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**Adopting Absurdism in Science Fiction: Depicting the
Meaninglessness of life in *Rick and Morty***

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for a Master's degree in Literature and Civilisation.

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Statement of Originality

We, hereby, declare that this thesis is our personal work and that it contains no material previously written by another person, in whole or in part, nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, we certify that the present thesis is the result of our own investigation.

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Dedications

To my parents *Abdellatif Kadaoui* and *Zineb Hakem*, my grandmother *Hafeda Berrezzoug*, for their immense support during my entire educational journey. As I owe them nothing less than achieving whatever would make them the proudest.

To my sisters, *Soumia* and *Amina*, for embracing my lows, and for their ceaseless reassurance and encouragements. Lastly, I dedicate this work to all my loved ones.

~Wafaa~

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Abstract

This research deals with the analysis of the science fiction sitcom *Rick and Morty*, solely within the philosophical and the literary area concerned with absurdism. With the rise of the adult animation genre, that became a central interest of a huge audience, there have been an excessive production of sitcoms that went beyond the initial purpose of amusing the viewers. As adults became more and more aware of the flaws of their existence, they felt the need of a consolation through a medium that, as well, suits their needs for entertainment. Thus, *Rick and Morty*'s popularity could only be explained through the unusual manner by which the show is assembled. In the case of this dissertation, the inclusion of the philosophy of absurdism in *Rick and Morty*, triggered the curiosity upon the way absurdist philosophical beliefs are explored through the literary elements of the show. Additionally, it delineates the science fiction genre's convenience in unraveling the absurdist vision that stands for the futility of existence, by providing the most pertinent atmosphere. The work consists of two chapters; the first one covers the required theoretical facets, that authorises the analysis carried in the second chapter. The latter mainly undertakes a practical scanning of philosophical and literary concepts, specifically concerned with absurdism being an entity of both a philosophy and a literature, which could be best rendered through the genre of science fiction in the sitcom of *Rick and Morty*.

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General Introduction

Philosophy has its own ways of sewing the human thoughts, and allows the brain's debris to outshine on the surface. The meaning of life and the purpose of humans' existence have always been the most pondered upon question that served at nothing but create the utmost dilemmas that may only stain the serenity of the human mind. Many philosophers tried to give it a sense; to help decipher whatever the real reason of humans' existence could ever be. Nonetheless, It was never a case where this question was given a particular answer.

Philosophers did not remain stagnant about the way they promoted their philosophies, and the transition to literature was most suitable, as it opened a new horizon for them to explicitly discharge their loudest abstractions. This created the necessary fusion between literature and philosophy and rendered it to be more of an interrelated sphere. Absurdism is one of the philosophies that found literature a sheltering home to all its queries. Writers of the same philosophy ran out their ink trying to ceaselessly express their confusion about what life holds in its folds; the lack of meaning surrounding them ignited an imperceptive desire to convince humanity to open their eyes and absorb the meaninglessness of life. This all gave the platform for the theatre of the absurd to shine in the gloomy darkness of the Second World War, and promoted a philosophy that highlighted the randomness of the vast universe.

Absurdism happens to remain in existence along with its literature till the present time. This allowed it to shape shift into the many occurring developments that brought a new area for literature to be presented. Technology as being the core of the twenty first century, was submerged in all spheres of life, including literature. At this point, a written book is no longer the solely existing manner to express literature; people of this age indulge in things that have reached better technological developments. Television and other media platforms reigned in the realm of literature as it became easily accessible for people to consume it. Sitcoms are one of the most popular means, in which literature along with philosophy are better expressed. Through the use of comedy, a plethora of heavy philosophical subjects are

given the chance to be discussed in a manner that makes it easier for the audience to consume.

Rick and Morty (2013) seems to be one of the most concurring sitcoms of this era. It allows the viewer to dive in an entire world where basically everything is permissible, and nothing matters. The sitcom belongs to the science fiction genre, with a touch of comedy that enabled the producers of the show to deal with heavy philosophical issues. The idea of blending such a deep matter that, comprehends life as peeled off any meaning, and a ludicrous animated series, put the audience in a perplexing atmosphere. This observation triggers the following research questions:

- How are absurdism and its literature displayed in the science fiction sitcom *Rick and Morty*?
- What are the main aspects of absurdism and the literature of the absurd and how can it be applied in science fiction?

The hypothesis for the previous questions put forward the fact that *Rick and Morty* serves as a medium where the philosophy of absurdism is explored. As for the sub questions, since *Rick and Morty* is a science fiction sitcom, gathering characteristics from both absurdism and its literature, the hypothesis suggests that it would be more natural for both of them to be conveniently and profoundly used. Furthermore, the science fiction of *Rick and Morty* with all its features could be helpful in diving through the philosophy of absurdism and its literature, and help into the dissection of life's meaning and the purpose of human existence.

To answer the above questions, this research employs two main approaches that provide a fruitful assistance of the tackled analysis. On the one hand, the philosophical approach covers the first part of this dissertation's analysis, as it scans *Rick and Morty* from

an absurdist perspective while identifying this philosophy's manifestations within the show. On the other hand, the literary approach serves at depicting the literary side of absurdism, and how it was used in *Rick and Morty* to achieve a successful delineation of such a notion.

The first chapter in its essence is an open door for the philosophy of absurdism and its literature to be majorly dissected. It deals with how absurdism came as a result of merging two former philosophies that were majorly spread in the nineteenth century. Thus, it will provide an introduction to how existentialism and nihilism paved the way for the philosophy of the absurd to receive its own shine and appear to the surface. It, additionally, highlights the notion of Camus and the major concepts he was able to include in the world of absurdism. More than that, this chapter tackles how the world of literature embraced the philosophy of absurdism, and stressed its primary features. Science fiction on the other hand, is lastly addressed to be the perfect arena for the world of the absurd to be dived in.

The second chapter is going to be an analysis of the sitcom *Rick and Morty* being an adult animation series in which the notion of absurdism is portrayed. Aspects of the Theatre of the Absurd including black humour and satire are as well analysed within the script of *Rick and Morty*. The nonsense of events being a major aspect of the literature of the absurd that explains absurdism as a philosophy and how it fits perfectly in science fiction is also explored. Additionally, science fiction along with cosmic horror are tackled in a way to support the convenience of using such genre in exploring a philosophical matter.

**Chapter One: Absurdism,
from the Theatre of the
Absurd to Absurdist Science
Fiction**

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Outline

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- 1.2. Pre-Absurdist Philosophies
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1.1. Introduction

On The Origin of Species (1857), a book published by Charles Darwin, was the reason to ignite a whole new wave of perception, and people's interest was more oriented toward science. God and religion, however, were no longer substances of great significance, rather a perplexing subject to be consumed. This led to the emergence of two significant philosophies that were highly spread in the nineteenth century and lasted till the twentieth century. These philosophies are known to be 'nihilism' and 'existentialism', where God was no longer a paramount concept in human's life, and humans were targeted to take responsibility for their own acts and behaviours. Life, as proclaimed by existentialism and nihilism, is devoid of all meaning, and humans are in charge of creating that meaning themselves.

The beginning of the twentieth century was a painful departure; the leftover ashes of World War II, left a bitter resentment, and life were condemned to be meaningless. The world was depleted of all hope, and people were looking for a refuge, something to cling to, leading them to a brighter future. In parallel to nihilism and existentialism, absurdism rose as a philosophy in the twentieth century, and was born basically from both former philosophies. It deals initially with the meaninglessness of life and the world's indifference towards man trying to create meaning. Nevertheless, Albert Camus argued that, man should accept the absurd and go beyond it as this would only allow them to create a certain meaning to life.

Regarding this chapter, absurdist philosophy along with its literature, are the focal point, and their coverage is what matters most. To begin with, the origins of absurdism are put into dissection, and how its philosophy gathers up two previous ones into one realm. The philosophy behind absurdism itself, is profoundly dug deep into, along with its

definition and all the different pieces that patch absurdism into a singular sphere. Moving further, the theatre of the absurd and its literature is a must route to pass by. Abstracting from the core of its philosophy, the theatre of the absurd is built up and manifested into being one of the most popular theatres in the whole world. Comedy and some of its modes are also necessitated to be covered, as they represent an integral part of the theatre of the absurd. Finally yet importantly, the world of science fiction is acknowledged in this chapter, as it represents one of the greatest parts of the show being analysed in this dissertation and one of its main themes.

1.2. Pre-Absurdist Philosophies

Absurdism is a philosophy that delves in the chaos and irrationality the universe provides. It deals more essentially with the human's quest to find meaning in this world, yet, as absurdism entails, it is all met with failure as life has no inherent meaning. Man's existence in itself is out of any purpose, rather futile and has no sense. Ergo, life is a tragedy and humans are ceaselessly left floundering in the sea of its vagueness. Nevertheless, prior to absurdism, two philosophies manifested their prominence and significance back in the nineteenth century. Nihilism and existentialism are philosophies that rose as the aftermath of the renaissance era, where people no longer relied on God in their daily life practices. Moreover, both of these philosophies took focus on the meaninglessness of the world and the essence of existence.

1.2.1. Existentialism

Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre both argued that, "existentialism is the ethical theory that we ought to treat the freedom at the core of the human existence as intrinsically valuable and the foundation of all other values" (Webber, 2018, p. 2). Existentialism is a philosophy that emerged in the late nineteenth century and took its larger development in

the twentieth century. Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, the nineteenth century fathers of existentialism, both dug profoundly in the truth of metaphysics and freedom, and focused on what Kierkegaard labelled “the single individual”. The single individual is concerned with the self and its meaningfulness, something that was completely neglected in traditional philosophy. Existentialism, additionally, is a philosophy in which God no longer interferes in the human affairs in spite of his existence. This led humans into trying to find meaning in them instead of turning to God to seek clarity (Crowell, 2004).

Jean-Paul Sartre is a founding pillar of existentialism, and one of the few who accepted the title of an existentialist, was the one to succeed in popularising the term ‘existentialism’ after it was first introduced by Gabriel Marcel in the mid-1920s. Through his mantra “existence precedes essence”, Sartre illustrates that the core of existentialism is the fact that, what it means to be human cannot be given, the meaning of a human being is in the process of existence. Existence is thus “self-making-in-a-situation” (Fackenheim, 1961, p. 37). In his public lecture “Is Existentialism Humanism?” (1945), Sartre took the chance to explain the humanitarian side the existentialist philosophy is concerned with. In this regard, the subject or the human being is the centre of its attention and the pinnacle of its value hierarchy. Freedom and the possibility of having concrete choices, is a subject of great importance in existentialism; and that freedom, he further argued, is not in favour of any higher value, not the class of Marxists nor the God of religion (Earnshaw, 2006).

Freedom is considered to be an integral value in existentialism, as equally important, authenticity is also one of the bases that builds the ground of this philosophy. Existentialism relies on ethical considerations and moral evaluation, as it failed to provide concrete norms of existing which elucidate particular ways of living life. Thus, authenticity is considered to be this transparency which gives the subject the light to be responsible for themselves, and who they are in terms of what is right to do and what is wrong to avoid. It

gives the sense of a self-making process as it gives the subject the chance to ponder upon whether they are making themselves, or are solely applying and confirming to the roles they found themselves into. Ergo, authenticity is about the subject's commitment toward a certain course of actions and to a specific way of living. Authenticity, moreover, does not control what a subject might choose to do; however, it controls over the manners and ethics a he/she would involve in their choice. Furthermore, Sartre suggests, "the choice of authenticity appears to be a moral decision" (Cited in Flynn, 2006, p. 63), as existentialism considers it to be a mark of freedom as well (Flynn, 2006).

1.2.2. Nihilism

Derived from the Latin word *Nihil*, nihilism, and according to *Oxford Latin Dictionary* means "not anything, nothing; that which does not exist" (Cited in Carr, 1992, p. 13). It was first coined in the nineteenth century in Russia, to express political opposition against the governmental system back then. Hence, nihilism is acknowledged as a sign of objection, and expresses the extinction of values, and life's meaninglessness. It came, additionally, as a result to the breakdown of the traditional western belief system, which indicated on the validity of values and human's purposeful existence. The escalation of the nihilistic philosophy, caused a peril on the human culture, and was considered intolerable, impractical enough for many modern thoughts to fight against it and fetch for other alternatives to it (Hatab, 1987).

Through his work, Nietzsche, poured all his endeavours in order to provide a full identification of nihilism. The German philosopher found that, the spread of science in western Europe damaged people's faith in God. With his famous phrase "God is dead" mentioned in the book *The Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche declares the death of the Christian God as he depicted the depletion of religious primaries in the European region.

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The death of God Nietzsche was referring to, was not entirely of a religious origin; however, it was the death of morals and truth. Nonetheless, since people were too attached to their religion, the death of God would lead to direct nothingness, in other words, nihilism. Man in this case, is left in full charge of himself and basically the backbone of his whole existence. Ultimately, this signifies that the weakly built will fall in the trap of nihilism, and realise the insignificance of life. On the contrary, the thick skinned, open minded individual sees nihilism from a different angle. It is a chance given to take responsibility to provide meaning and be able to create values (Crowell, 2004).

Attunements are what Heidegger prefers to term anxiety and boredom, while he explains their philosophical worth through their existence in humans' life (Cited in Tartaglia, 2016, p. 26). Quite significantly, in nihilism, their perpetual existence and importance are of the same level, as they unveil its core and truth. Hence, being caught up in the framework life provides, it is scarcely inevitable for humans to fall in the trap of boredom and anxiety. Nonetheless, it is an adequate response for a life that demands regular action for its temporality but not any particular action because of its meaninglessness. The human beings' full engagement and participation in the framework's activities are made by their own choice. Nonetheless, their non-participation in the framework is still an option, and here anxiety arises in the process of them being responsible of their own choice of choosing to participate or not. Boredom, on the other hand, reveals the futility of the framework. It comes from the realisation that the activities the humans are occupying serve no purpose because, initially, life is meaningless (Tartaglia, 2016).

1.3. Absurdism

Martin Esslin was the first to introduce the term absurdism in his most famous book *The Theatre of The Absurd* (1961). Its meaning however, and according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, is “not reasonable or sensible” (Hornby, 1995, p. 6). Moreover, in *Collins English Dictionary* (2019), absurdism is defined as “the belief that life is meaningless and all attempts to understand the universe are doomed to fail”. Defining absurdism is an inevitable route that would eventually lead to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the word ‘Absurd’. This latter, however, was the interest of many scholars and philosophers which made it have its own fair share of variant definitions, and a couple of them are going to be mentioned. The noun ‘Absurd’¹, as confirmed by the *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* is “the state or condition in which man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe and in which man's life has no meaning outside his own existence” (Cited in Cornwell, 2006, p. 3). In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1990), Chris Baldick, proceeds to define the Absurd as “a term derived from the existentialism of Albert Camus, and often applied to the modern sense of human purposelessness in a universe without meaning or value” (Cited in Cornwell, 2006, p. 2).

It is inevitable to say, then, that absurdism is a philosophy that negates the meaning of life. It states the fact that, the desire of the humankind trying to find meaning in life is something quite unreachable, and beyond the capacity of their earthly being. In total vain, it is then, to search the complete lucidity in the face of the unknown the world provides. Accordingly, humans are compelled to live in a world where chaos, hostility, and utter indifference are forever what they shall face. Consequently, from an absurdist perspective,

¹The Absurd with capital (a), refers to the philosophy of the absurd and its literary genre that highlights life's meaninglessness and the human reaction to a world that is indifferent to their existence.

life is a complex conundrum, and to solve its complexity is an absolute impossible mission. Ergo, human beings ought to accept this reality and live life through all its intricacies.

Esslin is the one to create the term absurdism in the twentieth century, nonetheless, the first philosopher to ever acknowledge the absurd through his existentialist philosophy is, Søren Kierkegaard. The nineteenth century, was an attempt for the Danish philosopher to provide an explanation to 'the Absurd', and in accordance to his claim, the absurd is the equivalent of the religious level of existence. In his book *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Kierkegaard asserts that to have faith is to believe in the absurd, as God's power surpasses absurdities and not impossibilities only. Through his analysis of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac, Kierkegaard explains that, Abraham's belief was found "on the strength of the absurd, for there could be no question of human calculation, and it was indeed absurd that God who demanded this of him should in the next instant withdraw the demand" (Cited in Darrow, 2005, p. 40-41).

Furthermore, in Abraham's sacrifice of his son, Kierkegaard depicted the whole incident as a confrontation of the absurd. Abraham's blind trust and strong faith in God allowed him to face the absurd and even move beyond it, for God does not accord with any forms of reason. What makes Kierkegaard an absurdist, however, is his profound immersion in rationalism, and his desperate desire for his God to be rational, albeit God is beyond and above all rationality. Kierkegaard, in addition to that, believed in the idea of subjective truth, a truth, as he insists, that can solely be reached by taking the leap of faith. As a further matter, he continues to assert that taking the leap of faith, one must stand in face to face with the absurd and deal with it, and that faith itself is flexible and limitless enough to reach the absurd (Halloran, 1973).

To speak of absurdism, without any doubt would lead to Albert Camus, the much known of being the father of this philosophy, and his name is part and parcel of absurdism. Linking absurdism to the metaphysical being of God, as Kierkegaard did, is something that Camus did not really adhere to what Kierkegaard view of absurdism. For Camus, absurdism still supports the idea that justifies the meaninglessness of life. Nonetheless, it does not exceed beyond the physical existence of the human beings and there is no supernatural force that is ruling over earth. “What can a meaning outside my condition mean to me? I can understand only in human term. What I can touch, what resists- that I can understand” (Camus, 1955, p. 51). The leap of faith², for Camus, is what hinders and ceases the absurd from existing, and the actuality of a spiritual world is what turns the absurd into mere oblivion (Roskowski, 2013).

Moreover, concerning subjective truth, Roskowski insists on it being only a guide that leads humans to believe in the supernatural and superpowers that exists outside the physical sphere. However, humans are in a favour to make decisions and accept their consequences. In other words, the humans need to be aware of the limits of their being, and the impossibility of understanding what the human brain can never reach to comprehend. On the other hand, Camus still defended the idea that the absurd can exist and occur at any moment, “at any street corner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face” (Camus, 1955, p. 10). This would eventually lead to the paradox that, Camus in fact, did not really reject the existence of a divine being, what he insisted on, however, is that the human being has no capacity in understanding what is beyond the reach of our thoughts and senses (2013).

Camus, through his interpretation of this philosophy, has an aim to present absurdism as this ultimate solution to accomplish a certain success in manoeuvring what

²To believe in something without any tangible proof i.e. developing faith in a spiritual reality.

life may offer, and do good in this meaningless world. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955), Camus portrays absurdism as an optimistic philosophy that calls and paves the way for people to redeem their thoughts and values, and how to aim for justice. The world indeed, is still stripped from any meaning, therefore, society members are directly to ponder upon the idea of the true meaning of their existence, and how valid is their social construct. A construct that is built upon humans' arbitrary values, would still be questioned on how far it will sustain and not crumble eventually. This allows some room for sensory experience to be more of an indestructible evident of the lucidity of man's existence. It is through sensory experience then, that the creation of values is necessitated to be made. Adding to that, denying, or censoring the interpretation of sensory experience is as harmful, however, it is quite just then, to accept the absurd and see the morality of interpreting sensory experience (Genovese, 2010).

Holly White (2006) gives an illustration on Camus' perspective and his belief that

despite the limitations in perspective and the absurdity of life, humans can make decisions that lead to less suffering. This is not the eradication of evil ... it is instead the work of humans to reduce suffering when they can, to act with the acceptance that all cannot be healed, resolved, or explained on this earth (p. 557).

Camus, therefore, invites people to focus on the now and get submerged in their limited existence, a place where other humans can be helped and saved. From this, it can be acknowledged that, absurdism is more than just a philosophy that started from the mere idea that life is meaningless; it is rather limitless and boundaryless. In an absurdist world, no higher power exists, thus the world is less compelled and chained. Humans in this case, are committed to live their lives and draw their paths according to the decisions they take,

however, only if they come to a point of accepting the absurd. In this case, life could eventually have a sense, and a meaning that only humans are in favour to create.

1.4. Meaningful Meaninglessness³

As a philosophy, it is completely true that absurdism is fundamentally built upon the fact that life has no meaning, and the mere idea of setting the goal of finding meaning in life is absolute nonsense. Nevertheless, Albert Camus, aims at changing people's perspective and trying to perceive absurdism from a different angle. He wants to give a positive image and a different façade to absurdism. Life is totally meaningless, undoubtedly, however, for Camus, there is this possibility in finding meaning in meaninglessness. Camus, for instance, argues that, the true realisation of the absurdity of existence, eradicate the belief in another life, which itself is permitting to absorb the beauty and pleasure of existing. Seeing life from such an angle, strengthens the mind against any illusions and self-deceptions (Camus, 1955).

The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays (1955) starts with a highly significant sentence, in which Camus shows where he stands when it comes to suicide; "There is just one true philosophical problem and that is of suicide" (Camus, 1955, p. 11). In this book, Camus, focuses on suicide as a primary problem that others seem to neglect, for it is related to the crux of life, and its meaningfulness. According to Camus, it is crucial for humans to ponder upon whether life has a meaning, in parallel, there is this urge to meet the problem of suicide face to face (1955, p. 6). Through dealing with the concept of suicide, he gave his own understanding of absurdity,

³Genovese, Maria K., "Meaningful Meaninglessness: Albert Camus' Presentation of Absurdism as a Foundation for Goodness" (2010). Pell Scholars and Senior Theses. 60. https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/pell_theses/60

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (1955, p. 13)

Camus' rejection of suicide is quite obvious, as he expresses it loud and clear through his writings. Suicide is not the solution to end one's agony, or to define life's meaninglessness, it may "eliminate the problem, it does not solve it" (Thorson, 1965, p. 287). As Camus explains, to commit suicide, is equal to relinquish to both life and death, and fall easily into their chains. Humans, as Camus insists, are supposed to be aware of the truth death provides, however, at the same time refuse it. Choosing death, is not eventually a solution to the absurd.

For Camus, three reasons are significantly enough to cause suicide: "the irrational, the human nostalgia, and the absurd" (1955, p.32). Seen from a different angle, Camus elucidates that, these same reasons that, are causing suicide can be used as a tool for self-enhancement. He further explains that, the irrationality and randomness of the universe is inevitable, thus accepting it, is the key to derive meaning from it. The human mind is limited and find it hard to accept everything, therefore, the indigestion of the meaningless is what results in suicide. What humans ought to do, as Camus insisted, is to accept the absurd; to accept the meaninglessness of life. To chase the meaning of life is what may cause and eventually lead to suicide. Consequently, accepting the meaninglessness is the most convenient choice (Sagar, 2021).

Sisyphus, the man in Camus' book title, is the most fitting example of an absurd man. According to Greek mythology, Sisyphus, a man who was condemned by the gods with a never-ending punishment. To perpetually roll a boulder up to the top of the mountain, just to see it roll back down to the bottom, is the futile torment that the gods thought Sisyphus would suffer from the most. Yet, Sisyphus never yielded, and was able to find relish in the futility of his punishment, "they had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labour" (Camus, 1955, p. 107). This, for Camus is what recapitulates the human condition in this life. The humankind is compelled with the repetitiveness of life events and how each and every day might seem like the copy pasted version of the other. Howbeit, just like Sisyphus did, to find meaning and joy in the futility of this life is what makes it less unbearable (Arinze & Onwuatuegwu, 2020).

The absurd man for Camus is he who is aware of all the circumstances life provides and still chooses love, and decides to create a meaning out of it. In describing Sisyphus, "His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing" (Camus, 1955, p. 108). In this, Camus is pointing out that humans are the ones responsible of creating meaning and an aim of their life. Nonetheless, to accept the absurd is what might bring joy and happiness to their life. To accept the meaningless is what adds meaning to life. "All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is a thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols.", and he concluded "One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, 1955, p. 110).

Humans are always battling in this life, as they are always in struggle to find purpose, with their freedom, with their responsibility, with their choice. They more precisely, are in need to fight together, in order to bring some positive change in this

world, to rebel against the failing social hierarchies. Nevertheless, above all, they struggle to absorb the meaninglessness of this life, and furthermore, to create meaning out of it. This makes of existence, a paradox of both peculiar yet an exciting combination. Nothing is static, and changes are constantly occurring as life continues to happen; everything is interjected by something else, and even life is faced with death. What Camus wanted to transmit from his book *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, and even from his other works, is that absurdism is also a philosophy of positivity, optimism, love and through being conscious of the absurd meaninglessness can turn into meaning (Genovese, 2010).

1.5. Theatre of the Absurd

Literature and philosophy are major fields that exist concurrently, for they are both meaningful products of human thoughts. The connection between them involves the literary treatment of ongoing philosophical issues, that oppose the serene flow of human intellectual life. Absurdism as a philosophy massively influenced the creation of a literature that is entirely devoted to a genuine portrayal of individuals dealing with the belief that life is meaningless.

The WWII resulted in disturbing the human peace all around the world, worse than its physical harm; its moral perturbation was the critical one. Normally, the human mind is easily influenced, his thoughts and beliefs happen to change according to the occurring events. Subsequently, the philosophy of absurdism thrived in an environment where peoples' mindsets were fragile enough to adopt a new perception about life. All the tragic events, deaths, and traumas inflamed the individuals, and smothered their desire to exist in this world. They became convinced that their worth and value were trivial, since they had no power to stop the horrors of the WWII, and more importantly to protect their lives. This notion reached a group of writers who were not able to keep their arms crossed; rather, they decided to use their powers to communicate this issue with the concerned audience.

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The theatre was their unique option to express such phenomenon; it thrived and thus, considered to be a movement (Culík, 2000).

The Theatre of the Absurd came to exist when multiple playwrights independently wrote for stage, while adhering to the theories mentioned in Camus' essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955). Critic Martin Esslin coined the term 'Theatre of the Absurd' in his famous work *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1962), where he assembled a wide range of literary works and identified them as absurdist products. Classical literary works like Jean Genet's *The Maids* (1947), Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1950) and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* (1953) addressed several issues resulted by the humans' existential crisis that occurred following the horrific experiences of WWII. These works were successfully performed in France, Germany and English-speaking countries, as they entertained hundreds of people who came to give themselves a break from the reality (Al Sayed Ali, 2018).

Theatre usually provides an artistic area for writers with creative imagination to convert their ideas into a narrative plot, which would be unfolded by objective characters and embellished with a sense of suspense. Theatre of the Absurd, however, particularly regards the stage as medium of representing the psychological reality by depicting images that are the apparent surface of the state of mind, as well as the conflicts that happen within the personality. Writers put together a plot that is unanimously agreed upon to be extremely odd, and developed through actions and abnormal dialogues. Equally important, characters are meant to carry intelligible characteristics so that the audience would ignore the physical appearance of the character, instead, they should give most attention the peculiar behaviour within the tangled happenings. Ergo, the public unconsciously start to unravel the concealed psychological matters, as they simultaneously feel involved in such disposition (Voss, 2013).

The frequent theme in plays belonging to Theatre of the Absurd revolves around a mode that unifies both comedy and tragedy. This latter invites the audience to laugh at the miserable state they are in, as it is considered to be their last asylum away from the absurdities of life. Samuel Beckett hinted at such combination in his work *Endgame* (1957) when the character Nell said, “Nothing is funnier than unhappiness” (p. 7). In fact, this expression also suits the way Barnes (1964) described tragicomedy, since he referred to it as a dramatic situation, where an unrealistic refutation of the gap between the human desire and reality occurs, along with an apparent inconsistency between the characters and the audience’s realistic behaviour.

Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting For Godot* (1948), originally called *En Attendant Godot*, is an iconic play that massively lightened the theatre of the absurd movement. It is referred to by the Irish critic Vivian Mercier (1959) as “The play where nothing happens” (p. 144), since the plot appears to end in the same condition where it began. While waiting for Godot, the characters’ ability to sustain an effective communication is absent, as they fail to exchange the simplest concepts and thoughts. The Absurd comes into the surface through the idea of the man being mad and unable to manage his own existence, where he is weak enough to just accept his situation in the most tepid manner. Beckett’s emphasis on the absurdity of human behaviour portrays the tragic and comedic phenomena of an existential crisis. The purposeless and the irrelevance of the characters in the play is proved through the fact that Godot never arrived (Siuli, 2017).

1.6. Absurdist Literature

Giving a static and a stagnant definition to absurdism in literature is quite of a tough task, although it takes its motives thoroughly from the Theatre of the Absurd, it is still iniquitous to forge any specific definition that relates absurdism to literature, as the nature of the link

is delicate and can be understood only when being encountered. Yet, absurdism is given the trait of being a ‘label’ i.e., a designation that gathers multiple literary works characterized by specific features, and created by a group of writers who shined in 1950s and the 1960s. Absurdist writers, in fact, never identified themselves by the labels placed upon them, since they unconsciously made use of new elements and themes, that later gave birth to the so-called absurdist literature (Bennett, 2015).

Elements of absurdist literature can be rooted back to the playwrights of antiquity as they employed numerous elements akin to those conceptualized by Albert Camus. Neil Cornwell (2006) argued that features like the use of masks and costumes, a commentating chorus and vulgarity in Greek drama directly hint at what is called ‘Theatre of the Absurd’. ‘Pathos’, additionally, is an element that was predominant in classical drama, through which the result of desolation and emptiness assisting existence was portrayed. Avant-garde movements like a and Surrealism⁴ provided a profitable cultural background for absurdist literature to prosper. This latter, was achieved when writers obliquely fused different literary aspects from each movement aiming to furnish their texts, so as to satisfy their desires to produce a pleasing piece of literature.

Absurdist texts made it to the history of literature for their uniqueness in terms of the way they are produced. They tend to create a ‘Kafkaesque’⁵ atmosphere to allude to the bizarreness and the confusion that was all over the society. Absurdist texts, furthermore, adopted a language that opposed the realistic one, unlike the themes that attempted to lighten the reality. The actual state of life was likely to be achieved through the ‘Tragicomedy’ genre which was meant to make the audience burst into tears of both laughter and cry. Equally important, the Aristotelian principle was no longer in use, rather,

⁴ Dadaism and Surrealism: Two important movements of the twentieth century. They both highly influenced the contemporary art, culture, and literature.

⁵ The term ‘Kafkaesque’ refers to Franz Kafka’s way of writing, which was characterised by a bizarre, unusual, and a complex quality.

writers flattered the narrative arc. The course of the story broke off from departing by an increasing tension of events, leading to a climax and followed by a smooth decrease towards a solution. Alternatively, the hero's destiny was condemned to a constant chaotic downfall heading to an ambiguous ending (Couder, 2019).

The Caretaker (1960), a play written by Harold Pinter, is a fitting demonstration of both literary elements and themes related to absurdist literature. Although the play is the sixth of Pinter's major works for the stage, it became his first significant success after it premiered in the Arts Theatre Club in London. Pinter, in his play, focused on the breakdown of relationships and the loss of the urge to survive, since people at that time struggled to handle their lives in such a chaotic environment. The play provided a painful incoherence of speech through restricting the characters' ability to hold a successful conversation during the play. The plot the play displays, leans towards a complete vagueness; as the audience expects a character to do a specific thing, however, ends up doing something of a strange and unexpected behaviour. The disarray in Pinter's writing reflects life from the perspective of people who had just undergone a horrific experience and from an angle where life lost its meaning and became absurd (Mir, 2015).

1.7. Comedy in the World of the Absurd

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2008), comedy is illustrated as “a fictional work in which the materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse us” (Abrams, Harpham, 2008). If the term ‘comedy’ is taken by its literal definition, *The Oxford Dictionary* suggests that comedy is “a stage play of light, amusing and often satirical character, chiefly representing everyday life, and with a happy ending” (Cited in Connard, 2005, p. 8). Nevertheless, ‘a comedy’, with the inclusion of an article such as “the” or “a”, is considered to be a genre, presented in plays or motion pictures such as

films. This, however, does not reject the fact that, it can also be considered in prose, work of fiction, or narrative poetry.

Farce is one of the most significant modes of comedy. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines the word 'farce' as a "dramatic work (usually short) which has for its sole object to excite laughter" (Cited in Connard, 2005, p. 95). It stands as a type of comedy that, is supposed to cause the audience great and belly laughter, and for that to happen, the characters employed are likely to be, exaggerated, ridiculous, absurd to a certain extent, and "puts them into improbable and ludicrous situations" (Abrams & Harpham, 2008). More than that, farce, is a comedy that is built upon deception and mistakes, often mixed with sexual verbal humour. Initially, it is just a type of humour where guidelines are often cut loose, and the world of oddities and uncertainties is represented (Connard, 2005).

As comedy reached the surface of literature, meaning classical comedy, it was often related to being "restorative, reconciliatory and cathartic" (Fakhrkonandeh, 2020, p. 110). Moreover, Bhabha indicates that comedy or humour, are in must to fit with the social norms and cultural appropriations, and likely used in expressing the rejection of socio-political stereotypes (2004). On the other hand, with the theatre of the absurd rising to the spotlight, comedy seems to be ripped of its pure meaning. It became, rather more in touch with darkness and tragedy.

Modern comedy, unlike the classical one, widened up its horizon, and included a rather grotesque, nihilistic, and absurdist features to describe the human existence. Hence, the content is no longer aiming at making people laugh, nor trying to bring a sort of a relief to the audience. Modern comedy is targeting the meaning of existence, sovereignty, and the human condition more specifically. The thin line between tragedy and comedy is getting thinner as time is moving forward. The comment given by Garcia Lorca, "if in

certain scenes the audience doesn't know what to do, whether to laugh or to cry, that will be a success for me" (Cited in Fakhrkonandeh, 2020, p. 111), explains more this transparency occurring between tragedy and comedy. Ergo, modern comedy leans more towards what is grotesquely, absurdly, and tragically comic (Fakhrkonandeh,2020).

The emergence of the theatre of the absurd, inadvertently led absurdist comedy or humour to develop. This latter, made everything more specific to its own world, and each joke or scenario is quite distinguishable in its way. Absurd comedy, has its specific way of ridiculing life, rendering all what is realistically accepted into nonsensical extremes. Incompatibility or incongruousness, whether in values, behaviours, or personalities is what gives absurd humour a certain sense of particularity. The nonsense used in absurd comedy, gives the audience a chance to be in contact with "the senselessness of the human condition and abandoning use of rational devices" (Erkan, 2016, p. 76). This whole meaninglessness, promote the absurdist humour as a liberating one, as the audience is there to laugh at life's absurdities, no pressure, even the characters have no real aim and constantly roam in the realm of foolishness and absurdness (Erkan, 2016).

Anthropomorphism, another distinct feature in absurd comedy; this latter gives animals human traits and characteristics, however not only that, basically everything does, whether inanimate or not. One of the examples is, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), in which animals are given the ability to speak and are involved in human affairs. This only proves the randomness of absurd comedy, and that it has set its roots way before it has been familiarised as the theatre of the absurd came to the surface (Ferguson, 2020).

1.7.1. Black Humour

The concept of black humour became of a central interest in The United States of America with the publication of *Black Humour* (1965), this latter encompassed thirteen fictional

works written by J.P. Donleavy, Thomas Pynchon, Edward Albee, John Barth, Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Heller Bruce Jay Friedman, and Céline. The product is described to be a mass market paperback that triggered the humans' insecurity by tracing a fading line between reality and the absurd fantasy. Friedman (1965) refused to conceptualise black humour in relation to the book; rather, he pointed out its interest in dealing with a new chord of absurdism through a way that is darker and beyond satire. Schulz and other non-American names such as Italo Calvino and Raymond Queneau preferred to describe literary black humourists as post-existentialists, who no longer find interest in demonstrating the absurdity and the tragedy of the world, as they are well convinced that life is an endless labyrinth. However, they agreed to approach the situation using the comic which is no less of a chocking method that would provoke laughter (O'Neill, 1983).

Anthologie de L'humour Noir (1940) is André Breton's work, in which a historical development of black humour as a form of literature was explored. In the preface, Breton claimed to be the first to make use of the term 'humour noir', insisting that it never existed before his coinage. Breton, additionally, asserted that black humour is "the process that allows one to brush reality aside when it gets too distressing" (Breton, 1997, 234). Black humour, therefore, is a tool that allows the audience to escape the bitterness of the world that is mostly caused by the chaotic condition of life. Within the same vein, Gero von Wilpert in his book *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (1969) defined black humour as 'humorloser Scherz' meaning a joke without humour or without the funniness. Wilpert discussed the concept of black humour as being devoid of any intention to provoke pleasant laughter, however, it is meant to arise a feeling of ridiculousness about a life that is horribly absurd. Cornwell (2006), additionally, suggested that the experience of the absurd is comic; thus, black humour is an element of the absurd (Kodzhaibrahimoglu, 2020).

Humour is not often necessarily humorous, black humour for instance, is a distressed type of comedy that stimulates a feeling of laughter that conceals a hidden feeling of sadness, as a defence mechanism against the plain meaninglessness and the absurdity of the world. Accordingly, black humour blends bitterness with anger, which obliquely treats the grotesque that unveils anxiety and struggle. Still within the field of literature, black humour is considered a sub-genre of comedy, as themes and events related to fatalistic phenomena such as death, sickness and depression, are converted into laughable themes via a comedic and a satirical manner. Black humour, additionally, is a pure product of incongruity, for, the participant's behaviour to stay by the scope of expectations is absent; instead, there is an extreme odd and abnormal reaction. Withal, the element of black humour rescues the participants from falling into the nihilistic feeling about purposelessness, since it supplies them with a sense of optimism that pushes them to tolerate the human existence the way it is (Cocu, 2013).

1.7.2. Satire

Satura, a Latin word meaning 'full', is the original word from which 'satire' was derived. *Satura* is closely related to the gastronomical phrase '*saturalanx*', which is a dish stuffed with unidentified ingredient. This latter hints directly at the variety and complexity of satire and fully indicates the character of the genre. Satire occurs in multiple types of literature such as verse compositions, prose essays, and encompasses modes of expressions since it is intensively used in visual arts and performances. Moreover, the main employment of the word satire revolves around what Alvin Kernan (1973) explained as "... the general term for any kind of writing which attacks, directly or indirectly, something which is hated or feared" (Cited in Ugolini, 2016, para. 3). Accordingly, the satirist is expected to be the voice of truth in a world where words are only used to falsify the occurring reality. His devotion in carefully choosing the words, as to genuinely

represent the errors of the society, often ends in an opposite and unacceptable image. Although Satire uses a tone of rage, disgust, and discontent in order to expose the subjects, it still holds an excessive sense of hope that promises better conditions in particular areas of life (Ugolini, 2016).

Satire as a form of literature and a literary device, deals with a journey towards a world that is not necessarily meaningful, but less chaotic and absurd. It strives to achieve positive reforms by shedding light at the ‘good’ and the ‘moral’, in order to bring back all the eccentrics into the right path. The satirist regards the world from an optimistic perspective; however, he is persuaded about the society being ridiculously calamitous. As a result, he unconsciously creates a standard in his mind that later becomes his ultimate target for which his satirist literature is written. Members of the targeted audience, in best scenarios, feel greatly entertained but deeply insulted by the idea that satire is attempting to represent. The reader must undergo a dissatisfying atmosphere while reading, and simultaneously realize that the satirist actually provided him with alternative suggestions so as to lead him near a cured environment (Tyler, 1974).

1.8. Science Fiction

In the 1920s, the popular fiction magazines attempted to construct a stable name in order to build a stable readership for a genre that involved both science and fiction. Hence, descriptions like “Different”, “off-trail”, “Pseudo-scientific” and “weird-scientific” were used in order to gather works determined by specific characteristics. In 1926, American writer Hugo Gernsback launched a pulp magazine⁶ that reprinted tales by H.G Wells and Edgar Allen Poe, where he used ‘Scientifiction’ to combine romance and scientific

⁶ Pulp Magazine: Cheap fiction magazines produced from 1896 till the 1950’s. The term ‘pulp’ refers to the cheap wood pulp paper used to print the magazine.

knowledge. Later, he coined the term ‘Science Fiction’ in his popular magazine *Science Wonder Stories* in 1929 (Luckhurst, 2005).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines science fiction as “Imaginative fiction based on postulated scientific discoveries or spectacular environmental changes, frequently set in the future or on other planets and involving space or time travel” (Cited in Masaqli & Masalha, 2018, p. 129). As opposed to fictional forms that deal with human-like characters and realistic modes, science fiction is all about the ‘Fantastic’, which is concerned with provoking a hesitation upon whether the supernatural events do have a rational explanation or not. ‘Postulated scientific discoveries’ refer to unrealistic inventions that were mentioned in science fiction works. For instance, in Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1872), ‘Nautilus’ the first prototype of the modern submarine was mentioned and described for the very first time. Moreover, the aspects of ‘spectacular environmental changes’ are quite occurring in this genre, as most science fiction works deal with bizarre people put in a futuristic setting or on other planets. Ergo, science fiction draws the world as an exotic place, and makes the reader experience the otherness of the created lands; the one he never truly experienced (Zirange, 2002).

Literary critic and theorist Robert Scholes defined science fiction as: “...any fiction that offers us a world clearly and radically discontinuous from the one we know, yet returns to confront that known world in some cognitive way” (Cited in Brooke-Rose, 1981, p. 81). Thus, science fiction signifies a genre of literature that is entirely distinct from realism, by predicting events that are impossible to occur in the current real world. Howbeit, all created phenomena must be given a sense of rationality, as readers must instinctively assume that those events are theoretically achievable under the laws of physics. Accordingly, elements like spaceships, time travel, biological robots and life on

other planets quite support Scholes' perspective, since the current scientific progress already brought those inventions to the actual reality (Hastings, 2011).

Science fiction roots date back to centuries before it became dominant in literature, owing to writers from antiquity who produced numerous literary works that appear to share similar characteristics involved in the contemporary genre. A science fiction discusses the encounter of "The other", and deals with the portrait of exotic distinctions, it is then appropriate to consider traveller tales as one fundamental origin. The exaggeration in portraying the unfamiliarity of foreign countries or cultures in traveller tales is quite similar to the initial concept of science fiction, where writers describe the world as a complete unusual and a strange place. Additionally, Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818) is considered to be the founding text of Science Fiction, for it nuances most science fiction features. Brian Aldiss claimed that he was never able to name an iconic text earlier than *Frankenstein* that includes most feature that genuinely marked science fiction as a genre (Luckhurst, 2005; Freedman, 2002)

Science fiction came to the surface of literature mostly in the 1940's and the 1950s, when John W. Campbell joined the editorial staff of the pulp magazine *Astounding Stories* in 1937, which eventually became the fulcrum of science fiction. Campbell, through his creative products, disseminated ideas that shaped what science fiction ought to be. The emergence of the Golden Age also owes to the seniority of the magazine phenomenon itself; it had entered its teens since the first pulp magazine was published in 1926. As a result, a generation of passionate readers, who had their intellectual and emotional lives affected by the insights of previous magazine writers, developed an interest in writing as well. The Golden age of science fiction valorised stories about heroes undertaking adventures, where they counter problems in a space opera or in futuristic settings, where they eventually manage to find a solution. Moreover, writers minded to upgrade the quality

of their writing, they focused on providing maturity, complexity and quality, which built a fandom that, unanimously, described the genre as the Golden Age of science fiction (Roberts, 2016; Canvan & Link, 2018).

1.9. Absurdist Science Fiction

Science fiction affords a world that is equipped with sufficient context to execute the key elements of any philosophical issue. Foremost, according to Camus (2005), a novel is basically nothing but a philosophy being expressed through images, by philosophers who chose to write in pictures rather than arguments (Cited in Tubali, 2020, p 7). Thus, science fiction works are solely a medium to pursue questions that are centered over philosophies concerned with the nature of human existence. This latter is achieved through the encounter of the ‘other’ i.e., the non-humans of science fiction, since in the field of philosophy, nothing can be defined unless being compared to its ‘other’. As humans do not possess any self-reflective creature around them, that would hold the mirror for them to see their own image, aliens and monsters allow philosophers and writers to make a comparison and be able to define what is like to be a human, thus, to exist. Additionally, science fiction frequently tackles situations when humans are threatened by the non-humans, in order to re-evaluate the real human values and instincts, and make the reader reflect over the purpose of his existence (Tubali, 2020).

Science fiction thrived for multiple decades, as writers abided to unleash their creativity in producing new futuristic concepts and describing a world that continued to embrace science. However, a futility began to be felt when writers neglected the exploration of issues concerned with the society, and only restricted themselves to the preconception of the earlier pulp magazines. Consequently, JG Ballard called for shift and extended the genre’s subject matter to psychology, which eventually led to the emergence

of the New Wave of science fiction. Ballard advocated the irrelevance of science fiction elements such as robots, spaceships, and aliens; instead, he invited writers to put much emphasis on 'soft science' meaning philosophy and sociology. Similarly, 'inner' and 'outer' space have been discussed by Ballard, he believed that writers better turn their concerns toward the 'inner' space, for the mind exploration is way more important than the space travel depicted in science fiction (Steble, 2011; Sarkar, 2018).

Ballard, in his book *A User's Guide to the Millennium* (1997) argued "The biggest development of the intermediate future will take place, not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth, and its inner space, not outer, that needs to be explored" (p. 216). His main concern was that the human mind is the real technological apparatuses that science fiction ought to investigate, and that the 'outer space' could only be of a utility, if it mirrors 'the inner space'. Ballard and writers like him, engaged into creating darker worlds, emphasizing personal phenomena and psychological effects in their vision of the future. They deemed science fiction genre as apt for such subject matters, owing to the feasibility to imagine new worlds through the use of exotic elements, which paved the way for a limitless horizon of themes and representations. Ballard's manifesto turned him into the champion of The New Wave (Groppo, 2009).

John Barth, an absurdist science fiction genre pioneer, particularly aimed at creating a metaphorical world that represents the reality which the universe unveils, i.e., meaninglessness. During the period Barth wrote, the absurdist thinking was at its peak; this only allowed him to adopt a technique that goes under the term 'burlesque'. This latter gave him a literary territory where he could convert absurd life in the most valid manner. Barth suggested the meaninglessness of life through bringing ridiculousness into the surface of his works; he distorted and exaggerated in describing events and characters. He, furthermore, used the language of burlesque by employing meaningless puns, empty

words, lexical distortion, exaggeration, disordered details, and jokes. Assigning names, moreover, marked the absurdity of Barth's writings, in his novel *Giles Goat-boy* (1966), there is a character named Eirkopf (egg-head), and another one named Kekataughtassapooekskumoughmass in the *Sot Weed Factor* (1960). The character's names used by Barth are symbolic, if not they are obviously unrealistic, only to reflect the absurdist vision about humans' being as illusive and incomprehensible as the real world they live in. Burlesquing, thus, allows the reader to experience abnormal happenings and laugh about them, knowing that if they treat them realistically, it would be horrible (Hyles, 1989).

1.10. Conclusion

A world that embraces chaos, irrationality, and total randomness; absurdism is then, a philosophy manifesting the meaninglessness of this universe and the futility of human existence. It is out of certainty that, dodging the absurd is quite the impossible mission, as humans seem to fail in relating meaning to their lives. Hence, as Camus suggests, meeting the absurd is a must; however, knowing how to deal with it is the key to a meaningful mortality. To create meaning out of meaninglessness is what Camus aspire humans to succeed in; as he illustrates the step of moving beyond the absurd in order to lead life where existing can matter.

Literature being an entire parallel world of whatever philosophy introduces to the real human life, embraced absurdism, and revamped the literary world of the 1940s and 1960s. Theatre alongside the existing literary forms, were altered by being introduced to new characteristics into the plot; characters, themes, and language. The new touches were of a massive significance and resulted in enchanting a remarkable audience. Humour, as well, cannot be easily plucked out of this chaotically structured equation. The theatre of the

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absurd found it a must to include humour and comedy, as it made it lighter for the audience to consume absurdism. Later, the science fiction genre later became home to multiple writers who felt at ease in drawing images that satisfy their own desire in writing absurdity.

Chapter Two: An Absurdist Reading of *Rick and Morty*

Chapter Two: An Absurdist Reading of *Rick and Morty*

Outline

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2.2. Adult Animation

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2.7. Conclusion

2.1. Introduction

Diving through the multiverse, crazy inventions, creating a fusion between reality and metaphysics, and diverging through multiple dimensions is the mix that *Rick and Morty* offers. *Rick and Morty* (2013) is a sitcom that takes the audience into a whole new world of adventures, as the main characters hop from a universe to another trying life lishes while they last. Nonetheless, digging deeper through the many layers of this sitcom unveils a whole new façade. It not only provides a scope of the absurdities of the science fiction universe; it additionally holds a more of a philosophical flavour, which conveys other meanings that could be depicted throughout the show. Absurdism as a philosophy along with the many characteristics of the theatre of the absurd, are portrayed all along the episodes of *Rick and Morty*. Through the consumption of the show, it would be discovered that one of the most important points that *Rick and Morty* wants to convey is the meaninglessness of this life, along with futility of the human existence. For that reason, the sitcom is built up upon comedy and more specifically black humour, for it to be light as the messages conveyed are quite heavy for human digestion.

2.2. Adult Animation

Adult animation or mature animation refers to animated visual content targeted for adults and adolescents, mainly created to forge a new entertainment dimension for grownups who spent most of their childhood watching traditional animation oriented for kids. Ergo, adult animation is described to be the medium through which the intersection between the colourful childhood and the baleful reality of adulthood is assembled. The genre provides a visual environment furnished with adult's common personal issues, where they can go through a self-reflective journey, while watching the characters struggle within the explored narratives. Adult animation additionally, embraces a comedic perspective in

portraying the life of adulthood, offering an outlet for grownups to take rest from reality, and simultaneously reflect on it since it contains “cheeky, if at times crass, humour that has no limits—bouncing between funny and offensive—and neatly packed into 22-minute segments” (Habib, 2020). The use of sitcom format alongside the elements of drama proposes multiple labels for shows belonging to the genre such as ‘dramedy’, ‘Dark comedy’ and ‘Sadcom’ (Marek, 2018).

Adult animation television began to receive much interest as efforts were made in arranging different types of audiences according to their appropriate interest and content. It is only then, when media creators felt at ease while producing animations with the integration of adult comedy, knowing that it will be aired on prime time during evenings away from children animated content that airs on weekend mornings. The combination of prime-time and animated shows established a faithful audience that included adults who felt the nostalgia of animated content as to take a break from the exhausting reality. The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed a light popularity of adult animation, as it continued to fade away with the last episode of *The Flintstones* airing in 1966. It was until the 1990s when shows like *The Simpsons* (1990) and *Family Guy* (1999) brought back the genre to the trending fashion, when millions of spectators took pleasure in experiencing different phenomena to which they could both laugh at and relate (Mittel, 2004).

2.3. *Rick and Morty* the Sitcom

On December 2nd, 2013, the American adult animated science fiction series *Rick and Morty* aired on Cartoon Network’s night time programming Adult Swim for the very first time. The series also considered to be a sitcom, consists of five seasons gathering ten to eleven twenty-two minutes episodes. The series was created by Dan Harmon and Justin Roiland after being inspired by the *Back to the Future* parody ‘*The Real Animated*

Adventures of Doc and Mharti'. The series imposed its success over the past years in the world of Adult Animation, as fans admitted its originality, creativity, and unique humour. The show's immense popularity resulted in holding 94% (2019) approval rating on an American review-aggregation website named Rotten Tomatoes for films and series, as well as winning multiple awards for different categories such as: Critics' Choice Television Awards for best Animated series Category 2018, Prime Time Emmy Awards for Outstanding Animated Series category 2018 and 2020, and American Cinema Editors Awards for Best Edited Animation category 2021.

Rick and Morty is far from being only just a random normal sitcom; it is home to many philosophies that are displayed all along the episodes of the show. Philosophies that have changed in a way how the world works today and impacted the human way of living. One of the main philosophies that are significantly portrayed in *Rick and Morty* are absurdism, existentialism, and nihilism. As all the three of them are entangled and co-related into the making of the whole storyline. Comedy additionally, is a highly used aspect in the show, as black humour carries it from the beginning to its end. This, nevertheless, does not spare *Rick and Morty* from all the cosmic horror and the absurdity science fiction often includes. The Science fiction nature of the show allows it to provide a series of unrealistic dimensions and planets. This enables the analysis of the show to go through a whole other level, and many truths would be unveiled as they were hidden under the many layers the show *Rick and Morty* holds.

Rick and Morty, the genius scientist and his gullible, very sensitive grandson, dive through the infinite number of dimensions existing in this vast universe. Rick, also known as the cleverest man ever to be alive, a crazy, alcoholic, fairly depressed and sometimes abusive scientist, is joined by his sidekick grandson to go to these series of intergalactical adventures. Through these adventures, both of them are in favour to experience all kind of

random, yet very absurd events, and even risk to lose their lives at times. It all begins when Rick Sanchez goes back to his daughter Beth after many years of separation. Beth, however, was able to build a life; she got married to Jerry Smith, a simple yet full of insecurities human being, with a primitive mindset and a weak personality. Beth and Jerry end up having two teenage kids, summer, and the star of the show Morty. Now, this is basically a very superficial reading of this sitcom, as it is quite impossible to resume *Rick and Morty* in just a few lines; digging deep through it, will unravel many things that can be missed if not taking the scrutinising mission at a profound level.

Rick goes back to his daughter and her little family, and launches a series of multidimensional adventures with his grandson Morty, where they roam around the cosmos, hopping from one planet to another. This is at first what the spectators grasp as they watch the first episodes of the show. The grotesque reality, however, is exposed when the audience find out the real reason Rick is going through all those adventures. According to the show, there are infinite numbers of realities, along with infinite versions of human beings, meaning there is an infinite number of Ricks and Mortys, along with all his family. Rick's C-137 (meaning from planet earth) attempt to invent the portal gun causes the death of both his wife and daughter by a Rick from another dimension. The ultimate shock leads Rick to fall into great depression, and his grief builds this desire of vengeance and spite inside of him against all the Ricks that exist in the universe. Hence, Rick starts using his portal gun, travelling from one dimension to another, trying to find the real Rick who killed his wife and daughter. His ceaseless quest, nonetheless, is not ended with victory, as he never finds out the one who actually did it.

During the show, it is explained that Beth is not Rick's C-137 real daughter, she is nevertheless, one of the infinite versions of his daughter Beth that already that died. This itself reveals the real reason Rick chose Morty to be his sidekick. Rick C-137, after killing

a great amount of other Ricks, becomes wanted by the galactical federation, and his super intelligent waves are easy to be detected. The only way to cover it up is the use of a Morty, as his extremely low intelligent waves would camouflage Rick's waves to be captured. This explains the existence of a citadel with infinite numbers of Mortys, where a huge amount of Mortys is daily created for the sole purpose to mask out for all the infinite number of Ricks that could ever exist.

2.4. Absurdism in *Rick and Morty*

If all humans aim at finding the core purpose of this life, then all they will end up with is a bundle of despair chaining them from every existing corner. For as long as humans existed, their one and only pursuit is to have a goal; a defining meaning of their being. Nonetheless, their quest has never been as successful as they ever desired. This would solely be explained through the philosophy of absurdism. Absurdism in its crux, denies any meaning related to life, and claims the futility of human existence. It is thus, impossible to reach meaning and the mere idea of hoping and aspiring for meaningfulness is basically a suicidal thought. Camus, being the one who brought this philosophy to light, insisted on the meaninglessness of life. From his perspective, the whole universe is known of its absurdity, and to meet the absurd is inescapable. Yet, acquainting the absurd may render the humans weak, though, it must not be a reason to relinquish to life's despairs, and humans ought to move beyond the absurd. Creating meaning out of meaninglessness is what Camus always attempted to illustrate, as it is the humans' responsibility to create their own meaning.

Rick Sanchez, one of the main characters in the widely famous sitcom *Rick and Morty*, is the epitome of what absurdism has always manifested. Through the episodes, the paradoxical character of Rick is the best way to explain absurdism with all its facades. Not

only that, the show as a whole, with all its narrative plots and characters, provides an effective service that aims at carrying this philosophy with all its manifestations. In fact, the duo Rick and Morty are the ultimate harmony through the whole show, as Rick was able to mind shift his fourteen-year-old grandson into the whole manifesto of a meaningless life. The latter is profoundly explored through their behaviours, conversations, and their way of being in general. Their adventures together are a very important addition to the mix since it mirrors the way both Rick and Morty absorb life.

2.4.1. Meaninglessness

Meaninglessness is carried out throughout the whole sitcom, as it seems to be the aim of both creators of the show Dan Harmon and Justin Roiland, to settle the idea of how absurdly deployed of meaning life could ever be. The universe is never at the service of humans' desires, neither humans are of that significance. It is this exact fact that the human race was not able to gallop, to cope with or to understand. It highlights their vulnerability and their utter helplessness, as the world continues to occur with total indifference. Thus, it is in chaos and absolute incongruousness that the basis of life is built.

Rick Sanchez, mostly known by Rick C-137, is considered as the most genius human to ever exist in all the dimensions and realities the universe has to offer. His extreme cleverness would only allow him to distinguish the meaninglessness of life, and how ineffective it is for humans to exist. This heavy idea itself made Rick devote most of his time to science and his multidimensional, absurd adventures, where he is no longer attached to earthly affairs, and reality is a far behind thought. Nonetheless, this is not the only reason that made Rick to be aware of the meaninglessness of life; the true and the most focal one is that, Rick met the absurd. He had the misfortunate event of losing both his wife and daughter because of one of his most significant inventions, his portal gun. The

way Rick encountered the absurd is by far the cruellest way of doing so. The blame, the feeling of guilt, and all this made Rick grow an unimaginable amount of pain inside of him. This all and the universe was in complete silence, nothing changed, nothing was ever to change the reality of his tragic events, not even his attempt of vengeance. Thus, everything is worthless to Rick.

The show, moreover, addresses the idea of the pointlessness of human existence in almost every single episode. It illustrates how vast the cosmos is and how humans are just a speck of dust roaming in one of its galaxies. The individual human life is then pathetic and worthless in comparison to all the greatness the universe holds. Through Jerry and Rick, *Rick and Morty* (2013), elucidates how humans often respond to the insignificance of human existence. Jerry Smith, or better known as Beth's husband, is a failing, unemployed, brainless, empty headed human being and worse than that, even his own wife seems to hate him. More than that, Jerry is totally oblivious of the meaninglessness of life. He leads a miserable life truly, however, his simple-minded character allows him to enjoy life, and ignore how meaningless life could ever be. He most of the times, chants and roots for life's preciousness as he once claimed, "life is effort and I'll stop when I'll die" (Harmon & Roiland, 2014, 4:30).

Rick in short, is the most complex, paradoxical character in the whole show. His understanding of life meaninglessness leads him automatically to suffer from an existential crisis; he happens to freeze all his feelings and emotions, and becomes eventually dead inside. Rick is a man living in great pain, even the catch phrase he chants so joyfully during the show "WubbaLubba Dub Dub", it turns out that it translates to "I'm in great pain, please help me!". Ergo, he decides to omit any sort of emotional attachment or to believe in anything beside his brain and genius, he even does not tie his life to any higher purpose to reach. Even his relationship with his own grandson Morty, he explains that

Morty's primitive brainwaves happen to cancel Rick's super genius ones. He scientifically explains why he always needs Morty by his side; to help him get away from the Galactical Federation, excluding any possible affection towards his grandson. Rick even goes far one time, and promises his grandchildren that he can scientifically prove to them that they are both 'pieces of shit'; then he proceeds to explain it on a white board.

At times, being mastermind is both a blessing and a curse, Rick's case is not so different. Being extremely clever, sure allowed Rick to realise the worthlessness of this life, yet, the truth sometimes can be a bitter pill to swallow. Rick definitely had his own ways to deal with the abhorrences the universe can provide, he had his science, the multiverse; though that did not really make up for feeling any less miserable. In episode nine, season three, entitled *The ABCs of Beth*, Beth asks her father Rick "Am I evil?" to which he responds, "Worse. You're smart! When you know nothing matters, the universe is yours. And I've never met a universe that was into it" he continues: "Smart people get a chance to climb on top, take reality for a ride, but it'll never stop trying to throw you, and eventually, it will" (McMahon, 2017, 17:21). Rick is just explaining that, being a human with an infinite amount of intelligence, will not save anybody from being crushed by the harsh reality, and the universe is in perpetual and utter disinterest.

Rick's genius, nonetheless, allows him to travel to all the infinite possible realities that exist. In one of the episodes of season one, Rick faces Morty: "what about the reality where Hitler cured cancer? The answer is: don't think about it!" (Roiland, 2014, 18:31), meaning it does not even matter, there is always going to be another reality, and all realities are meaningless anyway. Similarly in the same episode, which is episode six of season one named "*Rick Potion #9*", Rick and Morty after escaping the reality in which

everybody turns into Cronenberg⁷ creatures, to another reality where both Rick and Morty were found dead in the garage due to an explosion. Morty starts having a mental breakdown, and Rick tries to calm his grandson down by reducing the cataclysmic event that just happened into a mere “fine” thing, “there’s an infinite number of realities, Morty” (Roiland, 2014, 18:03). Rick finds it a normal thing to replace the dead version of himself and Morty in another reality just because it felt convenient; he even invites his grandson to bury their cadavers, therefore, everyone believes it is the Rick and Morty of that reality. This explains the extent of Rick’s awareness of humans’ weaknesses and rather insignificant existence.

In *Rixty Minutes*, the eighth episode of season one, *Rick and Morty* explains mainly the entire purpose of the show in one of Morty’s famous lines. It happens that summer, Rick’s teenage granddaughter, realises the meaninglessness and the triviality of her existence. Summer was perplexed with the shocking news of her being an unwanted child, and that if her parents were in a reality where they get to achieve their dreams she would not even be born. This came as a heavy weight for Summer, she felt as though her life is of no matter, and she even decides to leave the house. Nonetheless, Morty as a way to comfort his sister, shows her his grave in back yard, and recounts to her how he had to bury his own body after a reality where he and Rick destroyed the whole world, thus, they had to escape to another reality. Then Morty proceeds to say one of his famous lines: “Nobody exists on purpose. Nobody belongs anywhere. Everybody is going to die. Come watch TV” (Kauffman & Roiland, 2014, 18:05). It shows how small life could ever be, the fact that it could crumble at any moment, and nothing could ever help to fix it.

⁷Created originally by the Canadian horror film director David Cronenberg. They are hideous, multitailed and mutated creatures that exist in the multiverse.

Morty here, seems well aware of the absurd too, of how meaningless life is, caring way too much about life and giving it more than it deserves, will not help making it any less to be more valuable. Just like Camus insists on moving beyond the absurd, moving beyond the meaninglessness of life and accepting it. Morty is doing basically the same, he is inviting his sister to embrace the futility of life, and its absurdity; to be aware of the randomness of this universe and its utter silence to humans' woes. It would not matter if Summer packed her bag and decides to move out of her parent's house, it would not change anything in the world, nor make the world any less perplex. For this reason, Morty suggests for his sister to come watch TV, as simple as that, no need to further complicate things as they are already complicated.

Episode nine of season one, named *Something Ricked This Way Comes*, holds in its folds one of the show's most famous scenes. Rick the genius scientist invents a small robot. The robot after completing the task he was asked to perform, proceeds to raise a very significant question: "What is my purpose?" Rick then answered him carelessly; "You pass butter". The robot was drenched in frustration, as he realised the frivolity of his existence. He is just a pointless little invention with a mundane task. The robot then utters with disappointment: "oh, my god", to which Rick cynically answers: "Yeah, welcome to the club, pal" (0:42). Both Rick's life i.e., all human life, is as worthless as that robot's life. Rick and the robot sulk in the dismal condition of their existence, and are condemned to live a fruitless life. This scene of the show serves as the perfect example of human's ultimate exasperation as they realise the aim of their existence, is pointless.

2.4.2. Camus' Approach

It is impossible to speak of absurdism and not bring Camus to the surface, as he, the Algerian philosopher, built the ground and pillars to this philosophy. Through many of his

works, such as *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *Caligula*, and *The Stranger*, Camus was able to decipher the puzzling notions of this philosophy. Furthermore, he additionally, set the principals of absurdism and through his own perception he was able to give a rather fresh façade to absurdism and bring it to light, after it was buried under the dust of traditional philosophy.

There is no doubt that for Camus, life holds not a single speck of meaning, and the universe is eternally deaf to the humans' desires, suffering, and to exist is most of the time unbearable. For this sole reason, humans fall in the trap of desperation, as they discover the unimportance of their existence. Thus, to be alive, is yet a hard task to surmount, to live everyday knowing that life is worthless. This particular fact, engenders a sort of pain that is injected in the human race for as long as they shall exist.

Rick and Morty (2013) is by far, one of the most adequate sitcoms that epitomise Camus' principles throughout the whole show. The Meeseeks are alien creatures presented in the fifth episode of season one. They happen to live in a box and are only allowed to come out of it when they have an objective to achieve, as soon as they do, they fade away into thin air and basically stop existing. Jerry, asked Mr. Meeseeks to help him take off two strokes out of his golf game. The conundrum occurs when Jerry's Meeseeks fail to help him achieve his goal. Regardless, the situation starts to get more chaotic when every Meeseeks calls another Meeseeks to help Jerry with his golf stroke, and things get more entangled when they were all unsuccessful in helping him. Thus, they become all desperate, enraged and slowly resentful against Jerry. They try to kill each other at first in the most disturbing way; nonetheless, they decide to eventually take the life out of Jerry. At one point one of the Meeseeks bursts into Jerry's face and utters

Meeseeks are not into this world fumbling for meaning, Jerry. We are created to serve a singular purpose for which we will go to any length to fulfil! Existence is pain to a Meeseeks Jerry. We will do anything to alleviate that (Ridley, 2014, 16:49).

Same as humans, the Meeseeks cannot bear the idea of not having a purpose to achieve or failing what they think is the aim of their existence, and it becomes rather painful to exist. Therefore, they slowly become self-destructive, chaotic and sometimes even suicidal.

Camus asserts on the fact that humans are all the time looking for certainty, thus they often turn to religion in aim at finding the truth, or what Camus calls the leap of faith. The latter, for Camus is something unfathomable; as he believes no human is capable of understanding beyond the capacity of what the brain can retain. The leap of faith is that beam of hope that keeps humans waiting for a better tomorrow, or to clear their vision and make the truth closer to be obtained. On the contrary, Camus finds that people taking the leap of faith are weak, since they are unable to accept the reality of things, the meaninglessness of life, and irrationality of the universe. The leap of faith gives people hope, and hope is a philosophical suicide for Camus. Rick similar to Camus, finds things like hope, love and marriage are what hinders people from achieving purpose. As he once advised Morty

Listen Morty, I hate to break it to you, but what people call “love” is just a chemical reaction that compels animals to breed. It hits hard, Morty, then it slowly fades, leaving you stranded in a failing marriage. I did it. Your parents are gonna do it. Break the cycle, Morty. Rise above. Focus on science (Roiland, 2014, 02:16) .

Camus in one of his famous books, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955) addresses what he insists to label the most “serious philosophical problem” (Camus, 1955, p. 3), and that is suicide. The way Camus bares life from any inherent meaning, and the fact that the universe remains silent to humans’ despairs makes one wonder, if continuing to live has any matter in the first place. The human existence in itself is futile, and accepting that life is pointless as a whole is indeed a heavy burden. Anyone who is aware of all the pain life could offer due to its meaninglessness, would be as fragile as a sandcastle, easily destroyed by any outer surrounding facture. The human is easy to collapse too. Moreover, if life is meaningless, then why care at all, why would anyone bother to live if everything surrounding them is worthless, even their being is emptied of any value. It is understandable, then, if somebody decides to end their life.

Rick as a man who fathomed how meaningless life could ever be, and who simultaneously suffers from an existential crisis, is totally careless about his own life. His life has no merit to him, as he ceaselessly puts himself in very dangerous situations that could eventually cost him his own life. Nevertheless, Rick is soaked in meaninglessness enough that, he keeps perpetually risking his life. In one episode however, Rick attempts to end his own life, he was deeply emotionally damaged that, even his stoic persona was not enough to prevent him from ending his own life. The only thing that hindered his death, ironically, is him being extremely wasted; he fainted before he successfully caused his own death. This only explains that no one is safe from getting wrecked by life itself, even the genius Rick, as he desperately tries to vaporise the life out of him.

Paradoxically, however, Camus insists that suicide is never the answer. Giving up one’s life is just an act of cowardness towards both life and death. Camus elucidated that death is an inescapable path, the only certain fate that all humanity shall face. It is then, most favourable to live the amount of time each person is condemned to live.

Understanding and realising life's meaninglessness does not give the free pass to anybody to end their own life, just as he described Sisyphus, the man who had to eternally roll a boulder up the hill just watch it perpetually fall back again; Camus here, figuratively described the human condition. Humans after meeting the absurd and becoming quite acquainted with the futility of existence, their days have rather a monotonous tone. Sisyphus could have chosen to end his life, as his absurd situation was agonising enough to bear the idea in his mind about him killing himself. On the contrary, Sisyphus decided to accept life's absurdness and found relish in his labour, as it is the only way to start him free from all the stings the pointlessness of life may have chained him with. Sisyphus decided to find meaning in meaninglessness.

Just like Sisyphus, Rick decided not to chase the meaning of life and enjoy as it lasts. Rick is obviously aware of the meaninglessness life offers, therefore, he tries to find meaning in the small things, like watching TV with Morty for example. Rick as paradoxical as Camus, is aware of how unworthy life is, nevertheless, still he chooses to live it. It is true, and as it is portrayed throughout the whole show, Rick's awareness of the meaninglessness of existence burdens and pains him enough, that his own solace sometimes is his booze. Simultaneously, Rick seems to find his own way to enjoy life and extract meaning from a meaningless life.

Rick's genius helps him a great deal in grasping whatever is left of meaning to his life, as science plays a great part of his life. Though science itself does not provide any meaning, it helps Rick with his existential crisis. Science allows Rick to dive into the infinite dimensions and realities that exist. It helps him travel with his grandchildren and have crazy fun adventures around the galaxies, discovering new planets and experiencing the mysteries of the vast space. This is what pumps meaning to Rick's life. Moreover, and although Rick acts as if family and grandchildren do not mean anything to him, Rick

actually loves his family and grandkids profoundly as it is displayed in the show. At the end of season two, Rick decides to sacrifice his own self and save his family, as he turned himself to the authorities for the war crime he committed, hence, his family is given a better life and are no longer trapped in a tiny planet.

Additionally, *Ricksy business*, an episode in which Rick freezes time for six months to have the most of fun with his grandkids. To help his grandkids clean the house before their parents arrive, Rick had the brightest idea of freezing time. During that period of time, as Rick was helping Summer and Morty with the cleaning, the trio ends up spending most of their time having fun and goofing around as everything was frozen around them. More than that, at the end of the episode when Morty asks Rick why he no longer says his catchphrase “WubbaLubba Dub Dub”, Rick responds: “don’t need to. I have a new catchphrase” which is “I love my grandkids” (Ridley & Kauffman, 2014, 20:44). This clearly explains how much Rick enjoys spending time with Summer and Morty, and how much joy it brings to his life. The love he has for his grandkids is what makes his life more flavourful and adds a sprinkle of meaning to his abhorrent existence.

In another episode, Rick sacrifices his own life to save Morty. It is true, Rick winds up safe and sound, nonetheless, it shows just how far Rick would go in order to keep Morty alive. His relationship with Morty is meaningful enough to him, that he would not care about any particular aim, not even his own existence. This explains that inside that thick skinned man, Rick cares about his family the most, and would do anything to help them. As a man who grasped the meaninglessness of life, he finds meaning in absolutely nothing, in spite of that, Rick is the happiest when he is with his family, or when he is diving the galaxies with Summer and Morty. Rick, as Camus insisted, does not bother to search for meaning, or a purpose, he just lives through life and tries to make the best out of it.

2.5. From Comedy to Black Humour

Rick and Morty (2013) is a show that is by no means free of comedy and humour, as in every single episode, most events are centred on specific bitter happenings, yet, it manages to make the audience burst into laughter. In fact, there is a fading line between the actual intention to insert funny jokes, and the real concealed messages behind them. The gap provokes a sense of reflection as to whether members of audience should laugh or think about their pitiful state of life. Considering the philosophical perspective adopted in *Rick and Morty*, which comprehends life as devoid of meaning, the comedic feature in the show hints directly at the paramount literary medium that embraced the philosophy of absurdism called 'Theatre of the Absurd'. In the sitcom, there is a significant combination of both tragedies that occur within the plot, and a comic atmosphere resulted by either humorous dialogues or absurd actions taken by the characters.

Rick and Morty, in the first place, was embraced by a fandom who finds pleasure in laughing rather than feeling amusingly terrified or excited by horror or action series. Writers of the show successfully produced hilarious scripts, which dealt with several topics from different spheres of life. The comic lines spoke to the audience, as it necessarily triggered a sentient chord that is considered with their own personal matters. The characterization alone contributes in creating a comedic atmosphere, since each character in *Rick and Morty* is given specific traits that distinguish him, and turn him into a droll addition to the show. The central characters of the series including Rick, Morty, Beth, Jerry and Summer are all equally ridiculous and transparent. Their behaviour is somehow random as they continuously shame one another, mock each other's imperfections and spontaneously share their opinions that are most of the time unpopular within the Sanchez family.

In season one episode six, Rick's unstable relationship with his daughter's husband is comically rendered. It comes clear when Jerry makes a comment about not liking the fact that Rick throws glowing rocks in the kitchen trash. Rick then says, "Well, I don't like your unemployed genes in my grandchildren, Jerry. But life is made of little concessions" (McMahan, 2015, 00:30). Similarly, the script writers put the concept of Rick believing that his two grand kids are not of very intelligent mindsets as he literally tried to prove it mathematically.

Now listen, I know the two of you are very different from each other in a lot of ways, but you have to understand that as far as Grampa's concerned, you're both pieces of shit. Yeah, I can prove it mathematically. Actually, let me grab my whiteboard. This has been a long time coming anyway (Harmon & Roiland, 2015, 07:30).

The characters usually participate in controversial arguments related to highly significant topics. Rick specifically, with his unique perspective, often disagrees with the most popular opinions. He shares what he thinks whenever he has the chance to, without ever minding what others would think of him. The way he expresses himself is quite droll, and his statements are laughable as much as they are true and even convincing at times. Sitting at the breakfast table, during a conversation with Jerry, Rick voiced his disapproval of the educational system in the most honest and witty way. He thought that school is

... a waste of time. Bunch of people runnin' around bumpin' into each other, got a guy up front says "2 + 2," and the people in the back say, "4." Then the bell rings and they give you a carton of milk and a piece of paper that says you can go take a dump or somethin'. I mean, it's not a place for smart people, Jerry. I know that's not a

popular opinion, but that's my two cents on the issue (Harmon & Roiland, 2013, 03:48).

Every single episode of *Rick and Morty* makes the audience laugh, as the script is by no means free of humorous lines. However, the show as expected by its loyal audience, takes some turns where the jokes become so much more than just laughable words put together. Belonging to the world of the absurd, the series adopts one of the crucial features that thrived in the literature of the absurd, which is black humour. This type of humour makes *Rick and Morty* one of its kind, due to its excessive use of deep, unfunny, and offensive matters in specific moments. Black humour, thus, helped the writers to express multiple philosophical issues by inserting them under statements that provoke an unpleasant laughter. Subjects like life, death, and the futility of existing are strongly portrayed under the umbrella concept of black humour.

Noticing the meaninglessness of the world, would immediately suggest the idea of ending one's own life as a solution. Although, not necessarily committing suicide, some people find themselves eagerly waiting for death to rescue them from such torture. They no longer have the urge to look for meaning; however, they accept the futility of their existence while peacefully waiting for their lives to come to an end. In the second episode of the fourth season, entitled *The Old Man and the Seat*, a character named Tony is introduced as a man who is depressed and miserable. Tony lost his wife due to cancer, and from that moment, he became extremely unenthusiastic about life. The producers of the show, thus, inserted this problematic in form of a joke, which the audience could not just carelessly pass by.

As absurd as it sounds, Rick decided to kill Tony because he used his personal toilet, and when he was about to do so, he asked him "where do you want to die?" Tony

with no hesitation, turned to his assistant and asked “Suzan, is conference room three available?” (Waldron, 2019, 11:20). Tony’s answer provokes an instant reaction of laughter, as his reply is much unexpected, yet, if analysed from a different perspective, it is nothing but a dark representation of his own psychological state. Therefore, the use of black humour does not only support the representation of such serious matters, but it is more of a tool that makes the audience reflect on themselves, as the joke results in discomfort rather than pleasant laughter.

In *Rick and Morty*, black humour is also used to provide a further description of the main character Rick. As mentioned before, Rick is the most rational character in the series; he believes in science and refuses to be subjected to emotions. He thinks of Love as just “a chemical reaction that compels animals to breed” (Roiland, 2014, 02:16). Accordingly, he believes that marriage is suicidal and does not make sense. In the tenth episode of the second season entitled *The Wedding Squanchers* Rick stated, “weddings are basically funerals with a cake” (Kauffman, 2015, 01:02). Rick stands against marriage, for him, it is quite deadly to adopt feelings for another person in a universe that is often disappointing. The latter idea tackles a significant matter that concerns so many people who are uncertain about the purpose for which they exist, and therefore, do not take the risk to trap themselves into an uncertain contract that may lead them to feel even worse about themselves.

Writing absurdism relies on multiple literary techniques that guarantee a successful transmission of the absurd world. The use of comedy and black humour has proven its utility back in time when writers have just adopted the philosophy of absurdism in their writings. However, satire is a crucial technique, as it provides an entire way of writing that represents the occurring reality. One way to tackle the misfortunate state of life in any literary work, is to imitate it, but with a strong sense of mockery. The issue of the

meaninglessness of the world did not certainly occur on itself and hunted the human minds, it is rather undoubtful that there are limitless motivations for that to happen. *Rick and Morty*, thus, explores the issues that took part in positioning humans' perspective on the purpose for which they exist, as it presents an interesting form of satire beneath its comedic surface.

There are some people who are completely dependent of societal approval so as to feel satisfied with themselves. Jerry is the appropriate character that carries the satiric representation of every person belonging to a society that controls what people should do of their own lives. This issue has occurred since almost forever and everywhere in the real world. In the second episode of the third season, Jerry's familial status seems to go down hills, as his wife decided to end their marriage for several reasons, like him being unemployed, boring, a bad father, and an irresponsible human. Jerry initially struggles to find himself because he refuses to go beyond what the society suggest for him. Rick the honest person that he is, told his grandchildren while directly looking at Jerry's eyes "To live is to risk it all. Otherwise, you're just an inert chunk of randomly assembled molecules drifting wherever the universe blows you" (Becker, 2015, 00:33). This statement does not only show how careless Rick is about his existence, since he believes that life is so cheap that one can easily risk it, but it ironically suggests how people must ignore the society's limitations and judgments in order to earn some value for one's own life.

Rick and Morty's satire also takes its basis from the political issues that are firmly determining the condition of people's lives. It dealt with the gap that separates the people in power belonging to the upper class and the regular citizens belonging to the lower class. In the episode *Look Who's Purging Now*, Rick and Morty accompanied by Arthrisha, go through an adventure so as to get rid of the ruling people, who are responsible of the 'Purging Festival'. This latter is an annual event where people kill each other for

absolutely no reason, while the rich people get to enjoy a nice luxurious dinner away from all the crimes. A character belonging to the government even raised a toast to “Pitting people against each other for thousands of years” (Harmon et al, 2015, 17:12).

Following that, Rick entered the room where the dinner was hosted, claiming that he was not concerned because he came from another planet. However he voiced what Arthrisha was there for, he angrily said “...this girl is one of your poor people and I guess you guys felt like it was ok to subject her to inhuman conditions because there was no chance of it ever hurting you” (Harmon et al, 2015, 17:38). This whole plot ironically exposes the societies’ struggle to maintain peace within countries, through the use of unhuman characters. Just like *Animal Farm* (1945) where animals provide a powerful representation of the human nature. Political wars for instance, hardly ever touch the people of the government as they are protected and never involve themselves. The only victims are the citizens who initially have no opinion when it comes to such matters; they are only obliged to deal with fear and trauma, and even death.

2.6. Science Fiction as a Literary Medium of Absurdism

Rick and Morty (2013) takes its happenings in a supernatural world, where science has reached what the human brain in the real world is not even accustomed to take a chance to achieve. Every episode revolves around Rick’s adventures in universes that embraced an extreme scientific development, which is quite absurd and goes beyond the imagination of human beings. The creators of the show devoted much effort as to draw a unique science fiction atmosphere in order to express the philosophies tackled in the show. Although *Rick and Morty*’s fictional elements are all agreed to be unusual, creative and mind blowing; a hardcore fan would notice that the show is not about pleasing science fiction lovers with

aliens and robots. Instead, all the supernatural elements are there to carry plots and storylines that treat the philosophy of absurdism.

Rick is a mastermind whose only way of surviving in a meaningless universe, as he claims, is to convert his bright ideas into scientific inventions, and to keep himself busy away from the futility of life. The idea of him inventing a portal gun that permits him to travel between different realities and dimensions, results in an opening door for an infinite number of imaginary fictional settings and events. This allowed writers to convert their philosophical perspectives and merge it with the fiction displayed in the show. Science fiction genre in this case, represents a suitable literary approach for philosophers and fiction writers to feel flexible while producing absurd narratives. For this exact reason, *Rick and Morty* as a show that discusses existential crisis, only fits in the Science fiction genre. The use of fictitious characters and planets in *Rick and Morty* that are completely unrealistic and go beyond the human logic put the audience in an ambiance that is as absurd as their actual real life. The ridiculousness of the absurd fictional characteristics including the characterization, the settings, and Rick's weird yet wild inventions, assure a successful depiction of a universe that is believed to be ludicrous.

Science fiction is not just a genre that blows minds with impressive events that are impossible to take place in the real world, or stunning colourful images through which the plots are driven. It is rather home to philosophical matters that trigger the human's peacefulness. *Rick and Morty* retrieves its success from the outcome of what science fiction distinctively provides while writing. Unlike other realistic genres, science fiction uses the feature of including non-humans. This latter put in question the human values, which eventually provide an effective self-reflection. Rick and Morty are known for their unusual journeys to planets that look nothing like Earth, where they encounter creatures like Gazorpazorps, which threaten their own lives. Considering Rick's unstable

relationship with his family, and the fact that they represent almost nothing more than just biological relatives, he always finds himself fighting to protect them. Hence, it is only fair to admit the fruitful use of the encounter of otherness to point out a glimpse of meaning in one's life.

2.6.1. Cosmic Horror

Cosmic horror, also known as Lovecraftian horror, is a literary genre pioneered by H.P Lovecraft. The latter is an American author, who unknowingly created a whole genre that became widely famous in the twentieth century. Lovecraft led what could be described as a miserable life, in which he kept considering himself as an unsuccessful writer. Evidently, it can be considered as partially true, since he never knew how to manage a writing career, nor he was a good sport at taking criticism. This built up the bridge for publishers not to be on his side, for the Lovecraftian writings were of a special touch, uniquely manoeuvred, yet still highly peculiar for the audience of that time. Ergo, H.P Lovecraft ended up dying miserably at a very young age, and only was recognised and hailed after he passed away leaving behind an undiscovered treasure (Saijarami, 2002).

Though the term 'cosmic' may in many perspectives be the replacement of supernatural, the use of the word for Lovecraft goes further on a depth that is different from what is echoed by cosmic horror. As Lovecraft spoke of the literature of cosmic fear, he stressed on the fact that, it is to be differentiated from the literature of a fear that is physical or lame and rather bland horror. Cosmic horror deals not only with the supernatural but it is interested with the psychological reaction toward the supernatural, too. Furthermore, Lovecraft had a special kind of spite in his heart to the traditional stereotyped way supernatural texts were written; texts which are in favour to have a touch of mundanity through the inclusion of ghosts and witches into the creation of their plot.

Lovecraftian horror deals essentially in its essence with the kind of horror that bears a knowledge that is too heavy to retain, a knowledge that touches the surface of the undiscovered space. As in Lovecraft's words "that most terrible conception of the human brain- a malign and particular suspension of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguards against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space" (Cited in Joshi, 2007, p. 66).

The Lovecraftian literature contains this sort of power that makes the reader undergo this crippling fear from everything quite larger than them. Lovecraft asserted that there is nothing that sparks horror into the human being than the fear of the unknown, it is what makes anyone crumble down, unprotected, floundering in the agony of oblivion. Being afraid of the unknown transmits the message of how fragile and unimportant humans are in the big picture of all, and this serves as the pillar of Lovecraftian literature. To express the unknown, Lovecraft chose the vast space and its mysteries, and moreover, to show how vulnerable man is in face of nature and the unrevealed entities from space. This exact idea is taken from what it is known as cosmicism. The latter has an aim of unveiling the meaninglessness and worthlessness of human existence, "always threatened by the fulfilment of a superior... design on a cosmic scale" (Cited in Hlupić, 2021, p. 35). What brings fear into the surface, however, is man realising how small he is in front of the colossal darkness of space, and how indifferent the cosmos is towards mankind (Hlupić, 2021).

Despite Lovecraft being a non-postmodernist writer, his late discovered literature became the backbone of almost any postmodern fiction written in the twentieth century until this time being. *Rick and Morty* (2013), is similarly a show where the Lovecraftian cosmic horror has its roots gravely implanted. The show from its beginning to its end delve into the vastness and the multiple dimensions of the dark space, adding many alien

characters to the show that most of the time pay homage to other science fiction characters from previous works. In *The Meeseeks Destroy*, there is an avid reference of *Ghost Busters*, or the mentioning of the Cronenberg creatures in *Rick Potion #9*, and many others that refer to the science fiction horror genre. (Wisecrack, 2015)

The most famous Lovecraftian thing that was represented in *Rick and Morty*, is the personage of *Cthulhu*. This Lovecraftian monster happens to be one the most significant characters that were created by H.P. Lovecraft in his story *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928). This monster seems to appear in all the title sequences of *Rick and Morty* in all its seasons. The existence of numerous worlds and species in the title sequence hint to a Lovecraftian touch as well, though the show plays more with different timelines and multiple universes. In *The Rick Must Be Crazy*, Rick himself represents cosmic horror to a certain extent. He happens to create a microverse to empower the battery of his ship. It is true, he is not committing any genocides against this microverse, nonetheless, he is enslaving a whole species to produce electricity for his ship. During his visit to this world with Morty, it can be noticed that the inhabitants of this microverse consider Rick as an alien, which implies their awareness of the existing other worlds, however, they are completely oblivious they live in a battery (Candelaria, 2018).

Remaining in the same episode, when Rick and Morty visit this microverse, a persona similar to the genius of Rick named Zeep, seems to create another 'miniverse', with the same purpose as Rick's. When visiting the 'miniverse', there is another scientist named Kyle who, likewise, happens to create another 'teenyverse'. The dilemma occurs when all of them got stuck in the 'teenyverse', since Kyle suffered from an existential crisis when they told him the truth about the existence of those small worlds. Kyle committed suicide by crashing the only ship they had to get out of that 'teenyverse'. This implies Lovecraft's view of science, in which he believes science to be a tool that promotes

destruction, as he describes in his own words: “The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality” (Cited in Hlupić, 2021, p. 39)

2.6.2. The Nonsensity of Events

The philosophy of absurdism manifests its presence in the show by shaping its design, as it indirectly takes its motives from the Theatre of the Absurd. *Rick and Morty* (2013) emphasizes the use of settings, events, and characters that are extremely grotesque, illogical, and go beyond the humans’ assumptions and expectations. Considering the main theme of the show, which is the meaninglessness of life, it is only fair to perceive the show as an entity of absurd components, through which the audience could sense a hint of what their actual life is like. *Rick and Morty* takes its audience in an unusual journey, where they can feel disgust and horror as much as they feel bizarreness and humour. Harmon and Roiland’s main concern was to assemble an abnormal atmosphere that would speak to audiences’ minds and make them bewildered about the absurdity of both life and the show itself.

Rick and Morty takes its viewers on a wild journey in each episode, as they endeavour to grasp the confusing events belonging to the plot. It provides a twenty-minute ride full of humour and stimulating happenings. Nonetheless, there are some episodes that go beyond the expected standards of the show; they are ridiculously absurd and contain extremely unreasoned events. These characteristics are one of the many reasons for which *Rick and Morty* is considered as an absurd show. Just like the theatre of the Absurd, the confusion that is raised while experiencing a plot, reflects the absurdity of the tackled themes, and successfully creates a meaningless atmosphere that would put the audience into the appropriate mood.

The character Rick just being himself is already a crucial ludicrous addition to every episode. However, in the third episode of season three, entitled *Pickle Rick*, the viewers basically endure a plot where Rick turns himself into a pickle out of boredom. As irrational as it sounds, the events are centred on a pickle trying to overcome obstacles and fight enemies. Not only that, but the episode hits the climax of absurdity when the audience find themselves watching Pickle Rick sitting at a therapist office, and having one of the deepest conversations. The nonsensicality of events is as well noticed in the fourth episode of the second season entitled *Total Rickall*. In this episode, Alien parasites smoothly attack the Smith's house and inject their own unreal memories into the Smith's minds, in order to be accepted within the family, and slowly spread to take over the world. The producers of the show found it insufficient to write such a weird plot, as a result they decided to put it in the most unusual form. While watching the episode, it is quite impossible to follow how each event is related to the one that precedes it. The viewer's logic is completely destroyed, as they lose track of events once they feel like they finally started to follow.

Get Schwifty can be by far presented as one of the most important episodes of the whole show in which, it seems to have the most nonsensical turn. The episode starts with a giant Cromulonhead which makes an appearance over the surface of planet earth. This Cromulon creates chaos and people start freaking out, as it messes up with the environment and causes global catastrophes. Absurdly enough, what the Cromulon wanted was for earth to, as in his own words "show me what you got!" (Kauffman, 2015, 0:38), this implies that planet earth is demanded to perform an original hit song for the Cromulon to leave earth. Since all the musicians died in an earthquake, everyone now was depending on Rick and Morty to go to Area 51, and perform the song. Rick and Morty's performance of the song "Get Schwifty", which was totally a random song made up by Rick in the last minute,

ended up being a success, as in Rick's own words: "good music comes from who are relaxed, hit a button Morty, give me a beat" (Kauffman, 2015, 5:45). The lyrics of the song were meaningless and made absolutely no sense, even the word 'Schwifty' has no essence of meaning in the first place, and was just casually Rick's own production.

What adds to the nonsensities of the episode is that, after the smashing performance of Rick and Morty, earth was transported to participate in what is called the Planet Music Competition. This competition is run by the giant heads; each planet has to perform a song and the one who does not perform well get destroyed or basically disintegrated. The show here is initially ridiculing all the reality talent TV shows, the only difference is that the participants are entire planets not only people, and obviously the judges are giant headed Cromulons. Back in Beth and Jerry's town, people created a cult and started worshipping the giant head and made up an entire religion for it with a priest and everything. The only reason these people started worshipping those Cromulons, is because they witnessed how powerful those Cromulons were, and that gave them a sense of vulnerability. It is not absolutely of complete faith, which is basically pointing out at the absurdities of religion, however, it is also integrating the idea that people end up making poor decisions when being vulnerable or under complete stress.

In every episode, there is a stimulation that would trigger Rick and Morty's urge to take on an adventurous journey into other planets, universes, and even dimensions. It is indeed what characterizes *Rick and Morty* from other shows, the way the planets are designed and especially how absurd they are. The nonsense of the show which originally mirrors absurdism, is manifested through the way the place settings of the show are put together. The creators of *Rick and Morty* drew the most supernatural universes and planets, all furnished with bizarre elements that the human mind would not feel at ease fathoming them. *Rick and Morty* for instance, has its plots developed in a universe where people

evolved from corn, another one where pizzas eat people, phones eat chairs that are pizzas, and a world where cars sneeze. The list is longer, yet these universes are sufficient to portray the absurdity of the show, and specifically how it hints at the illogicality of a world that is devoid of meaning.

Every planet in *Rick and Morty* carries a new concept that makes the plots of all episodes happen. Rick and Morty's adventures result in exploring different planets and dimensions, which unavoidably raises a feeling of both excitement and confusion. In the episode *The Wedding Squanchers*, Rick and the Smith family were escaping the galactic federation that wanted to arrest Rick. Therefore, they tried to find an alternative planet accustomed enough to stay in. Thus, Rick suggested 'Screaming Earth Planet'; this latter is quite popular within *Rick and Morty* devoted audience mainly for its extreme ridiculousness. The Smith family refused to take refuge in this planet, because the sun of the planet screamed as loudly as possible non-stop, and the days there were 42 hours long. Consequently, they left and went to another planet called 'On a Cob Planet', which they discovered to be completely based on cobs; mountains on cobs, strawberries on cobs, birds on cobs and even creatures on cobs down to the atomic level.

In the very first episode of *Rick and Morty* entitled *Pilot*, the plot takes place in '35-C Dimension', the bizarreness of this dimension introduced the audience to the absurdity of the show, and guided their expectations upon the way the series is going to be like. The audience's first contact with such unpredicted setting left them in complete astonishment for the way this universe is put together, from the concept itself to the creatures and the designs. 'Dimension 35-C' is a fantastic version of Earth, which is inhabited by aliens and non-human creatures. Rick and Morty travelled to this dimension in search of Mega Trees that looked mostly like men's privates, to collect seeds that are only found inside the fruit that grows on these trees. During the episode, Rick is chased by a

gigantic spider-like creature and Morty jumps from a high cliff which resulted in breaking his legs. Rick, thus, went to another dimension where medicine is developed and brought an injection that immediately cured Morty's legs.

All these haphazard events are embellished by the surrounding environment that are crucial to the successful representation of an absurd world. 'Dimension 35-C' nature contains weird plants all over the surface where Rick and Morty were walking. There were yellow cones with several green holes, yellow blobs as big as the trees, purple circles on the ground, green plants with many holes and slimy balls upon orange spires, large kidney-like plants, blue crystals, and massive funguses. The sky was of a yellowish colour, and contained asteroids and circle forms that looked almost like planets belonging to the Milky Way, specifically like Saturn.

'Gazorpazorp' is as well no less of a perfect demonstration of what an absurd planet looks like. This planet was featured in the seventh episode of the first season entitled *Raising Gazorpazorp*. The plot takes place in this planet, which is ruled by females after several conflicts happened between the two genders. As a result, males became primitive, and females got to prosper and develop. The government is ruled by Ma-Sha from the females' utopian society settled undergrounds, and their motto is "Sis Semper Calumnium" meaning "you're always slandering". Not only that the events that occur on this planet are new to the audience, but the species living on it are of droll and interesting features. Gazorpians are human like creatures that have six hands of three sets. One set is attached to their ears, another one on their waists and the third one on their heads. Besides, the planet is very ludicrous, as the greeting among females is "I'm here if you need to talk".

2.7. Conclusion

Rick and Morty is a world that merges between reality and fiction, a sitcom that delves into the human perception about life and their behaviour towards an unsettling universe. Through their adventures, *Rick and Morty* depicts life's randomness and ergo its meaninglessness. The show saves a great part of it to dissect the interesting person of the genius scientist Rick; throughout the whole episodes of the show the audience gets the chance to discover the many existing facades of the claimed to be the smartest man in the universe. Through Rick and other narrative tools, both Dan Harmon and Justin Roiland, exploited their ways through reaching the message precisely needed to be transmitted and reach the conclusion of life's pointlessness.

Rick and Morty is evidently a show that was inspired from what is known as the philosophy of the absurd, and was patched in a way to make it belong to the literature created from the same philosophy. It is inevitable then, for black humour to be the main factor that gives the show a comedic sense, however, it touches many aspects of life's darkest corners. Transparently enough, the show creators found it an easy road to explore the philosophy of absurdism, as science fiction was a safe ground to include all life absurdities and nonsensities.

General Conclusion

From the beginning of time, the human's prime endeavour in this life is to find a sense of their being, to grasp the outcome of living a life in this universe. Nonetheless, an answer was never given, nor anything that would rest the chaos built in their minds. Many philosophers and writers tried to solve this puzzling conundrum, however, ultimately failed to provide an exact response to the world. Ultimately, it became more globally spread in the atmosphere, during the twentieth century, when WWII left its remnants roaming on the surface. With death being the only halo that shined on people's lives back then, to relate meaning to life was an unachievable aim. Absurdism is a philosophy that does not relate any meaning to life, nor give the human beings and their existence in this universe much of an importance.

From this notion, the theatre of the absurd took the chance to rise as a reaction to the gloomy current situation back then. Writers such as Albert Camus started nibbling with the idea of life's meaninglessness and addressed the issue of life's absurdity, which then promoted the literature of the absurd. This latter did not remain hidden only in the sphere of the theatre of the absurd, as it kept developing through time and reached several horizons and genres enough to reach science fiction. The twenty-first century witnessed a wide spread of what is known as sitcoms, which are a series that follows the circumstances of particular characters in a comedic sense. Writers and producers found sitcoms to be the ultimate spot to pour their heavy philosophical inquiries and problematics under the disguise of pure comedy. It is only fair then to find the philosophy of absurdism displayed subtly and imperceptibly under the comedic folds of many popular sitcoms. Furthermore, this exact concept is what the literature of the absurd stands for.

Rick and Morty, is one of the most renowned shows that was able to reign on many television platforms. It succeeded in transmitting the main purpose of any sitcom, which is entertainment; simultaneously it delves into life's most complicated matters. This research shed light upon the philosophical and the literary intersections, through which absurdism was

executed. Through the analysis of the script, themes, and characters as related components, the meaninglessness of the world could easily be spotted. The show clearly converted Camus' ideas into an entity of speeches, events, and situations, which could speak to the audience's inner relatable beliefs. *Rick and Morty*, additionally, as much as it explained how it is like to feel futile in a vast universe, and look at the world from an absurdist perspective, it also suggested moving beyond the absurd. This latter concept applies directly to Camus' approach, which is inevitably a crucial facet of absurdism. Due to the appropriate use of the sitcom's elements, and the strong control over the building of the plot, themes, and scripts in relation to the tackled philosophical dilemma, it is quite right to highlight the successfulness in the way the creators of the show carried absurdism.

The literature brought by the theatre of the absurd was able to patch a whole new facade of how plays were written. It gave the writers of the absurd the opportunity to produce and project whatever gloominess they found necessary to utter freely. This spared the surface for a new genre to be explored and promoted by the literature of the absurd. The latter dealt with mighty, heavy philosophical spheres, yet drenched in tragedy. The theatre of the absurd, however, found the right antidote that would lessen from the heaviness of those matters and delicately included it in its literature. Tragic comedy was then born from both colossally contradicting components, and became a genre that would allow the audience to crack a laugh but at the same time ponder upon whether life actually matters.

The literature of the absurd found its own ways of indulging different new aspects in writing theatre plays or any literary production. Chaos can be easily depicted in the literature of the absurd and it is wrapped in the unorganised ways of displaying the plot, or the characters. Reading an absurdist work seems perpetually misleading as the plot gives the feeling of being lost in a maze. Characters as well are given the trait of being irrelevant, and serve at nothing but to bring comedic sense into the plot.

Through the analysis of *Rick and Morty* as a show that belongs to science fiction, it can be depicted that this latter is a safe ground for the philosophy of absurdism and its literature to be exposed. Science fiction remains one of the latest genres where both fiction and science can be merged in the same orb. Refuting the former forms of how science fiction was dealt with, which was only concerned with describing and imagining a world furnished with an imaginary scientific development. Later then, it was not sufficient for this genre to only illustrate what space looked like, nor the unrealistic creatures that might exist on the surface of different planets. It rather started at seeking ways to link it with the existing philosophies and digging deeper in life's most unsolvable intricacies.

From a quick scan, *Rick and Morty* might seem as a ludicrous show that recounts the various adventures of a genius yet lunatic man named Rick, along with his naive grandson Morty. It entertains the audience with the comedic touch that the show provides, and how the script is written in a way that ridicules everything and renders it acceptable for the audience to consume. Nonetheless, taking much of a deeper look, it would be found that the show promotes the philosophy of the absurd with all its notions. The meaninglessness of life and the futility of human existence are gradually yet subtly tucked in the many episodes that the show aired. Moreover, the use of cosmic horror as one of the major themes, that covers the show, and engages the viewers in a trip that would take them to dive deep in other dimensions and galaxies, serves as the perfect plan that would deal with space and yet include absurdism and its literature to be one of its major components.

Certainly, the show *Rick and Morty* is the ultimate epitome to illustrate that philosophy can be uttered in many shapes and forms. This research determines the efficiency of adapting to the new way of dealing with philosophies, as the audience, mainly Millennials, can easily relate to such deep matters, and are more familiar with the current rush of evolution that the twenty-first century provides. Thus, sitcoms are way more suitable for

them to digest such heavy topics as absurdism. Writers and producers found it better to endorse and deal with philosophy through the use of other alternative ways, such as to draw the attention of the audience towards life's most intricate subjects and treat it with a little laugh.

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This research deals with the analysis of the science fiction sitcom *Rick and Morty*, solely within the philosophical and the literary area concerned with absurdism. In the case of this dissertation, the inclusion of the philosophy of absurdism in *Rick and Morty*, triggered the curiosity upon the way absurdist philosophical beliefs are explored through the literary elements of the show. Additionally, it delineates the science fiction genre's convenience in unraveling the absurdist vision that stands for the futility of existence, by providing the most pertinent atmosphere. The work consists of two chapters; the first one covers the required theoretical facets, that authorises the analysis carried in the second chapter. The latter mainly undertakes a practical scanning of philosophical and literary concepts, specifically concerned with absurdism being an entity of both a philosophy and a literature, which could be best rendered through the genre of science fiction in the sitcom of *Rick and Morty*.

Cette recherche porte sur l'analyse de la sitcom de science-fiction Rick et Morty, uniquement dans le domaine philosophique et littéraire concerné par l'absurde. Dans le cas de cette thèse, l'inclusion de la philosophie de l'absurde dans Rick et Morty a suscité la curiosité sur la manière dont les croyances philosophiques absurdes sont explorées à travers les éléments littéraires de l'émission. De plus, il délimite la commodité du genre science-fiction pour démêler la vision absurde qui représente la futilité de l'existence, en fournissant l'atmosphère la plus pertinente. Le travail se compose de deux chapitres; la première couvre les facettes théoriques requises, ce qui autorise l'analyse portée dans le deuxième chapitre. Ce dernier entreprend principalement un balayage pratique des concepts philosophiques et littéraires, spécifiquement concerné par l'absurdisme étant une entité à la fois d'une philosophie et d'une littérature, qui pourrait être mieux rendue à travers le genre de la science-fiction dans la sitcom de Rick et Morty.

يتناول هذا البحث تحليل المسلسل الهزلي للخيال العلمي ريك ومورتي فقط في المجال الفلسفي والأدبي المعني بالعبثية. في حالة هذه الرسالة ، أثار إدراج فلسفة العبثية في ريك ومورتي الفضول حول الطريقة التي يتم بها استكشاف المعتقدات الفلسفية العبثية من خلال العناصر الأدبية للعرض. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإنه يحدد ملاءمة نوع الخيال العلمي في كشف الرؤية العبثية التي تمثل عبثاً في الوجود، من خلال توفير الجو الأكثر صلة بالموضوع. يتكون العمل من فصلين؛ يغطي الأول الجوانب النظرية المطلوبة ، التي تسمح بالتحليل الذي تم إجراؤه في الفصل الثاني. يقوم الأخير بشكل أساسي بمسح عملي للمفاهيم الفلسفية والأدبية، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالعبثية كونها كياناً لكل من الفلسفة والأدب ، والذي يمكن تقديمه بشكل أفضل من خلال نوع الخيال العلمي في المسرحية الهزلية لريك ومورتي.