just like the Monkey Island had been built for 'folly'.

Therefore, it could be argued that Jenny's experience of existential vacuum is manifested in serious thinking but Chris's existential vacuum is consolidated via suspending thinking; one hardly ever hears from Chris questioning the worth of life or its meaning, in which Jenny frequently does, he just ignores it by creating his zone of nostalgic comfort. The most punctilious reference to Chris's status of existential vacuum is Jenny's wording, in which she says that Chris is an oblivious person, happy for his delusions, 'as a ring, cast into the sea, is lost' (West, p.176).

To an extended point, Jenny has an absurdist assertiveness for understanding life. When she hears the story of Margaret's son's death, she interprets it to be a sign of 'the cruelty of the order of things' (West, p. 157), that she criticises the universal justice for leading the course of events, which is exactly a bedrock for existentialism and a raw material of investigation for existential therapy. Correlating to the Existentialist insights on the absurd, it

is very hard for Jenny to make sense of the death of toddlers of such early ages when only the cruelty of a suffering remembering is left for their mothers, Margaret and Kitty. Jenny has an absurdist attitude in regard to life in the modern age; for her, it has no value because it lacks its basic justice and integrity. In other words, nothing is in its right scale therefore only through 'a magic circle' which is appealing to self-negligence one can bear its anguish: 'Lovers are frustrated; children are not begotten that should have had the loveliest life; the pale usurpers of their birth die young. Such a world will not suffer magic circles to endure' (West, p. 157).

The 'cruelty of the order of things' is replicated in the music Jenny plays in the Baldry Court's lobby at the time Chris arrives home which 'made the house maids cry' (West, p. 42). The music is melancholic and saddening which is 'empty of everting' (West, p. 57) denoting the void of the age; and holds a cynic 'laughter' at life with the 'wails of unrequited love' (West 57). Thus, the music is West's auditory to represent the characters' disinterestedness of life due to its missing justice and satisfaction, denoting a strong sense of existential vacuum.

3. Meaningfulness in *TRS*

The novel does not only pose the question of human's search for meaning, but it also grapples with his endeavour to find comfort in establishing a sense of meaning in life; this falls into the following patterns:

3.1. Emotional Dimensions of Man

Meaning of life in *TRS* is determined through an existential philosophical spectrum of answering to the question 'what is to be a human'. Jenny, Kitty, and Margaret's arguments over Chris's amnesia opens up complex premises and insights to look at the purpose of life. Chris's discontent with his life, despite his materialistic indulgence, puts them at a position to reconsider the spiritual and emotional aspects of human being, as Jenny says: 'I saw that deep down in him not to be moved by any material proof' (West, p. 63) referring to his dissatisfaction with life despite such materialistic perfection, and it leads them discover that Chris lacks a spiritual touch in his life: 'his spirit was incredulous' (ibid, p. 63). Jenny eventually becomes conscious of the factual point that at the Baldry Court Chris's soul had undergone an emotional thirst before going to the war-mission through which she and Kitty had disregarded: 'we had been utterly negligent of his future blasphemously careless of the divine essential of his soul' (ibid, p. 179). Chris's peculiar behaviour after his return, in his abundance to Kitty, his lavish seeking of pleasure, and hedonistic attitudes with Margaret, confirm Jenny's thesis that Chris at past had neglected the fulfilment of himself; in other words, he was not true to himself, and he had been living in a social-inflicted pattern of deceptiveness. Oscar Wilde (1997) once explicated such type of life as 'existing' but not 'living'. He said: 'to live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all' (p. 10). Chris practised existence without authentic living, and once by losing his memory his social mask fails, his true identity and his emotional hunger starts to emerge.

The novel emphasises on the balance between spirit, emotion and body to give a vivid image of human definition for a vigorous understanding of human situation in existential psychotherapy. Jenny comes to a realization that Chris had had a spiritual and emotional gap in his life, and this had caused him a seemingly incurable fatigue: 'I suppose that the subject of our tragedy was written in spiritual terms' (West, p. 130). Margaret's emergence, with a lap full of emotions, becomes a rattle in the Baldry Court that shakes the materialistic luxury that they were used to, in their high-class manners and grandeur; she becomes an involuntary token of change that leads them redefine their meanings of life with new schemes of emotional aspects.

In the novel, in a precise language, Margaret's impoverished material condition, which makes her feel 'sullen with shyness', described in her middle class 'coarse clothes' and

'clumsy' bodily shape, is juxtaposed to the 'delicacy of Kitty's car' (West, p. 95) and Kitty's 'golden hair' spread over her shoulders with 'a little silken jacket trimmed with rosebuds' (West 5) to bring an analogue of class differences. However, Margaret is affluent in her emotional impact over Chris in comparison to Kitty's shortages. Kitty in Chris's discourse is 'devil' (West, p. 98), whereas Margaret is 'a good engineer' of 'an accurate mind' with a 'motherly hug' providing him endless passions (West, p. 67). This analogy brings us at the status of defining Chris's gaps and lacks. Metaphorically, Margaret is like an architect who draws the life map of Chris's responsive needs that have been ignored by people around him. Therefore, when Kitty visits Chris at the hospital and hears Margaret's name for the first time from him; inferiorly, she realizes her inability of providing him this emotional aspect, and starts saying: 'it shows that there are bits of him we don't know. Things may be awfully wrong' (West, p.32) indicating that his return from war is a new page ahead in his life.

Chris's memory loss releases him from chains of social norms and manners, therefore, similar to a child whose unbounded curiosity trespasses social limits, Chris is engaged with questioning the ultimate point and purpose of his existence, without adhering to his spousal devotion to Kitty. Straughan (2019) considers his amnesia a 'gift' that provides him more freedom (p. 1). Kielty (2021), agrees to this point, stating that amnesia 'enables him to act with easy freedom of a child' (21). As such, Chris is enabled to embark a new life quest, away from cultural taboos received in fifteen years' memory, and away from his affiliation to Kitty, to reflect fulfilling his lacks, as an attempt to satisfy the stage developments of early teenager. Chris's quest is a response to the lack of coherence in his life lately. Yalom in his theory of 'meaninglessness' argues that *meaning* means 'having a sense or coherence' that reveals life's point. And synonymously, purpose refers to 'intention or aim' of doing something (p. 423). Chris is in crisis of having no clear vision what he is doing. Practical reality entangles him in torment; therefore, his defence mechanism is to flee from it, by distorting the present, and plea into the past.

3.2. Meaningfulness in Temporality

The Existential presentation of time in the novel is observable. Enjoying entertainment with Margaret in The Monkey Island, which is a slice of past life is Chris's defence mechanism to establish his zone of meaning-making in the past rather than in the present. But what is ironic is that, what satisfies him is not the fifteen years past living with Kitty, it is rather much earlier than that, that is a nostalgic unrealized past. His plea into the nostalgia of being unmarried and loving Margaret, is not only escaping the 'here and now', which is an important part of Existential interpretation, but it is also alleviation for the anguish of the present. It is for this reason that Chris at his home does not experience the warmth of life with his wife Kitty, unless Margaret accompanies him. Chris lacks Existential meaning because he does not invest the time being; his source of happiness is not at the present, it is rather in the nostalgic past. Brough and Blattner (2006) explicate the Existential notion for time, arguing that in Existentialism we are primarily living 'as we are', rather than what we intended to be the past; the present time provide us a chance 'to understand ourselves and to be capable being who we are' (p. 132). He supports his point by bringing Heidegger into the argument. Heidegger in his *Being and Time* (2001) maintains that the meaning of existence is determined by self-understanding, and understanding the self is realized by our consciousness of living in the here and now. Present time, for Heidegger, is the time which an individual is capable to understand himself in it. It could be argued that Chris's lack of self-awareness is culminated in his inability to fulfil knowing himself in relation to *now*; since his concerns are all related to nostalgic past, his sense of meaning is illusory and suspended. he delimits his time perception through the concept of 'temporality' (p. 277-8). For him, ontologically, Existence *Dasein* itself is an uncompleted status of temporality, contingency and continuity, which is existence in time that is 'present-at-hand' (p. 247) that is how life's

meaning can be man's 'projection' (p. 278) of his acts in its primordial form fulfilled overtime.

From the beginning of the novel till the end, Jenny attempts to bring Chris's consciousness back into the practicality of the present time; she makes him realize that he is not in the same age of the Monkey Island: 'you are right, I am not twenty-one' (West, p. 39) and tells him Margaret is old: 'But Chris I must tell you [...] I have seen Margaret [...] she is not you think of her [...] She's old Chris. She's not beautiful any longer. She is dearly married...' (West 83), implying that she is not the same delicate teenager that he fancied about. Jenny's philosophy of meaning-making is to submit ourselves into knowing the truth about our lives without any attempt to mitigate its pain or falsely fabricate it. She says: 'we are as we are, there is nothing more to us' (West, p. 137). Submission to life-facts in *TRS* is not only Jenny's point of view, it is also West's existential philosophy intended beneath the lines. The novel aims its readers to understand that 'every living creature was in possession of such facts' (West, p. 34), because every self-deception is indulging into the falsehood of pleasure.

3.3. Knowledge versus Happiness

Another aspect of existential meaninglessness in *TRS* is embodied in the implication that establishing the sense of coherence to life comes at the expense of sacrificing one's happiness. Chris's momentarily and fragile globe of happiness is formulated when he is oblivious to reality and is impaired from rationality. Notably, much earlier than Chris's return, the female characters of the Baldry Court pleased themselves with the lavishness of the house and had ornamented the house with 'decorum': 'you probably know the beauty of that view' (West, p. 6), which denotes that the Baldry's family enjoyed and appreciated life, and it comes in a time that war grieved many houses. Kielty (2021) illustrates that the Baldry Court is an icon for the architectural luxury of neatness, exquisiteness and elegance of the gardens, which provides comfort to its dwellers (p. 10), but Chris's amnesia brings a disruption and turmoil into their stable luxury. He returns prepared to establish his own sense of ecstasy at the expense of his family's one; one could name his attitude a form of hedonism.

Both Chris's private globe of happiness and Kitty's sense of satisfaction are recognised at the expense of one another's contentment, and this reflects the existential notion that a full grasp of satisfaction and a life of flawlessness is not attainable. Kavka (1998) observes that Kitty's insistence on smashing Chris's world of happiness by bringing him back into life's practical rationality is only meant to re-establish the sense of 'class-order' (p. 11). In such an endeavour, her previous domestic role gets restored, she regains her previous position and owns back her value in the community as a housewife, and a high-class lady.

However, one should not disregard that kitty's determination brings a dispute into the novel. Borrego (2020) states that bringing back Chris's memory is 'a moral dilemma' (p. 2), as by restoring him sanity he will lose the momentarily taste of ecstasy, and it arouses the discussion whether in terms of moral legacy Chris's cheerfulness or his rationality should be privileged on the other. Borrego comes in terms with conclusion that 'sanity' brings worry and anxiety into Chris's life and persecutes his sense of pleasure (8). West directly portrayed this moral dilemma to her readers. Margaret shows her disinterest in terminating Chris's happiness and in bringing him back to his family duties: 'Either I never should have come, or you should let him be' (West 174). Jenny is conscious of Margaret's existential sense of anguish, of the unfairness of the world, by comprehending that putting man at the face of full truth leads to ruin his ease of happiness. In other words, Margaret's dissatisfaction is a universal plea: 'she as arguing not with me, but with the whole hostile reasonable world' (West 174), claiming that one cannot experience the act of *being* happily through rationality; if one wants comfort, sanity is a disruption.

Jenny voices out Margaret's existential cry, of her discontent over leading Chris to a rational meaning, by saying that 'there was to be a finality of his happiness which usually belongs only to loss and calamity' (West, p. 177), reflecting that the alternative for his masked happiness to is only the bitterness of reality. This perception stimulates the idea that Chris's life philosophy is based on hedonism, which provokes scrutiny over what form of pleasure he is seeking in life. Sobel (2002) outlines the concept of hedonism with expressions of "pleasure through a desirable consciousness" (p. 241), and hedonist as someone who "conceives pleasure as a sensation" that gives 'a particular flavour of feeling' which satisfies him/her 'an intrinsic value' (p. 242). Measured to Sobel's category, Chris is a pleasure-seeker who 'loved the life' (West, p. 10), and after his return, has dedicated his sense of life to compensating the lost intimacies that he had failed to catch amid growing mature. And as Sobel agrees that 'hedonists differ significantly in their understanding of the meaning of pleasure' (p. 240), Chris's worldview of considering the values of life differ from others. His definition of meaning is centred upon revisiting the Monkey Island with his nostalgic zestfulness: 'they settled down happily in Monkey Island' (West, p. 97). Thus, the novel entails that Chris's globe of hedonism is an index of the novel's attitude of existential vacuum, in the sense, that life loses its meaning when it is a total pursue for joy.

3.4. Meaningfulness in Seeking Pleasure

Appealing to existential psychotherapy, there are some hints that refer to human enterprises with understanding that the goal of life is pursuing pleasure. Yalom agrees that for most people, the meaning of life is centred upon 'pleasure-producing values' that provide prosperity (p. 437). He also asserts that the search for meaning is incarnated in the search for pleasure. Margaret represents this indication of Yalom by saying 'I know nothing in the world matters so much as happiness. If anybody's happy, you ought to let them be' (West, p. 174), which implies that just the condition where Chris finds himself happy in is enough to provide him a life meaning. For Yalom (1980), a sense of pleasure in life has a great significance. He comments: 'The purpose of life [in the hedonistic solution] is simply to live fully, to retain one's sense of astonishment at the miracle of life, to plunge oneself into the natural rhythm of life, to search for pleasure in the deepest possible sense' (p. 437).

However, Yalom is also conscious that, such a measurement does not stay sole. There are two existential psychotherapeutic measurements for life's meaning; the first dimension is the belief that the point of life is seeking knowledge and wisdom; then, the second one is fulfilling enjoyment. TRS personifies both perspectives towards the meaning of life. Depending on the attitudes of the characters for what is the point of existence, a juxtaposition is established between happiness with ignorance and the tragedy of living with full awareness. Kitty refers to happiness as 'the trivial joy' (West, p. 189) that provides only a deceptive taste in life; therefore, her attitude is staying in her passed son's room yearning for his loss, contrary to Chris who pleads to forgetfulness. On the other scale, despite her intrinsic pains, Margaret is a token for preferring satisfaction over perfection and joy over suffering. Her stimulating discourse, that objects Kitty's demand on restoring Chris's rationality, signifies how human zeal for perfection leads to bringing him pain, thus, she prefers to accept human being with a crippled body of a happy heart rather than a perfect body of a miserable heart: 'if my boy had been a cripple, ___he wasn't; he had the loveliest limbs, and the doctors had said to me, 'we will straighten your boy's legs for you, but he will be in pain for the rest of his life, I'd not have let them touch him' (West, p. 166-167).

Linett (2013) comments on Margaret's claim, pointing out that she prefers his happiness over 'the standards of the world' (p. 5), aiming to reject matching to the normality of the society at the expense of the individual welfare. Therefore, she shouts out 'I can't, I can't' (West, p. 167) as a sign of her intentional revolt against telling Chris the whole truth of

his life. Linett also agrees that in *TRS* ‘happiness is against reasonableness’; thus, the whole point of the novel is to provide its readers a sense of satisfaction with the humble natural gifts of life far from the sophistications of rationality, as Linett says that ‘the novel shows accepting the human imperfection’ (p. 6), that shall be explored in more detail further. Yalom’s synthesis of Existential therapy of comparing wisdom to enjoyment is meticulously incarnated in Margaret’s entity composed of a soul and a body. Jenny understood Margaret as a human to have a body for delight, but a soul prone to misery, and this has caused her torn in between: ‘one might intervene between this body, which was formed for happiness, and this soul, which cherished so deep a faith in tragedy’ (West, p. 98).

Inspecting the historical upbringing of the time the novel was being written, it will be vital to understand why West questioned happiness. The novel was written in 1918 (Orel, 1986; p. 124), while the flame of the First World War was in its cruellest destructiveness. It was estimated that the war caused seventeen million casualties dead, let alone millions of wounded left behind (Pawliczek et al 2014, p. 57), and under the massacre of the war, a little scope was left for the worth of human prosperity and welfare on the planet. The novel targets the deep wonder of man at that dreadful disorder in regard to his position in the universe and the worth of making meaning in it when he fails to establish peaceful civilizations. One remedy for man’s painful awareness about the war, which was too harsh to accept and comprehend, was to clown around the dreadful reality and plea into an unmindful life dedicated to mere joy-seeking instead. Kavka (1998) attaches the novel’s philosophical concern of happiness to the dread of the First World War, appealing that at that time men came back from war ‘with broken spirits’ and ‘their social order was evacuated’ (p. 153-154), therefore it was expected from these worriers to question the ultimate point of living and the extent of happiness that it provided. This aspect leads forward to another point which is existential vacuum that is highly reflected in *TRS*.

3.5. The Existential Meaning of Life-Values in *TRS*

In *TRS*, there are some references to some life-values in which West addresses them as an attempt to investigate the practise of existential meaning-making. As in Existential therapy, having awareness about universal values contributes to build a sense of self-worth’ as an essential aspect of psychological identity, the novel provides a templet for inspecting these values under an existentialist therapeutic eye. However, similar to those of existential therapy, the system of values in the novel is different from the collective and traditional judgements. In the novel an individual reflects a touch of moral and conscious codes through experiencing the consciousness of his own being by developing life-feeling, which makes their experience of perceiving values of life to be subjective. Here are some of them briefly:

3.5.1. Value of Selflessness

In *TRS*, establishing values in an intrinsic direction is present in Jenny and Margaret’s characterization. Margaret who was ‘sustained by a mystic interpretation of life’ (West, p. 156) has a humanistic outlook for facing the challenges of life, unlike Kitty whose values are cultural and convention-based. Despite her familial burdens and limitations, Margaret comes to take part in Chris’s therapy of regaining self by accompanying him. Although her accompany to Chris could also be interpreted cheating and being dishonest on Kitty who has legal marital condition with him, such participation plays a vital role in his therapy. She says: ‘I know it is wrong, but I am so glad Chris wants to see me’ (West, p. 88). By this token, Margaret redefines not only Chris’s but her own existence too by getting in touch with the value of selflessness and sharing. To put it in another scale, Margaret does not only guide Chris with an indication to find himself, but also fills herself with the need for these warm values, especially after her wound with child loss. This is an existential therapeutic agent that

West has narratively embedded in the novel because Margaret plays a vital role in leading Chris voice out his trapped and suppressed anguish of his resentment towards reality.

3.5.2. Value of Dignity

Human dignity is another value that a reader comes across in *TRS*. The novel prompts the readers to inspect the prominence of sense of dignity in the process of existential meaning-making. Batthyany and Russo-Netzer (2014) believe that there three aspects of existential neurosis that have to be considered to understand the challenges of the patients with life-meaning; they are ‘body-image, sense of dignity, and memory’ (p. 136); they name them ‘the three unities of meaning’ (p. 143). They also argue that existential patients often tend to give privilege to boosting their sense of dignity over the physical security of their lives.

A character who concerns most about sense of dignity, and gives it a tremendous role for making life-meaning, is Kitty. Applying Batthyany and Russo-Netzer’s three unities of meaning, Kitty’s image of physical attractiveness, her honour and the legacy she has in Chris’s memory are at stake; therefore, her sense of life-meaning is dreadfully shaken. It has been discussed earlier that Kitty’s bodily beauty is declining into fragility due to both her mourning over her son’s loss and her husband’s lack of attention: ‘Kitty, whose beauty was changed in grief from its ordinary seeming as a rose in moonlight is different by day’ (West, p. 41). As well, her intrinsic image of dignity is under threat due to Margaret’s disturbance in her house. West directly refers to Kitty as being ‘abandoned’ by Chris while her identity of existence is constructed upon her dignity, i.e. her ‘grace’: ‘This suddenly abandonment of beauty and amiability meant so much in our Kitty, whose law of life is grace’ (West, p. 58). These two previous aspects complete kitty’s anxiety over the meaning of her life alongside with the third one, that is her loss of legacy in Chris’ memory. Chris does not recognize her presence in the house as a legitimate and wilful housewife, Chris recognizes her only as a woman who had stayed with her in a hotel (West, p. 61), and Chris denies recognizing her properties to have been given by him as gifts (West, p. 140). As such, Kitty is in a desperate condition of meaninglessness due to losing the values of self-dignity, body-self-esteem, and remembrance, and this has shaped her to be a character in the mood of agony. Jenny refers to her condition as empty from any life-worth to be considered: ‘... as if anything worth looking at, in her life, had kept a long way off’ (West, p. 18). To lessen the angst of sense of void, man needs a taste of sanity and order; and the following explains to what extent the novel tackles it.

3.5.3. Value of Sanity

RTS places its readers at a position to question the value of sanity and rationality. In the novel, to be sane is equivalent to being devoted to conventional social duties, therefore to run away from such burdens, man pleas into insanity. A reason for the novel’s Existential dimension rather than a Freudian one is that the novel puts a question mark on the merit of human rationality by questioning the validity of scientific approaches of psychotherapy. Through disapproving the worth of scientific systems of in sustain Chris’s meaning and memory, saying: ‘hypnotization is a silly trick’ (West, p. 162), West deviates from the rational technique of science in brining remedy for Chris. In replacement, a heightened version of rationality is provided, which emphasizes on the human intrinsic consciousness to individually construct meaning. This worldview of West is embodied in Jenny’s distrust to the doctors who represent the scientific rationality. Jenny says: ‘I had no reason for faith in any doctor [...], their most successful enterprise has been his futile hypnotism’ (West, p. 134). Jenny’s belief system, to a great extent, mirrors Yalom’s theory of existential therapy, which was discussed earlier, since he considers that the value of man’s existence cannot be shortened in his physical qualities since human being is a serenity of soul and mind, and the

goal of fulfilling his meaning can be achieved via the interconnection of these dimensions. It has been discussed in the previous section that Jenny considers Chris, despite his deviations from the norm of being a 'man' to be the 'saner' than the rest of the family: 'He is saner than the rest of us, who take life as it come, loaded with the unessential and the irritating' (West 29). Jenny's critical reference against 'unessential and the irritating' is an existentialist therapeutic interpretation that places the individuality of man at the centre of attention rather than his performance in the society. Borrego (2020) comments on Jenny's underpinning, by assuming that 'he is not irrational but beyond the normative notion of sanity' (p. 8), to reflect upon Chris's meaning making as a deviating procedure from the society's rationality.

Jenny's denial of 'the normative notion of sanity' comes in parallel with Wrathall and Dreyfus's (2006) insight that existentialist philosophy is 'a heightened awareness of the non-rational dimensions of human existence' (p. 5) believing that the awareness and meaning provided by Existentialism is higher than that of scientific rationality. Kavka (1998) attaches the existential 'heightened awareness' implied by the novel to Margaret's selfless devotion in the process of healing Chris, arguing that Margaret has a 'wisdom' of care and cure, which the doctor 'recognizes' despite her lack of 'scientific knowledge' (p. 164). As such, *TRS* provides an elevated version of consciousness and sanity that is stripped from conventional paradigms of rationality; it suggests a deeper sense of intrinsic awareness that is based on individuality rather than society.

4. Existential Therapeutic Paradigms of Meaningfulness in *TRS*

Identified as an open ended novel for its lack of a cutting-edge conclusion, the novel does not suggest a sharp therapy. Neither Chris nor any of the other characters are depicted to have been emptied from the anguish of meaninglessness; such feeling seems to be an inescapable clumsy cage, however, *TRS* indicates human enterprise in search for himself, meaning, and sense of life's coherence. The novel ends with a sense of serenity of submitting oneself to truth and overcoming memory-denial, which renders into the full procedure of existential psychotherapy.

Little to provide a cosmic fixed meaning for life, *TRS* optimizes the paradigm 'terrestrial meaning' in different forms, a concept Yalom has used as it is previously expiated, with the aim to encourage the reader to stand at the front-gate of life's sense of meaning, in order to reward them with a new intuition for the worth of living and a new definition of the *self*. Despite being sceptic and somehow upset, Jenny insists to see the coming therapist that is invited to cure Chris and is curious to see Chris at the position of such a change towards himself and life: 'Gilbert Anderson must cure him' she says (West, p. 133). Her zeal for therapy denotes that Chris's final alteration is not only a concern for himself, but rather for Jenny, Kitty, Margaret and the readers as well. Chris's sense of emptiness from memory, identity, authentic self, family and social responsibility gives the reader a thirst of curiosity for inspecting life, and what new 'self' Chris might recreate.

Within such rebirth, Margaret 'comes up so kind and sweet' (West, p. 82-83) as a disruption to shape his life and that of his surrounding with new versions of values such as selflessness, giving, care, emotional and spiritual warmth, dedication and patience. For Margaret, these values produce the meaning of 'sense of achievement' and 'relationship'—concepts of Existential therapy addressed by Wong (1998, p. 25). Margaret stands for Yalom's paradigm of 'altruism', which is an important element of existential therapy, as a person whose terrestrial meaning is based on serving others and participating in helping humans in order to 'make the world a better place to live in' (1980, p. 431-432). Those patients who serve to provide help to other humans, by doing charity or emotionally supporting someone, tend to be provided a sense of coherence and fairness in life, therefore they stay stronger at the face of life's anguish. As discussed in the previous section, Margaret had been suffering of her son's death trauma and life's hardship for being "ravaged by squalid

circumstances" (West, p. 43), therefore her soul has been formed to be weary and emotionally fatigued. Her contribution to Chris's cure, by being emotionally at his side in the miserable time of shell-shock, stands as a compensation for her loss, and such selflessness provides *her* an implication of therapy by being dedicated to a meaningful cause. This leads to another paradigm of yalom's theory of meaning-making which is called 'dedication to a cause' and 'devotion to a cause' (Yalom, p. 434) which is dedicating the value of life for a certain significant political, social, religious or scientific cause. Margaret comes up at the right time, to build up Chris's broken personality and psychology, and feeding his soul with a 'spiritual relationship' (West, p. 128); and this implies for her that there exist meaningful causes that one can devote to, and through which one can fill his/her emotional gaps of previous hurtful losses.

Jenny reveals Margaret's personality of playing her role effectively in providing Chris the elated senses of togetherness and affiliation by saying that she is 'like a beautiful voice singing in a darkened room' (West, p. 90). Having Margaret's articulation of 'a beautiful voice' despite the anguish of life's meaninglessness, amongst war and chaos, compared to a 'darkened room' entails West's hopefulness and hints of optimism despite the existential dilemma of pointlessness and human enterprise of meaning-discovery. Jenny does not hesitate to express her admiration to Margaret's role on Chris's mental status, that she has come with a spirit of 'sacrifice' and it has given Jenny a 'gift' to learn a life lesson from. She says: 'I looked upward act of sacrifice and glowed at her private gift to me.' (West, p. 142). This indicates that Margaret has brought to Jenny the 'gift' of discovering the meaning of life. This is how, in Existential therapy, human beings are gladdened by the conviction that 'each individual has some particular role' in life, and their contribution in life is 'a set of guideline how one should live' (p. 426). West does not prevent her readers from the relief of such a 'guideline' in seeing such meaningful roles of Margaret in the novel.

At the end of the novel, indications of therapy emerge when Chris is re-directed towards a practical goal; as he is, with Yalom's dimensions of 'altruism and dedication to a cause' prepared to return back to the trenches of war with a patriotic intention. Paradoxically, the novel begins with Jenny's disinterest in such patriotic devotions; she yearns for Chris's return 'disregarding the national interest' (West, p. 7), however, at the end of the novel, Jenny herself is pleased to see Chris returned to the norm of soldierly manhood: 'oh, how could I say it? 'every inch a soldier' (West, p. 185). Such orientation indicates Chris's alteration from being mentally confused into a sense of consistency and direction, which is a consequence of existential therapy. Existential therapy, in Sibson's view (1967), leads to 're-education of behaviour' in the form of 'an ongoing task and process rather than a once-and-for-all event' (p. 49). As such, Chris's alteration is not signposted in a clear edge form, West has left it open for the readers' assumptions, of what might Chris's future worldview and meaning-making for life be in the future is a matter of predicted disputes. Despite being prone to self-oblivion, Chris had already been forward to this existential alteration before his involvement to war. Jenny describes his character to metaphorically be like 'an alchemy' who is 'turning metal to gold' (West, p. 8) to imply that Chris by nature is apt for fitting himself into the new tracts of life; and the eventual journey of self-discovery was on his life-path that had to happen at any price.

The novel provokes the moral logo that a perfect *living* does not exist, as Linett (2013) observes that *TRS* implies that 'in nature imperfection is the rule', therefore man has to configure his character as such to fit into the facticity of life with all its dreads, and get rid of his unattainable desire for perfection. Margaret's sense of quench for her son's loss is her compensation mirrored in a pattern of *altruism*, in being a helping hand to people in need, and this is the most renowned sense of meaning that is established in the novel. Linett also sustains the belief that *TRS* stands as an emblem for human 'drawbacks' battling the 'illusion of infirmity' in its eventual act of submission to 'the knowledge of truth' (8, 12) through

Chris's embracing the full truth about the fifteen years' memory that he slipped in his mind. Chris's acknowledgement of remembering his son's passing, recognising Kitty as his legitimate wife, and accepting Margaret of being married to another one, is an act of self-acceptance with the limitations of the real life, embodied in Jenny's metaphor: 'one must drink the wine of truth' (West, p. 178) despite its bitterness.

Jenny's metaphor of 'the wine of truth' is West's existential alternative for the dilemma of life's lack of meaning and the human enterprise of making a meaning of it. West implies that despite Chris's attempt to mitigate the dread of reality by creating a special sphere of illusion. 'the trivial joy of happiness' (West, p. 189), he had to celebrate an unconditional reunion with life's actuality by drinking its 'wine'. This conclusion is the novel's declaration of existential therapy, because in existential therapy every attitude of man is interpreted meaningful if it makes 'the patient reconnect with the real world' (Iacovou and Dixon 2015, p. 44). Chris's reunion with the reality of life is Yalom's paradigm of 'engagement', because for Yalom: 'engagement is the therapeutic answer to meaninglessness regardless of its latter's source' since meaning is a 'by-product of engagement' (p. 482). Chris's sense of reality-acceptance, through remembering his past life and his devotion to his career duty, knowing who the people around him are, his reconciliation with his soldierly identity, is one of the eminent implications of existential therapy that the novel concludes. The novel proclaims that Chris is 'cured' from his memory loss, only at the time when he again becomes in 'every inch a soldier' (West, p. 185). Such moment is very vital in therapy when the patient is familiarized with re-knowing himself again and is reconciled with life, as Jenny says: '[Chris] had exchanged his expectation [...] for the equally wistful aspiration of becoming completely reconciled to life' (West, p. 13). And at the frontline of such a fork road, with the power of gaining meaning, Chris is at a position of growing into maturity, which metaphorically, in Yalom's words, is 'just like an acorn grows to become an oak' (p. 437). One could assume Chris's next return to the Baldry Court different, to be more self-relieved and satisfied, similar to Kitty's sigh of relief, of her 'breath with satisfaction' for his cure (West, p. 185); he could return with another form of meaning gained after suffering, similar to Margaret's insight of altruism that was gained after her past suffering.

5. conclusion:

Existential psychotherapy is a vivid approach of uncovering the human intrinsic world. *TRS* is an existentialist narrative piece of work that elicits the human being's profound sense of the loss of Universal order and the feeling of meaninglessness. This agonistic sense is portrayed in Chris's memory loss, and his failure to make connections to the previous life-events. The article aims at providing alternatives and paradigms of meaning-making, in realms of existential therapy, other than the societal conventions of traditional meaning. Chris is a prototype of human being who lives with a sense of void due to the folly of his social surrounding, and triggered to lose contact to reality due to violence of war. Having no prior meaning in the novel is West's presentation of the groundlessness of the Universe in regard to the human percept of meaning, that renders in his strife to find one. After a narrative display of the anguishes of memory loss, death and isolation, the novel is fruitful in provoking patterns of meaning discovery within existential values, humanistic sense of altruism, dedication for a cause, and engagement with life, which are key-elements of therapy in Existential psychotherapy. The existential therapeutic message of the novel is presented in his return to the burdens of the temporal existence, of here and now, and neglecting the urge for past fantasies. It is also implied in human being's rebirth to a new character trait which is more practical, active and responsible. As existential therapy demands accepting reality without fabrications, Chris represents man in his individualistic decision of abandoning social masks of the Baldry Court, and accepting the reality of his life with the loss of his son, going to war trenches again.

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بیمانایی و ماتاداری بوونیانه له رۆمانی "هاتنهوهی سه‌بازه‌که" ی ریبیکا ویست: توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌کی ده‌روون‌چاره‌خوایزی بوونگه‌رای

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پوخته

هه‌میشه‌ گه‌ران به‌دوای مانای ژبان به‌شێکی گرنگی له‌ ئه‌ده‌ب پێکهێنانه. به‌پێیبه‌ی که هه‌ندێک کاری ئه‌ده‌بی لێوانلێون له‌ ره‌هه‌ندی بوونگه‌رای که له‌ په‌سه‌ری گه‌وره‌ی ده‌ره‌ق به‌ بوونی مرۆف ده‌کۆلنه‌وه، و مکو: مردن، گۆشه‌گیریی، نازادی، مانا، به‌ره‌مه‌نیکه‌ ئه‌ده‌بی و مکو (هاتنه‌وه‌ی سه‌بازمه‌که) (1918) ی ریبیکا ویست (1892-1983) گه‌رانی مرۆف به‌دوای دۆزینه‌وه‌ی مانای بوون له‌خۆ ده‌گریت، له‌ که‌شێکدا که پراوپه‌ره له‌ ته‌نگه‌زه، به‌تایبه‌ت له‌ دوو ناستدا: یه‌کتێکیان ته‌نگه‌زه‌ی ناخی مرۆفه‌ که له‌ ئه‌نجامی له‌ده‌ستدانی یادگه‌ و نه‌خۆشی ده‌روونیه‌وه سه‌ره‌له‌ده‌دات، ئه‌وه‌تریشیان بریتیه‌ له‌ ته‌نگه‌زه‌ و بیه‌سه‌ره‌وه‌یه‌کی ده‌ره‌مکی که له‌ ئه‌نجامی شه‌ر و توندوتیژییه‌وه سه‌ره‌له‌ده‌دات. نهم رۆمانه له‌سه‌رده‌می جه‌نگدا نووسراوه، وه‌ ده‌ره‌مخات که لێکه‌وته‌کانی جه‌نگ له‌رووی لێکترزانی خیزان و تێکچوونی دۆخی ده‌روونی مرۆف چین. لهم رۆماندا کاراکته‌ریک به‌ناوی (کریس) ژانگی بوونگه‌رای هه‌یه، که به‌هۆکاری شوکی جه‌نگ و له‌ده‌ستدانی یادگه‌ی پانزه‌ ساڵی رابردووی، هه‌ستکردنی به‌ بوونی به‌نچه‌ی بناغه‌یه‌ک بۆ ژبانی خۆی له‌ده‌ستداوه‌ هه‌چ واتایه‌کی دیاریکراوه‌ و به‌ره‌سته‌ی بۆ ژبان نهماوه. له‌ ئه‌نجامی ئه‌مه‌دا، گه‌رۆده‌ی چه‌مه‌سه‌ری ده‌بیت له‌مه‌دا که له‌مه‌یانه‌ی گه‌رانه‌وه‌ی دواي جه‌نگی بۆ خاوه‌نه‌که‌ی خۆی درک به‌ هه‌چ پێگه‌یه‌ک بۆ خۆی ناکات، وه‌ مکو (میکانیزمی ناوه‌کی بۆ خۆبه‌هه‌رگری) بۆ جه‌نگه‌رته‌وه‌ی ئه‌ی بۆشایه‌ بوونگه‌رایه‌ی که له‌ناخیدا سه‌ره‌له‌داوه‌ و هۆکاری هه‌ستکردنیه‌ی به‌ ناخی بۆش و بیمانایی له‌ ژبان کریس په‌نا ده‌بات به‌ر چه‌نگه‌رته‌ن له‌ مرۆلێون به‌ خه‌یاڵێک که به‌ناخه‌که‌ی یادگه‌یه‌کی کلۆل و کۆله، له‌وه‌ جارێکی تر سه‌ره‌له‌نوێ په‌یوه‌ندیه‌کی له‌ده‌ستچوو له‌گه‌ڵ خاوه‌نیکه‌ی هاوسه‌ر دار داهمه‌زریننه‌وه، که خۆشه‌وه‌یه‌که‌ی بۆ ماوه‌یه‌کی کاتی ژانی بوونگه‌رایه‌ی کریس خامۆش ده‌کات. ره‌هه‌نده‌ فله‌سه‌فیه‌ی بوونگه‌رایه‌که‌ی ئه‌مه‌ رۆمانه له‌وه‌ دێت که کریس له‌کۆتایه‌که‌یدا جارێکی تر واقیعیکی تال و به‌نازار له‌باوش ده‌گریت، له‌رێگه‌ی گه‌رانه‌وه‌ی یادگه‌ی جارانی خۆی و دووباره‌ ژبان له‌ناو ئیستایی کاتدا، به‌مه‌ش خه‌وه‌کانی رابردووی ژبانی خۆی له‌بار ده‌بات. له‌سه‌ر به‌ناوی قبۆلکردنی واقیعیته‌ی ژبانی خۆی، به‌تایبه‌ت مرۆفی کوره‌که‌ی، رۆمانه‌که‌ ره‌هه‌ندی نوێی چاره‌سه‌ری ئه‌وه‌ ته‌نگه‌زه‌ ده‌روونیه‌ی کریس داهمه‌زریننه‌ت. بۆ ئه‌مه‌ مه‌یه‌سته‌ ئه‌مه‌ لێکۆلنه‌وه‌یه‌ ته‌رخانه‌راوه‌ بۆ روونکردنه‌وه‌ی بۆشایی بوونگه‌رای، هه‌ستی بیمانایی، و پوچی، له‌ پێوه‌ندیدا به‌ له‌ده‌ستدانی یادگه‌، پاشان لێکۆلنه‌وه‌که‌ ده‌ره‌مخات که چۆن مرۆف ده‌توانه‌ت مانای ژبانی خۆی به‌ره‌سته‌ بکات. ریبازی تیۆری لێکۆلنه‌وه‌که‌ بریتیه‌ له‌ ده‌روون‌چاره‌خوایزی بوونگه‌رای، که ریبازی هه‌واچه‌رخه‌ له‌ ناویه‌ بوونی ده‌روونشیکاری و فله‌سه‌فه‌ به‌تایبه‌ت بوونگه‌رای پێکهاتوه. به‌تایبه‌تتر و وردتر، له‌ناو زانایانی ده‌روون‌چاره‌خوایزی بوونگه‌رایدا، جه‌خت کراوته‌ سه‌ر به‌کاره‌ینانی میتۆده‌ شیکارییه‌کانی زانا (ئیرفین یالۆم) که له‌ کیلگه‌ی ئه‌مه‌ زانسته‌دا رۆلێکی به‌رچاوی گه‌یرواوه‌ کاره‌کانی به‌رزخه‌نراوه‌.

ه‌وشه‌ کلێله‌کان: ده‌روون‌چاره‌خوایزی بوونگه‌رای، ریبیکا ویست، بیمانایی، مانا، بۆشایی بوونیانه.

اللامعنى والمعنى الوجودي في رواية "عودة الجندي" لريبیکا ویست: دراسة في المعالجة النفسانية الوجودية

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ملخص

البحث من أجل العثور على معنى الحياة يتكون جزءاً مهماً من الأدب، حيث إن بعض الأعمال الأدبية مليئة بالأبعاد الوجودية التي تثير تساؤلات عميقة حول كينونة الإنسان، مثل الموت، العزلة، الحرية، المعنى، كما نجد ذلك في نتاج أدبي مثل (عودة الجندي) (1918) ريبیکا ويست (1892-1983) الذي يحتوي بحث الإنسان حول الوجود، في حال مليئة بالأزمات، لا سيما في اتجاهين اثنين: واحد منه أزمة في عمق الإنسان التي تظهر بسبب فقدان الذاكرة والأمراض النفسية، والثاني؛ هي التي تظهر نتيجة الاضطرابات الخارجية والحروب والإرهاب. إن هذه الرواية مكتوبة في زمن الحرب، وتبين ما تداعيات الحرب من ناحية انفصال الأسرة وتدهور الحالة النفسية للإنسان؟.. وفيها شخصية باسم (كريس) الذي كان في مخاض وجودي، وذلك بسبب صدمة حربية وفقدان ذاكرته لخمس عشرة سنواته المنصرم، وفقدان إحساسه بأصالة الأسرة، لم يبق معنى محددًا لحياته. ونتيجة ذلك؛ يقع في مشكلة كبيرة، حيث بعدما يعود بعد الحرب إلى أسرته لا يدرك بمكانته السابقة، و (كآلية داخلية للدفاع الذاتي) وكبديل لهذا الفراغ الوجودي الذي كان في عمقه وسبباً لشعوره بالفراغ واللامعنى في الحياة، (كريس) يلجأ إلى التلذذ بالانشغال بخيال مبني على ذاكرة غائمة تائهة، وهناك يعقد علاقة فاقدة مع امرأة متزوجة، حيث إن محبتها تطفئ مخاض كريس الوجودي. إن البعد الفلسفي الوجودي لهذه الرواية؛ تكمن في أن كريس في نهايته يحتضن واقعا مرا ومؤلماً، وذلك من خلال استعادة ذاكرته السابقة وإعادة الحياة في أنه أيضاً، وبذلك يفقد آماله الماضية في حياته، كانت هذه الرواية تؤسس علاجاً لهذه الأزمات النفسية لكريس، بناءً على قبول واقعه المعيش ولا سيما موت ابنه، ولهذا الغرض إن هذه الدراسة تحاول من أجل توضيح الفراغ الوجودي، الشعور بعدم المعنى، والفراغ، في العلاقة بفقدان الذاكرة، وكذلك تبين هذه الدراسة أن الإنسان كيف يستطيع أن يعثر على معنى لحياته. وإن منهج هذه الدراسة هو منهج العلاج النفسي الوجودي، الذي كان منهجاً معاصراً مكوناً من النفسانية والفلسفة، خاصة الوجودية. على وجه التحديد، بين علماء النفس الوجودي، في هذا البحث تتركز الأدوات التحليلية على إيرفين يالوم (1931-؟) الذي نال إعجاباً كبيراً بمساهمته العلمية في هذا المجال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العلاج النفسي الوجودي، ريبیکا ويست، اللامعنى، المعنى، الفراغ الوجودي.

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