

# A Comparative Guide to Sartrean and Deleuzean Selves in Modernist and Post- Modernist Fiction

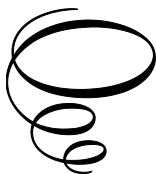


# A Comparative Guide to Sartrean and Deleuzean Selves in Modernist and Post- Modernist Fiction

By

Onur Ekler

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



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and Post-Modernist Fiction

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This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-7147-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-7147-1

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Any success requires the effort of many people, and this study is a product of it. The master builder behind this success is my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Behzad Ghaderi Sohi, the greatest source of my inspiration and encouragement. I am deeply thankful to him. His unwavering support, help, and guidance were invaluable. His constructive feedback, his positive attitude, and his guidance in any stage of my study have mainly contributed to the completion of this book.

I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Melih Karakuzu and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hasan Baktır for their constructive criticism and guidance. I am highly grateful to them for their invaluable support despite their busy agendas.

I also owe Assoc. Prof. Dr. Banu Akçeşme a debt of gratitude. Her teachings in the eco/feminist literary field helped me to gain new insight into the analysis of Atwood's novel *Surfacing* in this study.

I am also highly thankful to Prof. Dr. Hasan Boynukara. I have always felt his unwavering support and encouragement.

My special thanks go to my precious teacher, Assist. Prof. Tuncay Küçüköztürk. Death plucked him too early from life. He was a friend to me, a brother to me. He was the driving force that first ignited the wick of my love for literature. He never spared his help whenever I was in trouble. I always felt his spiritual presence during my painful times. Rest in peace—my dear Tuncay Hocam.

I would also like to thank my dear friend, Eren Bolat for his moral support and encouragement. His support has had a positive effect on the completion of this book.

Finally, my special thanks go to my family for their love, faith and supportive presence.

Onur Ekler





# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Know thyself! (An ancient Greek aphorism)

‘Know thyself?’—If I knew myself, I’d run away. (Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe)

Any fool can turn a blind eye but who knows what the ostrich sees in the sand. (Beckett)

The question of the Self has always been the topic for discussion in non/fictional writings ever since humankind fell from innocence as a result of the loss of Eden. In the search for an answer to this question, different interpretations have surfaced in different periods under different conditions. Despite being behind different masks, the question never changes: Who are we? One cannot help but ask: What was Adam and Eve’s defiance against God’s will for? What was Oedipus’ confrontation with his fate for? What was Medea’s stepping out of her social role for? What was Hamlet’s melancholic mood for? What were all these “transgressive” acts for? Were all these futile attempts? Or should we consider these as attempts to solve the riddle of the Self?

The question of the Self for mankind usually surfaces in times of crisis. This crisis occurs particularly when the Self does not altogether fit in the culture anymore. As a result of this, the Self begins to suffer since its position in that given culture has been displaced. Afterwards, the Self is cast adrift. It starts to set out on a voyage to know itself. This crisis occurs differently regarding the relevant periods. When the clothing of the Self becomes obsolete for the new social dynamics, the Self struggles to change it. However, this process is really painful. In ancient Greece, this crisis happened when the consciousness of man came above the established order. Pentheus’ unintentional defiance of Dionysus, Antigone’s attempt to violate the laws of Gods, and Socrates’ defense of his position at the expense of death despite being accused of blasphemy can be exemplified as the crisis of the Self in Ancient Greece (Grene and Lattimore, 37-128). In the Renaissance and Early modern period, this

crisis happened when the totality of Self in the Great Chain of Being under the guarantee of Christianity began to break because of the rise of Humanism. The humanistic notion of the Self, resuscitated with boundless energy, broke the chains of the Higher Order and tasted the freedom of the will. The Self took itself to the center as Protagoras said: “man is the measure of all things.” Faustus’ contract first with Lucifer and then with Mephistopheles despite God’s warnings, Hamlet’s experimental observations to find the murderer of his father rather than believing the ghost’s/Father’s command “List, list, O, List! (Act I, Sc. V, p. 2)”, Prospero’s colonial ambitions, and Macbeth’s murdering the king, the shadow of God on earth can be the examples of the humanistic notion of the Self.

In the Enlightenment period, the boundless energy of the humanistic Self was confined with the rational and mechanical notions of Newton’s mechanical universe and Decartes’ dualistic notion of the Self. The mechanical and rational control of the unbridled energy of the humanistic Self led to the development of the dualistic notion of the Self, theorized by Rene Descartes. This notion flourished as a need to cope with the rapid changes that occurred in the embers of the decaying values of bourgeois society. In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes argues that thinking is the evidence of existence. He indubitably regards this principle that “I think therefore I am” as the foundation of philosophy.

But immediately upon this I observed that, whilst I thus wished to think that all was false, it was absolutely necessary that I, who thus thought, should be somewhat; and as I observed that this truth, I think, therefore I am (COGITO ERGO SUM), was so certain and of such evidence that no ground of doubt, however extravagant, could be alleged by the sceptics capable of shaking it, I concluded that I might, without scruple, accept it as the first principle of the philosophy of which I was in search. (46)

Descartes sees himself as a thinking Self. He carries on his discussion saying that everything he perceives consists in thinking, and thinking does not need any material being in order to exist. His emphasis on the thinking Self, as the essence of everything, left no room for the extended reality of the Self. It caused thinkers to not see the whole picture of the Self in his age or in the following centuries. Unlike Descartes’ thinking Self, David Hume attempted to see the Self through the senses. Rousseau put the emphasis on the emotional side of the Self. Karl Marx attempted to materialize it. Their one-sided existential questioning of the Self widened the split in the Self. Thus, the conception of the Self became bigger and bigger in the course of time.

In the modern and postmodern literary periods, the question of the Self has become more problematic. Most probably, it is because the

Self cannot keep pace with the new social dynamics of the time and becomes insufficient to the needs of time. A critical thinker on existential philosophy, Barrett in his book, *Irrational Man* (1958) clearly expresses that the developments in science and technology have been so rapid that one has found oneself in an unsecured atmosphere. One may claim that these rapid changes have displaced oneself. Thus, the Self has drifted. One's organic connections with Nature have become mechanical (25). Another critic, Luntley in line with Barrett blames modernity for stripping the Self bare of its essentials. He claims that the Self becomes too abstract and ahistorical, without gender, class, values, and beliefs (151). The displacement of the Self causes dizziness and anxiety. The Self becomes alienated to its own surroundings. So, the Self as a displaced figure is exposed to further fragmentation. It has come to a point when one cannot cover one's fragmented Self with the traditional illusions. Therefore, the unbarred, integrated and unitary notion of the Self has come under criticism particularly in the modernist and postmodernist periods. Sypher in *Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art* (1954) notes that an issue of the lost and inauthentic Self has appeared as the main point of the contemporary literature (22).

Before embarking on the modernist and postmodernist discussions of the Self, it is worthwhile explaining the central point that has been the point of departure in this study, that is, to trace the shift in approach toward the Self from modernism to postmodernism in general, and from the Sartrean notion of no-Self to the Deleuzean notion of "rhizomic Self" in particular in the selected texts.

In the modern period, there appeared to be some efforts or investigations to bridge this ever-widening split in the Self particularly among the modern thinkers. They have sought some ways to reintegrate the fragmented Self of modern man. And they have resorted to anatomizing the Self to discover what lies behind it. Though different in their methods and philosophy, many thinkers have blinked an immediate eye to the truth through the crack of the Self that has been caused by the ongoing rapid changes. What they have attempted to do is to see whether the Self exists or not, but their one-dimensional existential glasses have gradually led to the total destruction of the Self. To illustrate, Nietzsche's and Freud's emphasis on the irrational side of the Self, Husserl's detachment of the pure Self bracketing the world outside, and Heidegger's seeing the anchorage of Self not in God but in the world have eventually seen modern man drifting into an inevitable descent to nothingness (Solomon, 111-152).

The end of the voyage in the maze of “Know Thyself” becomes most complicated since modern man is totally trapped in the chaosmos; that is, he finds no exit from this maze. Here, it is worthwhile to note that the modernist view of chaos, as Mellor points out, is the negative interpretation of a romantic ironist’s understanding of chaos (184). The modernist-existentialist man feels terror, anxiety and fear in the chaos whereas a romantic ironist finds the unboundless energy that makes way for Self-multiplicity and Self-becoming. As Mellor argues further, while the romantic ironist sees life as the flux of the de-creative and re-creative process, the modernist-existentialists only put the emphasis on the destructive side of life (185).

The philosopher, novelist, and playwright in the modernist period who stigmatizes the Self with nothingness is Jean Paul Sartre (1905-80). This study will first explore the critical reception of his reductionist attitude of the Self that will throw more light on modern man’s nausea which he suffers amidst the existential crisis. As will be studied later, Sartre destroys the operating Self-image in the consciousness. He realizes that the ladder which the total man has climbed up till modern times has long been broken (Sartre, 16). It is possible to see a similar depiction of this situation in another modernist figure, Yeats’ lines in “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” (1939):

Now that my ladder is gone,  
I must lie down where all ladders start,  
In the foul and bone shop of the heart.

Of significance here is that Sartre attacks the Husserlian notion of the Self because of his claim that the pure, permanent Self can be discovered through the phenomenological reduction:

This world with all its objects, I said, derives its whole sense and its existential status, which it has for me, from me myself from me as the transcendental ego... (Husserl, 26)

Instead, Sartre uses the Husserlian reductionist method to evidence his notion of no-Self. Sartre in his well-known essay, “Transcendence of the Ego” (1934) conceptualizes his notion of “No-Self”. Later in his life, he extends his study of no-Self theory in his book, *Being and Nothingness* (1943). For him, there is no permanent Self in the consciousness. This can also be said the other way around: in consciousness, there is no Self as the knowing subject. The Self is the product of the consciousness. He states:

Consciousness is a being whose existence posits its essence, and inversely it is consciousness of a being, whose essence implies its existence; that is, in which appearance lays claim to being. Being is everywhere... We must understand that this being is no other than the transphenomenal being of phenomena and not a noumenal being which is hidden behind them... Consciousness absolutely cannot derive from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is *de trop* for eternity... (24)

To Solomon, an important scholar on Western philosophy, Sartre compares consciousness to “wind blowing from nowhere to everything” (180). Sartre calls mankind pitiful since it denies its total freedom by hiding behind Self-illusion. He claims that if only it can destroy this illusion, it can be totally free. In one of Sartre’s plays, *Dirty Hands* Jessica accuses Hugo of not letting her see the bare existence behind the illusions:

I was your luxury. For nineteen years I have been put in your man’s world and was forbidden to touch anything and you made me think that all was going very well and that I did not have to worry about anything but putting flowers in vases. Why did you lie to me? Why did you keep me ignorant, if it was to admit to me one day that this world is cracking and that you are all powerless and to make me choose between a suicide and a murder? (Act 5, sc. 2)

Sartre further argues that humans should see their “thrownness” into the world in order to perceive their true existence (Sartre, 5). As the quotation above shows, Jessica keeps herself hidden in the veil of illusions that Hugo has created for her. A rupture in the illusions leads her to Self-destruction.

In addition to the Sartrean concept of nothingness, this study will also explore one of Sartre’s big concepts; *Bad Faith* that means the denial of freedom. Sartre as a Marxist-Existentialist emphasizes that one denies the absolute freedom since one thinks that life has moral constraints beyond oneself. He calls such a figure a coward. Sartre rejects these moral limitations on man and thinks that the universe is indifferent to us. In other words, he implies that one should see the absurdity of life. Sartre is greatly disturbed by humans’ tendency to treat the absurd world as a meaningful place.

Albert Camus (1913-1960), a great friend to Sartre, defines the Absurd as “the confrontation between ourselves, with our demands for rationality and justice, and an indifferent universe” (Camus qtd. in Haney, 149). This definition reminds us of Roquentin’s words in Sartre’s *Nausea*:

“They will have to find something else to conceal the enormous absurdity of their existence” (161). Roquentin experiences the nausea in his confrontation with this absurdity. One can understand that both Camus and Sartre resemble each other in the proposition that one clothes oneself with different social roles to hide the absurdity of one’s existence.

One of my objectives in this study is to demonstrate the problematic side of the Sartrean concept of “no-Self” in its reductionist perception. It manifests itself in Sartrean existential philosophy as the endless suffering of the individual in the total darkness of chaos. It abandons the individual in his nakedness alone amidst the ebb and flow of anxiety within the cycle of choice and responsibility after he has been stripped of his permanent Self. By decentering him/her from the fixed, permanent, and traditional Self, modern man/woman either struggles to find out what lies behind the mirror by stripping all of the contingent elements of the contingent world or disguises him/herself in the pseudo world with pseudo names and hence suffering from Self-alienation. The first path reduces him/her to Self-destruction in his/her existential quest since for Sartre, what s/he will discover is nothingness, and the latter lets him/her create an illusory World (Bad Faith) to hide his/her nakedness. When the illusory world collapses and s/he sees that there is no-Self thus facing nothingness, s/he realizes that the world in which s/he lives is nothing but a waste land. Estelle in Sartre’s play *No Exit* exemplifies this situation by saying that “when I cannot see myself, I begin to wonder if I really and truly exist [...] How empty it is, a glass in which I am absent” (19).

The Sartrean theory of no-Self will be analyzed in such a way as to highlight its reductionist, destructive and nihilistic manner. This study will also attempt to show that the Sartrean theory of no-Self has not been able to develop a positive notion of the Self that can evolve in harmony with the evolutionary time and space, thus rendering the Self an illusion to be destroyed in the relevant time. Modern man has been stuck on one side of the existential quest. From Sartre’s viewpoint, while some like Sisyphus seek out the boundless energy and freedom in their total destruction in chaos, others linger in different masks, or predetermined roles, created by the society. Kennedy defines the fact of having to act in such predetermined roles, controlled by the society as the protean Self. As he points out, the protean Self is a means of the society to cause one to lose one’s free will and to turn one into the willing prisoner or “the reality instructor” of the society (4-6). McMurphy in Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Stephen Daedalus in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, or Oedipa in Pynchon’s *The Crying Lot of 49* are considerable examples of the loss of the romantic Self

against the protean Self of the controlling systems. Their romantic spirit in their quest for Self-becoming is eventually suppressed and they have to yield to the social orthodoxy. To Sartre and some other modernists such as Beckett and Hedayat, the passive acceptance and the internalization of the prefigured dramatic roles in the society mean the suppression of the limitless and undisciplined energy of the individual. In Sartre's novel, *The Age of Reason*, his protagonist, Mathieu well explains Sartre's position toward role-playing: "all these were just a mere performance" (225). In another context in the same novel, Mathieu says, "Perhaps it's inevitable, perhaps one has to choose between being nothing at all and impersonating what one is" (227). In the following pages, this study will try to show how such internalized dramatic performances enable Sartre and others to realize the nature of the protean Self and to doubt the existence of the Self behind these masks. Also, in the selected novels, we will attempt to explore how the solipsistic and destructive nature of Sartre's nihilistic view of the Self and others will lead one to further victimization and Self-destruction after one's refusal to recognize the external world beyond oneself.

Solomon rightly claims that the Sartrean no-Self is "too conformist, too radical, and too Cartesian (194)" to cope with the social dynamics of the postmodern/capitalist culture, since, as Collins argues, the postmodern world necessitates the multiple, situational, and fluctuating notions of the Self (26). Therefore, my further explorations in this study will be on the "rhizomic" Self, claimed by Gilles Deleuze to perhaps be an antidote to the Self-crisis, particularly experienced in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I will attempt to present the rhizomic Self particularly as an alternative to the Sartrean no-Self because the latter strips the Self bare of its essences and lets the consciousness face the unbearable situation of nothingness. As mentioned above, this study will also discuss whether one's experience of the pangs of existence in one's confrontation with the Sartrean nothingness leads one to either become the stranger in one's own community or to seek out ways for Self-destruction. Moreover, this study intends to go even further by claiming the ineptness of the Sartrean no-Self theory for the swift, sudden and constant changes in the society. Therefore, while most of the modernist fictions have begun to lament the loss of the secure home and the fragmentation of the Self in desolation, this study will deal with how the postmodern Self has stopped this lamentation for the stable, real, and integrated Self. What is more, I will try to show how the rhizomic Self celebrates the Self in multiplicity since the fragmentation has been perceived as normal in the flux of time. Change is regarded as fundamental for the Self. In other words, the Self in constant change cannot

have a stable identity. It is constantly redefined and reshaped regarding the social, cultural, and ideological transformations of the relevant time.

At this point, it is important to highlight the relation of the Self with other terms such as identity and social persona to prevent the contradiction in terms. To Zahavi, the Self is the totalizing principle of one's social identity (Zahavi, 143). Likewise, Melucci defines the Self as the sum of actions and choices that determine one's identity in the society (Melucci, 31). Melucci also notes that identity is a synchronic and diachronic process through which one can observe "the playing of the Self" throughout the ages (30). To him, the conflict between the Self and the traditional categories of the society leads to the dissolution of the Self as a social actor on the stage due to the changing dynamics of the relevant time. The Self becomes a masquerade, that is, the mere representations or social personas (roles) in the postmodern world that hide the absence of the totalizing Being behind one's actions or choices (47). However, in the modernist world, the Self is thought to have a rigid, fixed, and idiosyncratic character that supposedly acts behind the social personas. This explains the failure of the modernists in not coping with the flux of social personas that results from the swiftly changing dynamics of the relevant time.

The flux of things in the postmodern world leads to the Self drifting from the position of Being, a sort of rigid, fixed character into the realm of Becoming that is depicted by fluidity, instability and plurality. Best and Kellner perceive the postmodern culture as a new arena for welcoming changes and possibilities (Best and Kellner, 9). Likewise, Jameson in his book, *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* portrays it as a transitory state that has flourished out of late capitalism and defines it intentionally an "absolute and absolutely random pluralism [...] a coexistence not even of multiple and alternate worlds so much as of unrelated fuzzy sets and semiautonomous subsystems" (372). However, in "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", Jameson who has Marxist tendencies attacks postmodernism and late capitalism to break the individuation process of the Self. The collapse of this process, he claims, causes the creation of some schizophrenic characters in the society. To him, schizophrenia is thought to be a psychological disorder in which an infant cannot develop an integrated Self-formation (26). He blames popular culture for this situation since it creates images full of "isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers, which fail to link up into a coherent sequence" (119). In brief, Jameson sees schizophrenia as the inherent danger of popular culture.

Like Jameson, Deleuze has also found some links between capitalism and schizophrenia. However, Deleuze does not regard schizophrenia



as a psychological disorder in contrast to Jameson. He regards it as the destroyer of the traditional codes, or the boundaries among cultures (76). Crockett in his book, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou* interprets the Deleuzean understanding of schizophrenia as the absolute limit of capitalism where mankind would create no permanent, fixed Self within the local cultures and would see the fluidity of the contextual Selves as normal (82). To Deleuze, a schizophrenic person negates the values. S/he finds no lack in him/her. In other words, desire, as he asserts, lies not outside but within him/herself. For him, the schizophrenic desire is the liberating power in one's body from any kind of border. This means that the schizophrenic Self is a nomadic traveler who struggles against the different forms of the despotic, hierarchal, fixed, and totalized Self. Such an attitude of the Self causes the repression of the liberating force of the schizophrenic desire. To Deleuze, it must be abandoned since the dynamics of the postmodern world necessitate the contextual, plural, impermanent, and fluid selves.

In this respect, Deleuze theorizes the "rhizomic" Self as an alternative notion that is able to respond to the needs of the postmodern world. The rhizomic Self is pluralistic, decentered, uprooted and not intentional. In this way, I will argue how the Deleuzean rhizomic Self might help one survive in times of crisis in contrast to the nihilistic tradition of the Sartrean no-Self.

In order to explain the rhizomic Self, my theoretical stand in this study will be the rhizomic model of thought claimed by Deleuze and Guattari in their book; *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980). This book consists of two volumes: *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. The latter attempts to highlight the rhizomic notion of the Self in its contrast with the Self-notions in the arborescent or root-tree system. Therefore, the second book will mainly be focused on Deleuze and Guattari's argument that the arborescent notions of the Self and society<sup>1</sup> no longer respond to the needs of the society, which will be analyzed with examples from the selected texts. In light of the reasons that have widened the gap between the Self and society in each passing day, his argument that the stable, permanent, and fixed notions of the Self should immediately be abandoned will gain momentum in this study. This study will further argue Deleuze's view that the constant configuration of the Self is possible with regard to the changes in the social ideological perspective. At this stage, this study will be an attempt to elucidate his proposition of the rhizomic Self.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleuze and Guattari see the arborescent model of society as man's total efforts to create a stable, hierarchical society in which man has a stable Self. However, they reject this Notion since in the flux of time, it is impossible to create a stable Notion of Self.

This book will contextualize the rhizomic Self at both the collective and individual levels. It will first attempt to explain what is the “rhizomic Self”. Then, it will be presented as an alternative self-theory to help the characters grow further connections after a sudden rupture or destruction as a result of the changing dynamics of the contemporary society. This is why; there is no ultimate end for the “rhizomic Self” which is always in the middle (23).

While the Sartrean existential philosophy has put the seemingly operating Self under siege in its self-annihilative and monolithic approach, I will try to show the possible ways of redeeming the Self from total destruction, which could be the remedy for the in-between characters to restore their psychological health in the novels to be discussed in this project. In doing this, I will make use of the Deleuzean rhizomic Self, one of the postmodern notions of the Self. The rhizomic Self is originally multi-directional and does not follow any predestined discourses. Thus, it is an ever-motioning Self in the eddying time and space. Thanks to its fluidity, the rhizomic Self will help people to regard life and the Self inherently in plurality.

To corroborate my argument above, this book will be twofold. Firstly, I will critically analyze *Murphy* (1938) by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), and *The Blind Owl* (1937) by Sadegh Hedayat (1903-1951) in light of the Sartrean no-Self. The most prevailing and persistent view among the critics is that Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy* and Sadegh Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl* could be read in line with the Sartrean theory of no-Self. They were exact contemporaries. Moreover, there exist some facts and rumors about their association with each other. Sartre was an intersecting source of inspiration for both writers. As Moran notes, Beckett met Sartre at Ecole Normale and continued a distant relationship through the 1940s (99). As for the association between Sartre and Hedayat, Katouzian in his book, *Sadegh Hedayat: The Life and Legend of an Iranian Writer* refers to a legend that Hedayat and Sartre were friends. Also, Katouzian mentions that according to some occasional claims in the weekly presses of the time, Sartre and his existential philosophy were accepted as the basis of Hedayat’s attitude to life (264). It is also known that Hedayat translated Sartre’s short story *The Wall* in *Sokhan* (Speech/Discourse, a prestigious Iranian literary monthly; then, a new literary periodical) (142).

Moreover, the first pillar of this book is to critically find traces of the Sartrean notion of no-Self in Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy*, and Sadegh Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl*. Both Beckett and Hedayat share some similar nihilistic views with Sartre. Therefore, both novels can be regarded as the fruits of the nihilistic views that Beckett and Hedayat had in their lives.

The protagonist, Murphy bears some powerful marks of Beckett's states of mind during his stay in London where he underwent mental treatment. Likewise, the narrator in the *Blind Owl* has some hysterical tendencies just like the suicidal novelist, Hedayat. Hedayat attempted to commit suicide twice in his life. On his second attempt, he killed himself with gas in a hotel room. The way he killed himself is quite similar to the method that Beckett's protagonist, Murphy used. It is worth mentioning that gas in ancient Greek means chaos (Cresswell, 80).

This study will attempt to demonstrate how both novelists unconsciously fall into the Sartrean pits of nothingness in order to solve the riddle of the Self in the aforementioned novels. I will try to show their argument about the freedom of the Self from bondage. This bondage that they both identified is the external world. It is possible to notice the existential cracks in their heroes' lives as a result of the protagonists' detachment of the Self from the outside world. Therefore, I will attempt to find out the reasons why both heroes feel as if they are living corpses caged in the material world and why they both become strangers to their surroundings. Moreover, I will attempt to show how the characters' unconscious tracing of the Sartrean no-Self in their existential voyages leads to them drifting into nothingness.

The salient element in this comparison is that neither of the characters can grasp life, as does the dynamic interplay of the paradoxes as the romantic ironic Self. As Schlegel argues "irony is the form of paradox" (48). The ironic paradox reveals the dynamic interplay between the contradicting forces in man's mind: man's desire for order and coherence (to become being) and his desire for chaos and freedom (to become becoming). They are neither reconciled nor separable. They are in constant conflict. Because of this, the reasons why neither of the protagonists can cope with the existential nausea will be analyzed in this book. I shall further argue that Sadegh Hedayat and Samuel Beckett give too much credit to the destructive side of existence. The ultimate goal for both of them is the protagonists' utter destruction in chaos through their dissociation from the world of illusions. I will try to show how their failure to see the dynamic relations between the de-creative and re-creative sides of the mind and life causes them not to have an evolving perception of Self-becoming. One may find an affinity in the way that both protagonists behave. As will be studied later in detail, the narrator cutting the ethereal girl (the embodiment of illusion) into pieces in Sadegh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* and Murphy's surrender to Endon's black pieces in the chess game in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* can be seen as the result of ignorance in man's vision since they do not realize the necessity of the

ceaseless clash between these two forces which is able to unleash the creative energy to balance the Self in plurality or multiplicity.

Secondly, in defense of my argument, I will attempt to show the proto/types that have been able to achieve the realm of the “rhizomic” Self in two postmodernist novels by two Canadian origin novelists: *Herzog* (1964) by Saul Bellow (1915-2005) and *Surfacing* (1972) by Margaret Atwood (1939- ). In this project, I will deal with how the novelists are able to develop Self-notions similar to the Deleuzean “rhizomic” Self in both selected novels. In both novels, the protagonists’ existential torments are mainly brought up by their past lives. Both protagonists attempt Self-reconstruction firstly by experiencing an existential crack and then delving into their past. Both protagonists set up flashbacks for the reader to show how they end up with this existential nausea. Through the use of some flashbacks to the protagonists’ memories, Atwood and Bellow attempt here to create a stage to improvise on the throbbings of existence. Even though both protagonists are on the same path to manufacture a notion of the Self in the flux of time, their methods for the existential questioning are different. Herzog achieves it in mind while writing his unsent letters. However, the narrator in *Surfacing* achieves it in action while keeping track of her lost father.

Of significance here is that the rhizomic Self is not the variable of the fixed, unified, and traditional Self that seems to have a kind of totalitarian role. It is a series of ceaseless connections and ruptures. Similar to this notion, both protagonists become aware of the fact that life itself is the dynamic interplay of the paradoxes. It is the constant clash of these paradoxes. Therefore, in this study, I will try to show that both protagonists unconsciously trace the “rhizomic” Self in their walkthrough that will help them accept all the paradoxes and uncertainties in human life rather than being reduced to nothing in Sartre’s chaos.

My claim is that the protagonists in both novels are able to develop a notion of the Self that celebrates life in multiplicity despite their disjointed minds. Their spontaneous awareness that life is the energy released from the dynamic interplay of the destructive and creative forces in one’s mind, and society helps them cope with the overwhelming effect of the higher consciousness leaking from any possible crack of one’s own mind. Thus, it enables the hero to have the necessary insight into the endless possibilities of existence. Thanks to this, the Self is redeemed from any kind of siege by turning matter into energy. And this energy becomes the rhizomic Self, the essence of which is based on fluidity and alterity rather than on rigidity and identity. Therefore, this book aims to justify the possible ways of the rhizomic Self to the in-between characters that are

stuck in the chaos of the Sartrean nothingness.

In testing my argument in this book, I will make a critical analysis of the selected novels, which employ the reductionist aspect of the Sartrean existentialism with an aim to show how the characters are drifting into the pitfalls of the monolithic understanding of Sartre's "no-Self". My anticipated conclusion will be that awareness of the coexistence of the destructive and creative forces and their ceaseless clashes in one's Self, which is a prerequisite for creating the rhizomic Self, can be the key to enable one to restore one's damaged psychological health amidst the existential nausea. In this way, the rhizomic Self or the ever-becoming Self can help people to protect their psychological integrity during the painful processes before any sudden and immediate changes in their lives.

In this study, the chief questions I will investigate are: What contributions do these novelists and thinkers make to the existential questioning of the Self? Why does Sartre perceive the Self and life as a lie to be destroyed? Why does he put too much emphasis on the negative and nihilistic side of existence? Do Hedayat and Beckett share some resemblance in thought to Sartre's nihilistic tradition? Do Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* and Beckett's *Murphy* bear an elegiac and suicidal tone on the Self, similar to the Sartrean no-Self? What is lacking in the protagonists' questioning and where lies their flaw to build a rhizomic Self or an ever-becoming Self, which is key to the psychological reintegration of modern man without conforming to the socially accepted values? Can the Deleuzean rhizomic Self be seen as a possible alternative to the Sartrean nihilistic tradition? Do Atwood's *Surfacing* and Bellow's *Herzog* develop a positive sense of the Self and life similar to Deleuze's rhizomic Self? These questions will help me to parcel out my thinking and also help me to sustain a systematic and focused study.

## 1.1. Overall Objectives

The primary concern of this book is that modern fiction has an elegiac, suicidal and nihilistic tone on the Self whereas postmodern fiction has a more positive sense of the Self and life. To corroborate this argument, this study will be an attempt to trace the shift in Self-concept from Sartre to Deleuze in the selected novels. A further concern will be to discuss the possibility of the rhizomic Self out of the dynamic interplay of the destructive and creative forces in one's nature. Its defensive point will be to present the rhizomic Self as one of the possible ways to recuperate the suffering minds of the characters stuck in the Sartrean reductionist existential quest with no exit and to reintegrate them into the society which

is regarded, for Sartre and the Sartrean existential thinkers, as the “rabble” or hell. To do this, the book will be twofold. Firstly, it will discuss the critical reflections on the convulsions of the protagonists, imprisoned in a Sartrean existential whirlpool in the novels: Beckett’s *Murphy* and Sadegh Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl*. In both novels, it will attempt to make a critical analysis of the existential quests of the characters. It will explore how the light, the truth, and the “I” once reflected as symmetrical, precise, indivisible and clear has become refracted, diffused, and distorted in the protagonists’ fissured minds. In other words, it will aim to show how the protagonists are drifting into nothingness due to their subjective dissolutions in the process of self-destruction.

Secondly, the im/possibilities to reintegrate the in-between characters into the dynamic realm of the rhizomic Self that is able to negate the corrosive effects of the changing dynamics in the contemporary society will be another discussion point to cope with in Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy* and Sadegh Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl*. Thanks to this negation, the release of the creative energy out of the ceaseless clashes of destructive and creative forces helps these characters to keep up with the ambiguities of life. As a result, they can forge a rhizomic Self that celebrates the new openings and possibilities in the relevant time. The Deleuzian rhizomic Self never regards change as a threat since s/he hovers in the way of becoming, that is, his/her very essence will become the flux of changes. To prove this argument, the characters that have achieved the rhizomic realm of the ever-motioning Self in Saul Bellow’s *Herzog* and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* will be closely studied in order to compare and contrast with characters both within the same novel and across the selected novels.

Moreover, this book will be a critical study on the nihilistic views of the Self, shared by some leading existentialist thinkers like Sartre and Beckett, and Hedayat. To this end, this book will become quite experimental particularly on observing the shift from the Sartrean notion of “no-Self” to the Deleuzian “rhizomic Self” that grows like crabgrass out of the dynamic interplay of the destructive and creative forces.

## 1.2. Research Methods

The basis of my argument against the nihilistic tradition of the Sartrean existential quests in Beckett and Sadegh Hedayat is the insufficient capacity to grasp the Janus-faced man in his/her ontological quest. They anatomize the Self as T. S. Eliot says in his poem “like a patient etherized upon a table”. They remove all the constituent parts and

reduce it to nothingness instead of letting it flow freely. This is why my research methods will be based on the textual analysis of the primary sources as well as supporting my findings with a lot of critical books on the selected novels employing the Sartrean “no-Self”. Moreover, it will consist of interpreting and comparing/contrasting the primary sources. My interpretive strategy is grounded in deducing some hypothetical results to create awareness of the “rhizomic” Self while I critically approach the existing notions of the Self in the selected texts. In doing this, I will ply between different social theories, such as; modernism, existentialism, capitalism, postmodernism... My method of analysis will be dialectical in order to point to other possibilities and alternative ways of looking at the same issue. Thus, the selected novels will be analyzed accordingly.

### 1.3. Significance

The uniqueness of this book lies in the experimental study to create an awareness of the rhizomic Self, which is born out of the dynamic relations of the ceaseless clashes of destructive and creative forces in one’s mind or society. Many existential studies have been done over the ontological quests but they have not gone too far beyond the already trodden paths of the theoretical reflections over the existential quests in their monolithic approaches. Certainly, they made great contributions to the studies over the Self-concept. Also, there is no claim that without their efforts, such a book can be possible. Taking Hegelian dialecticism into account, the ceaseless clashes of ideas give birth to new ideas in the evolutionary time. Thus, this book comes out of the uninterrupted clashes of the philosophical and social ideas of existential thinkers like Sartre, Beckett, and Hedayat and postmodern thinkers like Deleuze, Bellow, and Atwood. This book in itself, which has to be compressed within a set of rules, might be seen as the product of already trodden barren land by the arrows of critics. But it must be kept in mind that Socrates compares himself to a barren midwife (Greek word “*maieutic*”) in Plato’s *Theatetus* (Plato, 102). Although Socrates, like the barren midwife, could not give birth to ideas and only sees in himself a huge nothing, he helps many to give birth to the new thoughts. Therefore, this book might be a good guide for the readers to be aware of the Deleuzian rhizomic Self that welcomes changes rather than seeing them as threats to their fixed, permanent, and traditional Selves. Moreover, this book will render it possible for the readers to understand how one can achieve the rhizomic Self without being stuck in the Sartrean chaos by giving a detailed and critical analysis of the protagonists in the novels; Beckett’s *Murphy* and Hedayat’s *The*

*Blind Owl.* The characters in these novels suffer from the pangs of existence. They are imprisoned in the matrix of an infinite restlessness after their illusory worlds are broken. They are drifting into the realm of death in their Self-alienated worlds in which they see nothing meaningful around them and they are reduced to nothingness in chaos because of their suicidal acts. This book will enable the readers to see the reasons why these characters fail to see the creative side of life in its endless possibilities. Their blindness to the fact that the source of existence is the dynamic interplay of the destructive and creative forces in one's mind or society leads them to Self-destruction. This study suggests that the rhizomic Self can help people accept Self-multiplicity as an inherent condition of life during the painful processes before any sudden immediate changes. The readers of this book will realize that the "rhizomic" Self is not an understanding of the Self built on the deification of ideas which consequently turn into the walls of biases leading to create polarizations in the individual mind and society. On the contrary, it is energy that flows in the evolutionary time and space.

This book also intends to negotiate these concepts among various social strata that have been poisoned by the radicalization and/or the deification of ideas that they once created or have been imposed upon. In this state of rottenness, covered by painted veils, they have been canalized into the predetermined spheres with the ossified principles, which have become their prisons. However, this book has the humble hope of making a contribution to further analysis of these social issues to negotiate the need for change in a more dialogical way. Thus, I hope I will gain further knowledge to establish some negotiation spaces among peoples to question their selves and spheres and depending on this, to break the walls of bias. Thanks to this, they can create any rhizomic connections in the flux of ideas and they will see changes not as threats to their spheres but as new arenas that will help them see their selves as improvisers. Only in this way, can they build a Self or a state transcending any conflicting ideas like race, religion and politics... This book humbly aspires to do this.

## 1.4. Background

The subtleties and delicacies hidden in our being are revealed in full manifestation only in utter darkness and silence. Otherwise, they die away in the daily life endeavors, the light and the hue and cry in the environment. I felt that needed darkness within myself and my attempts to remove it from my being were in fact futile. .... I now realize that the most precious thing in my being is this very need to darkness and silence. Actually, it exists in everybody, but is revealed to us only when



we distance the secular life and ourselves from the worldly and live in seclusion... I only want to be myself and wake up from within the real whatever that I am. (Hedayat, qtd. in Harati and Abadi, 98)

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And turn that over-light off! Turn that off! I won't be looked at in this merciless glare! (Williams, 11)

Light and darkness are universal symbols for the contrasting states of consciousness. Those symbols have always been the challenging points for the analysis of the Janus-faced Self. Just like Nietzsche's dancer on the thin rope above whom there lies the light and below whom there lies the darkness, one attempts to stabilize oneself between this duality or in other words, between illusion and bare existence (Nietzsche, 6). However, one never achieves it, as one's totality has been disrupted in modern times. One either clings to light or darkness in order to, or not, answer the question, "who really am I?". At both ends, one's choice leads one to Self-alienation and Self-destruction. Different studies have been done on the possibilities of the re-integration of the fragmented Self. However, few studies could step beyond defining the situation of the fragmented Self through reductionist terms.

As a reaction to the Cartesian notion of the rational Self, different interpretations of the Self have surfaced, such as Rousseau's romantic notion of the Self, Schopenhauer's denial of the rational Self, Kierkegaard's subjective notion of the Self, Freud's notion of the split Self, Nietzsche's perception of the Self as a paradox, and Marx and Engels' understanding of the reified Self. Each of them interprets the Self in the monolithic approaches. The first reaction against the Cartesian notion comes from Rousseau. He develops a new understanding of the Self in his solitary walk through the forests of St. Germain. What he discovers is his own "Self". It is different from Descartes' pure rational Self that is based on the indubitable premise that "I think therefore I am." His understanding of Self is based on the goodness he shares with all humanity. He focuses on the inner richness of the Self although it is surrounded with the artifices of life. He criticizes the Cartesian notion of the Self as a thinking being, the boundaries of which are drawn by pure logic leaving no room for feelings and intuition. He perceives feelings central to the Self rather than logic (Mansfield, 18-20). Rousseau contends that one is free and independent. Another theorist is Schopenhauer who reacts against Cartesian thought. He rejects the notion of the Self-knowing subject. He only regards it as a Self-deceptive notion. For him, it is only a mask for the warring instincts caused by the Will. Schopenhauer illustrates the operation of the Will with

sexual love. He remarks that the Will wants to perpetuate itself. However, one realizes that disaster always lies behind every desire (Solomon, 76-78). For Schopenhauer, man has to gain an insight to cultivate the flux of the Self in order to blow out the flame of desire. Only in this way, is he able to achieve “nirvana”. Nirvana for Schopenhauer is the Will-less state or the denial of the Will (Solomon, 80-83). Kierkegaard is another critic of the Cartesian notion of the Self. He champions the subjective Self, the essence of which is passion and freedom. For him, the basis of Selfhood is personal choice. Kierkegaard deals more with how one chooses than what one chooses. The Self for Kierkegaard is either/or (Solomon, 91-93). Marx and Engels also criticized the rational Self in its total detachment from material conditions. They sought out ways to explain the Self with material relations. Unlike Kierkegaard’s sense of alienation, which is defined as the Self away from God, Marx sees alienation as the reification of the Self in materialism. This view also makes him question who is the greatest sufferer of self-alienation in this commodity economy (Solomon, 96). Moreover, Nietzsche as an admirer of ancient Greece, poses his notion of the “Self” not in the contemporary world but in ancient Greece. In his early work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, he sees tragedy as central to life. He propounds that thanks to tragedy; one can only bear the sufferings and absurdities behind the temporality of one’s existence by making them into ecstatic moments. In doing this, it sends a message to the spectator of a tragedy that the Self is a struggle between the rational and irrational impulses of life. Nietzsche calls these impulses Dionysian and Apollonian. For him, these impulses are in continuous conflict with each other. In this endless war between these impulses, the Self can be achieved (Huskinson, 20). Last to be mentioned here is Sigmund Freud (1865-1939) as the critic of rational thought. He deals with the Self-crisis that troubles his culture. He claims that much of the mind is hidden from the rational Self. He terms it the unconscious mind. He argues that the unconscious mind consists of urges and impulses that are repressed, blocked, or rechanneled by the conscious mind. Therefore, he purports that one’s integrity oscillates between the impulses of the unconscious mind and the rational censorship of the conscious mind. In other words, the Self manifests itself as the outcome of dialectical forces (Solomon, 140-41). All of these Self-notions widen the crack in the Self rather than find ways to recuperate Self-fragmentation.

Even worse, in existential studies, the Self is detached from all the contingent elements that belong to the phenomenal world. It is reduced to nothingness in Sartrean terms. Their efforts to rebuild the totality of Self result in the total destruction of the Self.

Jean Paul Sartre's "no-Self" that he first theorizes in his article, "Transcendence of The Ego" (1934), and then continues in his famous book called *Being and Nothingness* (1943) has been the main discussion point of many researchers. However, discussions over the Sartrean concept of "no-Self" have never gone beyond textual analysis or comparative purposes. Webber puts forward the presence of the Self as a Being in the world. The focal point in his study is to depict concepts such as bad faith, nothingness, freedom, and choice. Medhidhammaporn, in his comparative study of *Selflessness Theories*, compares and contrasts Sartre's no-Self theory with Anatta (no-Self) in Early Buddhism. Fox, in his book *The New Sartre: Explorations in Postmodernism*, places Sartre among postmodern figures like Foucault and Deleuze. In addition, he sees the Sartrean no-Self theory in assenting forms of postmodernism. Hennessey, in her doctoral book named *Beckett and Being: A Phenomenological Ontology* (2015), focuses on the links between Sartre's notion of no-Self and Beckett's works. She draws the attention of the reader to the dichotomy between the presence and absence of the Self. However, unlike the aforementioned studies, this book will focus on Sartre's reductionist approach in his "no-Self" theory. Unlike the pure discussion of no-Self theory in the aforementioned studies or books, this book will attempt to lead this discussion via the protagonists in the selected novels.

In the second phase, this book will embark on a discussion of postmodern self-theories in general and the Deleuzian "rhizomic" Self in particular. This argument has been little questioned among scholars. I have noticed that some similar studies have been carried out on re-building the Self out of the dynamic interplay of destructive and creative forces: One of these is Chatzantonis' work *Deleuze and Mereology: Multiplicity, Structure and Composition*. In this work, he surveys the Deleuzian notion of the Self that concerns multiplicity. However, his conception of the Self in multiplicity is of the relations between the parts and the wholes. The way that he sees multiplicity is different from the one to be discussed in this project. I will attempt to show the concept of multiplicity as the inherent condition of life and the Self. Another is Stagoll's work, *Deleuze's Becoming Subject: Difference and the Human Individual* (1998). In this work, Stagoll claims that Deleuze's Subject does not have any permanent identities. Instead, it is always in the process of Becoming. This claim bears similar qualities to what I will put forward in this project. However, in my project, I will attempt to show the reasons why the capitalist society needs such a notion of the Self. Another work is Huskinson's *The Whole Self in The Union of Opposites*. Our starting point is the same, to create awareness about a new self-theory by bringing two opposite forces

together, but our conception of the “whole Self” is quite different. While she aims to restore the fragmented modernist Self into a concrete wholeness, I will attempt to reach a different end. My objective will be to show the plural Self in wholeness, the essence of which is the flux of changes. In doing this, this book will not be pure philosophical discussions of self-theories like that of Huskinson; it will mainly focus on their reflections in the novels by taking socio-historical background into consideration.

There are also some works available on the philosophical links between Sartre and Deleuze. In this context, there are two works among many in relation to my project. These are respectively; Boundas’ article on “Foreclosure of the Other: From Deleuze to Sartre” (1993), and “Deleuze and Sartre: From theory to Praxis” by Raymond Van de Wiel. In the first article, Boundas argues that Sartrean existentialism has enabled the start of poststructuralism. He draws attention to the ambiguous relation between Sartre and Deleuze. The other article holds some common ground. It focuses on the differences between the Sartrean and Deleuzian theories about the existence of other people. Wiel refers to the practical failure of the Sartrean theory of no-Self.

The first pillar of this study is to trace the Sartrean no-Self in Sadeh Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl*, and Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy*. Therefore, both novels will be studied in light of the Sartrean nothingness to show how the protagonists, who are not aware of the ceaseless clashes of the destructive and creative forces in one’s mind as the driving force of life itself, have eventually been imprisoned and destroyed in the Sartrean vortex after they tear out the veil of illusions with the Sartrean reductionist method. Out of the critical analysis of both novels, this book will attempt to trace the Deleuzian rhizomic in Saul Bellow’s *Herzog* and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* in order to show that the protagonists are able to gain insight into life and the Self, based on the dynamic interplay between the antithetical forces.

The books have been selected fastidiously since they are the unexplored territory for the analysis in the context of the selected Self-theories, which will be analyzed in this book. I have discovered that the former studies have revolved around the cycle of the authors’ purposes. Within this context, I have noticed that there have been many studies done on Sadeh Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl* and Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy*.

Firstly, there are different interpretations of Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl*. These interpretations are canalized into two different discourses. The first discourse sees the novel in a psychoanalytic current. As Simidchieva notes, Alishan and Katouzian are seen as two representatives of these

discourses. She also argues that Alishan sees part I of the novel as the dream world and part II as the real world in the psychoanalytic cycle of consciousness and sub-consciousness (Simidchieva, 24). On the other hand, Katouzian sees part I as the narrator's life in the decaying society of the modern world and part II as the narrator's life in the thriving Ray of golden past. Katouzian focuses on the character's yearning for the golden past of the society (Katouzian, 119). My interpretation will not dwell on either of these ways. Central to my argument, *The Blind Owl* can be read in light of the Sartrean "no-Self". In addition to these discourses, I have also found some studies that have been carried out on the discussion of the Self in *The Blind Owl*. One of them is Mahmoodi and Jelodar's article, "The Construction of Self and the Rejection of the Natives as the inferior Other: Sadegh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*". In this article, Mahmoodi and Jelodar discuss the Self-alienation of the people in the face of the false ideals of Western Modernity. Another study on the discussion of the Self in *The Blind Owl* is "Absurdity and Creation in the Work of Sadegh Hedayat" (1982) by Lashgari. In this article, he aims to show Hedayat's wish to know himself before his death. He also draws the readers' attention to Hedayat's use of artistic creativity to pull a blanket over the absurdity of life. In an article called "Hysterical Self Analysis", Kamshad presents the reader with the biographical history of *The Blind Owl*. Through my readings of the secondary sources on Hedayat and his works, I have also explored some studies that have searched for different connections of Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*. One of them is "the Khayyamic Influence in the Blind Owl" by Leonard Bogle. Bogle focuses on the influence of Omar Khayyam's philosophy on Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*. In his discussion, he traces the protagonist of *The Blind Owl* in the track of Omar Khayyam's ideas about the Self and existence. Omar Khayyam sees the Self as the accidental creation (89):

A drop of water merged with the sea  
A speck of dust became one with the earth  
What is your coming into the world?  
A fly appears and disappears. (qtd. in Bogle, 89)

In 1934, Hedayat published *The Songs of Khayyam*. In the introduction to this work, Hedayat writes about his views of Khayyamic philosophy. In 1937, *The Blind Owl* was written. In his article, Bogle attempts to see the relation between *The Blind Owl* and Khayyamic philosophy. Another connection that I have found is the relation between Buddhism and *The Blind Owl*. In the article, "Buddhism and The Structure of *The Blind Owl*" by Richard A. Williams, and in a personal note on *The*

*Blind Owl* by Iraj Bashiri, the influence of Buddhism on Hedayat and his work has been researched. Both critics focus on the voyage of the narrator in the cycle of samsara (the world of illusions) and nirvana (the egoless state). My observations have led me to draw the conclusion that there are few studies that have been conducted on the possible relation between the Sartrean theory of “no-Self” and Hedayat’s works, particularly *The Blind Owl*.

Secondly, there are a lot of secondary sources on Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy*. The conflict between the internal and external forces has become the central criticism in almost all of them. One of them is Kiberd’s article, “Murphy and the World of Samuel Beckett”. In this article, Kiberd sees Murphy as the incarnation of Beckett’s concern on the existential crisis or the Cartesian duality between illusion and reality. The article titled “Murphy’s Surrender to Symmetry” by Neil Taylor and Bryan Loughrey, concerns the game of chess between Murphy and Mr. Endon. Through a game of chess, they attempt to explain Murphy’s realization of the Cartesian split and how he is drifting towards utter chaos in the end. Arka Chattopadhyay’s article titled “Murphy in the Letters of Samuel Beckett” debates the split between the Self and the voice. To Chattopadhyay, the split results from Murphy’s encounter with the other. The realization of the other leads him to lose his voice. Chattopadhyay bases her argument on three letters that Beckett wrote to Thomas McGreevy (2). These letters were written during the years (1935-36) when Beckett wrote *Murphy*. Chattopadhyay argues that Beckett’s memories of the streets of London that he mentioned in these letters are the inspirational source for *Murphy* (2). John Fletcher’s book with the name *The Novels of Samuel Beckett* (1964), discusses the evolution of Beckett’s characters and style during his literary career. About *Murphy*, Fletcher also directs his attention to the duality of mind and matter that Murphy has experienced. Hugh Kenner, in his book *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study*, prefers to guide the reader to think critically rather than make a textual analysis. He guides the reader to see Murphy as a man who is stuck between material and immaterial existence. Angela B. Moorjani in her study, “Abysmal Games”, claims that *Murphy* epitomizes Beckett’s technical achievement in his way of “undermining [of] the subject,” because it includes “the reduplication of the subject within itself” (81). Anthony Farrow in his book called *Early Beckett: Art and Allusion in More Pricks than Kicks and Murphy* allocates two chapters on *Murphy*. In these chapters, he pays attention to the philosophical side of *Murphy*. He attempts to explore the distinction between the objective knowledge of the world and the phenomenological consciousness that have been discussed in the novel. Moreover, I have also