

Chaos Theory and Literature from an Existentialist Perspective

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**Yasser Khamees Ragab Aman,**  
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**Abstract:** Yasser Khamees Ragab Aman proposes in his article "Chaos Theory and Literature from an Existentialist Perspective" that in literature the relation, principles, and processes of chaos and order can be analyzed from an existentialist perspective. Chaos lies at the heart of nothingness felt by the for-itself and order is the appearance the for-itself seeks, the achievement it tries to realize, temporary it may seem. Ragab Aman argues that with the application of chaos theory to works of literature may yield new insight. Ragab Aman applies in his paper aspects of chaos theory to three literary works which represent three different literatures and cultures, namely Arabic, English, and French. Through a comparative textual interpretation of Sartre's *Nausea*, Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, and Al Hakim's *The People of the Cave*, Ragab Aman's analysis suggests that despite cultural differences literature -- as primary representation of culture -- shows significant similarities and thus suggests the principles and processes of chaos and order as universal systemic characteristics.

**Yasser KHAMEES RAGAB AMAN**

### **Chaos Theory and Literature from an Existentialist Perspective**

The last thirty years have witnessed a strong impact of chaos theory, also known as nonlinear dynamical systems theory on various fields in the humanities and the social sciences. The theory's characteristics, its concepts, and principles are explained in a number of books such as James Gleick's *Chaos: Making a New Science*, Tien-Yien Li's and James A. Yorke's *Period Three Implies Chaos*, and Katherine Hayles's *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* and her edited volume *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*. Gleick's book shows how chaos theory opposes the deterministic Newtonian viewpoint. Moreover, it highlights the claims of the theory's advocates that it will be remembered as the third landmark of twentieth-century science, being preceded by relativity and quantum mechanics. The same view of Gleick's is supported by other post-modern advocates of the theory (see Kiel and Elliott 2). The applicability of chaos theory in humanities scholarship is based on a similarity between theory, (post)modernism, and systems studied by social fiction and science. Both chaos and postmodernism reject the logical systems which preceded them: Newtonian science and modernism (see Zimmerman 13). Morse Peckham's idea of cultural convergence, which shows parallel paradigms of theory and postmodernism, and Ilya Prigogine's and Isabelle Stenger's similar concept of the convergence of ideas between the sciences and the humanities show the potential of the application of chaos theory in the study of literature. Hayles, in particular, argues for the importance of taking into consideration the relationship between chaos theory and literature. The science of chaos and the literary reading method with regard to deconstruction both subvert longstanding values of established paradigms (Hayles, *Chaos Bound* 16-17). Hayles's collected volume *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science* may be the most thorough and well-reasoned application of chaos humanities scholarship, with a number of outstanding papers. Overall, the papers explain the relation of chaos theory to recent developments in literature and literary criticism, especially post-structuralism and deconstruction. The work in the volume shows that both chaos theory and literary trends involve attempts to understand the variability of meaning in systems or texts and questions the traditional concept of chaos theory and the longstanding viewpoint which equates it with disorder, the opposite of order: "The last twenty years have seen a radical reevaluation of this view. In both contemporary literature and science, chaos has been conceptualized as extremely complex information rather than an absence of order. As a result, textuality is conceived in new ways within critical theory and literature, and new kinds of phenomena are coming to the fore within an emerging field known as the science of chaos" (Hayles, "Introduction" 1).

Like many other articulations that have emerged from postmodern contexts, chaos theory's formation has been catalyzed by the Kuhnian paradigm shift which involves new ideas about the behavior of chaotic or complicatedly ordered systems, whether natural or artificial. The theory has been developed through the use of the microcomputer which allows mathematics to be practiced as an experimental science (see Hayles, "Introduction" 5-6). Further, for example Edward Lorenz's concept of the "butterfly effect" has suggested the applicability of chaos theory in weather forecasting. Chaos lies at the heart of nothingness felt by the for-itself and order is the appearance the for-itself seeks, the achievement it tries to realize, temporary it may seem. Sometimes achieving someone's order creates another's chaos. To a similar effect, Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers wrote that "Classical thermodynamics leads to the concept of 'equilibrium structures' such as crystals. Bernard cells are structures too, but of a quite different nature. That is why we have introduced the notion of 'dissipative structures,' to emphasize the close association, at first paradoxical, in such situations between structure and order on the one side, and dissipation or waste on the other. Heat transfer was considered a source of waste in classical thermodynamics. In the Bernard cell it becomes a source of order" (143). And chaos has been an important theme in science fiction particularly in works by A.A. Attanasio, Lewis Shiner, Bruce Sterling, and William Gibson (on this, see, e.g., Porushe). I propose that the relation of chaos and order can be analyzed from an existentialist perspective and based on this hypothesis I analyze the relationship of chaos and order in Sartre's *Nausea*, Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, and Al Hakim's *The People of the Cave (Ahl al-Kahf, 1933)*.

Sartre's concept of chaotic absurdity is responsible for his concept of existentialism; it is like a worm in the heart of existentialism's being. Sartre's protagonist, Roquentin, suffers from such chaotic absurdity. He utters it: "every existing thing is born without reason; prolongs itself out of weakness and dies by chance" (133). Roquentin suffers duplicity of life, discovers the chaotic absurdity of his situation, and after an odyssey of hysterical scenes, in which he confronts chaos and reflects what is inside him, he decides to write a novel in order to achieve his being and to enjoy a new order. Howev-

er, this achievement is temporary and unsatisfactory. I contend that the reason for Sartre's own plight as expressed in his play is his total denial of the absolute, of the Cartesian Perfect Being. *Nausea* springs from the idea of a Godless world: "Sartre is an atheist who understands men's thirst for God, and who teaches them that they must learn to live with their thirst forever unsatisfied" (Granston 17). The protagonist suffers from the unconsciousness of the in-itself and a psychedelic vision of life. He settles in Bouville to write a biography of the Marquis de Rollebon; he retreats in an impenetrable shell; even his visits to the patroness of the railway men's rendezvous and his relationship to the Self-Taught Man are of no real effect. He is free from all common ties in the sense of having none. His freedom is in fact a passive one. From the very beginning the protagonist makes it clear that chaos springs from his inability to understand his absurd situation: "it was certain that I was afraid or had some other feeling of that sort. If I had only known what I was afraid of, I would have made a great step forward" (2). The introduction of chaos prefigures the potential order sought after: his consciousness of his ignorance of the situation, makes him, as a for-itself now, ready for seeing the necessity of order represented as a great step forward. What worsens the matter is that his freedom seems to slip away from him and he begins to feel the existence of other objects which sometimes resist him and give him a sense of nausea: "I recall better what I felt the other day at the seashore when I held the pebble. It was a sort of sweetish sickness. How unpleasant it was! It came from the stone, I'm sure of it; it passed from the stone to my hand. Yes, that's it, just it -- a sort of nausea in the hands" (10-11). Chaos lies at the heart of the encounter; things are no longer taken for granted. The realization of their existence breaches the old order, presumably false, and prepares for the new one. That is why Roquentin sees it as sweetish sickness, a phrase which represents the coming order referred to in the adjective sweetish, which is perceived in the present chaotic situation suggested by the word sickness. Nausea-packed scenes pile up until they overwhelm him. Chaos and absurdity characterize his predicament. The protagonist's nausea gets worse after recognizing the breakup of the customary relationship between him and the world of objects. It reaches the climax in the café where he scrutinizes Adolph's purple suspenders: "Things are bad! Things are very bad: I have it, the filth, the Nausea. And this time it is new: it caught me in a café ... Then the Nausea seized me, I dropped to a seat, I no longer knew where I was; I saw the colors spin slowly around me, I wanted to vomit. And since that time, the Nausea has not left me, it holds me ... The Nausea is not inside me: I feel it out there in the wall, in the suspenders, everywhere around me. It makes itself one with the café, I am the one who is within it" (18-20).

The increasing sense of chaos and nausea is construed in complicatedly drawn images which reflect two contradictory values expressed in the physicalities of the human body: vomiting and swallowing. The former suggests the latter. Full of nausea, the protagonist reflects it on everything he sees and feels as if it is bad food which he gets rid of by vomiting. Then the scene turns kaleidoscopic with nausea swallowing everything. Therefore the two images form a chaotic atmosphere and system. To ease this sense of chaos, the protagonist seeks a form of order, temporary it may be. He listens to his favorite song: the song is effective in changing his nausea and internal chaos in a kind of tranquility and order. However, this state is temporary. The voice represents the initiation of order yet it does not guarantee its continuity. That's why nausea reappears and chaos hovers over his life. His nausea is shaped in a kind of time-related chaos. The trilogy of time -- the past, the present, and the future -- intermingles chaotically and violates the logical order: "I see the future. It is there, poised over the street, hardly more dim [sic] than the present. What advantage will accrue from its realization? ... I can no longer distinguish present from future and yet it lasts ... This is time, time laid bare, coming slowly into existence, keeping us waiting, and when it does come making us sick because we realize it's been there for a long time" (31). The indefinite dimensions of Time and the protagonist's strictly limited vision of it (his shortsightedness) necessitate the absence of a stable order that can encompass the future. He sees the future as dimmer than the present because of the narrow lens with which he beholds the now of the present. The natural progress of time confuses the protagonist since the future becomes present and the present is past. He realizes that existence passes through time, it is not stable or fixed. Moreover, it lacks order and is most of the time subject to experience chaos which results from a sense of being sick of nausea. Talking about the past does not change this state of chaos and nothingness. It is not a genuine achievement to write about the life of someone else. Roquentin encounters his freedom in nausea. He suffers and wishes to discover what nausea is: it is simply the loss of the thing which turns from an essential necessity to a meaningless contingency. It is only in the park that the veil is torn and he sees for himself that he, as a *de trop*, reflects nausea on what he sees; it springs from inside him: "the nausea has not left me and I don't believe it will leave me so soon; but I no longer have to bear it, it is no longer an illness or a passing fit: it is I" (126). He becomes aware of himself, he turns a for-itself which gropes its way for freedom. According to Sartre,

the awareness of existent things is relative since every for-itself gives private significations to these things; thus they do not exist outside consciousness. To reduce this sense of nausea, he listens to his preferred song "Some of these Days": The song ... comes to stand for one of the two poles in the crucial philosophical distinction that underlines *La Nausée*: that is, for being as opposed to existence, for necessity as opposed to contingency, for order and form as opposed to chaos, for structures as opposed to unstructured time. The ending of *La Nausée* is deliberately shown to be a certain kind of development of the theme of this philosophical contrast" (Wilcocks 184). He discovers that such a creation justifies both the Jewish composer's and the Negress singer's beings. The individual's purposeful achievement is the order that springs from chaos and nausea. Before the song, the singer and the composer seem to live in a chaotic world. The song ends the state of chaos for both of them. The composer is "a fat man, who was short of money, had other human problems, and who, nevertheless, created this melody which, since it exists in its inevitable, necessary way, bestows upon its creator some of its own necessity and helps him, at any rate partially, to escape from his contingency. And what is true of the Jewish composer is also true of the Negress who sings the song" (Grove 42). In fact, Roquentin reflects his inner struggle, his nausea, in what he sees; thus everything is seen as overwhelming its form. He discovers that the one who cannot achieve or justify his being is a *de trop*, a source of nausea. He decides to escape his contingency and achieve his being. He finds out that freedom is not to run away or to keep in an impenetrable shell; it is there in the universe. He decides to write a novel and there would be people who would read this book and say: "Antoine Roquentin wrote it, a red-headed man who hung around cafés," and they would think about my life as I think about the Negress's: as something precious and almost legendary" (178). Whether Nausea is autobiographical or not, what is important is that Roquentin -- or Sartre -- owing to his total denial of the absolute, fulfills, if there is any fulfillment, his being temporarily.

Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* revolves around the chaotic life of Paul who, through bad circumstances and disturbance in family relations, becomes almost the lover of his mother. The novel slowly reveals the plight of the son who, after discovering his chaotic existence, struggles and undergoes a drastic ordeal to achieve order and attain his individuality. Paul's family background and his relationships to Miriam and Clara force him into an ordeal through which he excruciatingly passes from chaos to order. Mrs. Morel's married life is the core of her to-be-born son's chaotic life. So chaotic her marriage is that she feels death-in-life: "She felt wretched with the coming child. The world seemed a dreary place, where nothing else would happen for her--at least until William grew up. But for herself, nothing but this dreary endurance -- till the children grew up. And the children! She could not afford to have this third. She did not want it. The father was serving beer in a public house, swilling himself drunk. She despised him, and was tied to him. This coming child was too much for her. If it were not for William and Annie, she was sick of it, the struggle with poverty and ugliness and meanness ... The prospect of her life made her feel as if she were buried alive" (5). The quotation shades light on the early married life of the Morels. Disturbance in the husband-wife relationship affects deeply the lives of their children. The image of a bleak house over which chaos looms is illustrated by stressing the condition of the mother being wretched, the place being dreary and the father being drunk. This image is sustained by another which shows the mother's suffering with poverty and ugliness and meanness. Put together, the two images reveal a chaotic life, meaningless and devoid of order. At Paul's birth Mr. Morel's fate is sealed since he is cut off from the family circle. Moreover, it provides Mrs. Morel with an alternative to William in case, as it will happen indeed, he fails to take up the task of achieving his mother's hopes. Her attempts at creating order in her life necessitate chaos in others' lives. Focusing on her two sons means neglecting her husband and thus chaos nourishes on their marital life. The one sided angle from which order is viewed by the mother will impose a chaotically stifling atmosphere on Paul's life. Even before his death William does not gratify his mother's desire since he has got many of his father's traits: "Paul on the other hand has been presented to us from even before his birth as linked to his mother's frustrations and desires in a peculiarly intimate way. Whereas the choice of William as a surrogate through whom to live her inner life was a conscious act determined by her husband's neglect and violence at a particular point in their relationship, the bond with Paul appears to go below Mrs. Morel's conscious will" (Salgado 101-02). From the outset, Paul's relationship with Miriam shows symptoms of chaos: "As a little girl she held aloof" (142) lest Paul should depreciate her. She quarrels with her brothers and does not show due esteem to her father: "On the whole, she scorned the male sex" (143). Moreover, "Miriam almost fiercely wished she were a man. And yet she hated men at the same time" (154). Her misunderstanding of religion creates inner chaos which is so overwhelming that she is seen as a helpless, spellbound being. Not only does Miriam equate love to a wrongdoing that may amount to blasphemy but she also dogs this idea misguidedly ruining her relationship to Paul. Relating love to two antithetical ideas -- being God's gift and causing her shame --

underlines a sense of chaos in her thinking. On the other hand, introducing the idea of sacrifice assures the failure of such a relation.

Although the idea of shame shows itself in Paul's attitude towards Miriam, unlike her, his shame is not based on religious motives; rather it is rooted in his Oedipal unconscious feelings: "He was afraid of her. The fact that he might want her as a man wants a woman had in him been suppressed into a shame. When she shrank in her convulsed, coiled torture from the thought of such a thing, he had winced to the depths of his soul. And now this "purity" prevented even their first love-kiss. It was as if she could scarcely stand the shock of physical love, even a passionate kiss, and then he was too shrinking and sensitive to give it" (178-79). For Paul, love, physical or spiritual, is associated with shame and purity. However, his sense of purity is derived from his impotence. His inability to make love or even kiss her sheds light on his disordered life and stresses his sexually distorted ego. Like Miriam, he is under a spell -- his mother's. Put together, her distorted ideas about religion and sacrifice and his Oedipal background, they causes their attempt at lovemaking to be a total fiasco. Miriam believes that religious ideas stress an encompassing sense of chaos. She is torn between sacrificing herself to gratify Paul's sexual desire and the mortifying feelings lovemaking will bring on. Their actual lovemaking is encumbered by the idea of sacrifice. The image of sacrifice, suggested by words such as "resigned," "sacrifice," and "immolation" (see 289-90) hinders their lovemaking at first. Devoid from any sense of mutual emotions and physical harmony, the act of lovemaking is actually sacrificed for wrong religious beliefs and is rendered chaotic and meaningless. Paul's ordeal lies in the fact he is being torn between his expectations in life and his mother's domination: "His new young life, so strong and imperious, was urged towards something else. It made him mad with restlessness ... He fought against his mother almost as he fought against Miriam" (222-23). An invisible struggle flares up between the son and the mother. As a for-itself now, he yearns to end the state of chaos he lives in, to attain freedom and individuality. The more the mother's grip is tightened on him, the fiercer his sense of chaos becomes and the greater his need for order is. The struggle turns fiercer at the hint of marriage, a symbol of a life of stability and order. In turn, the mother fights back to keep her son under her spell. She, of course unwittingly, prolongs her son's state of chaos. She hates Miriam for the fact that she represents a potentially orderly solid long-term stable relationship that will take her place in his heart. She measures herself against Miriam and finds the latter of a better quality than she. In a moment of tension, she describes Paul-Miriam relationship saying: "She is one of those who will suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left ... she will never let him become a man" (160). And the mother describes her distorted relationship to her son, the chaotic atmosphere she imposes on him. The semantic relations between the words "suck," "soul," and "never" reveal the chaos which overwhelms the son. The three words seem to form a triangle at the base of which is the act of sucking which, so long as it is there, equates the soul to nothingness, to never to be a man, a being thrown into a vicious circle of chaos. The son's craving for attaining stability and order leads him to attempt an uncalculated sexual experience with Miriam, which ends in failure. However, provoked by his sense of increasing chaos, he hurls himself into another relation with Clara who shows his divided aim. He "loved Miriam with his soul. He grew warm at the thought of Clara ... Miriam was his old friend, lover, and she belonged to Bestwood and home and his youth. Clara belonged to Nottingham, to life, to the world" (276). Introducing Clara, although this may be seen as to counterbalance Miriam's influence, prolongs the state of chaos he feels. After escorting her to the railway station, he returns home and suffers from spiritual as well as physical pain: "There was a physical pain that made him bite his lips till they bled, and the chaos inside him left him unable to think, almost to feel" (329-30). The violent act of biting his lips until they bleed suggests a more violent yet invisible act of chaos fiercely shaking him. Chaos goes hand in hand with instability: Paul cannot go for either woman, since one represents the soul while the other represents the body. Now the for-itself reaches self-knowledge -- the first step in ending chaos and bringing in order. The Paul-Miriam-Clara affair is given only to stress Paul's chaotic life, being torn asunder between the two women with his mother's dominance hovering over his life. His mother dies and, as a matter of course, his affair with Clara comes to an end since he is in need of none's guidance now. He is utterly freed: "He would not take that direction, to darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the finally humming, glowing town quickly" (420). The end of the novel introduces the protagonist into a new life of order where he no longer feels the deadening chaos which has been close in on him all over his life. His ego is dissolved into the society. After getting involved into an accumulating series of chaos, the reader perceives a sense of order at the end of both *Nausea* and *Sons and Lovers*, however temporary it may be.

Al-Hakim's *The People of the Cave* received different interpretations. At the time of its publication it was seen as a play which deals with insurrection, a story in the Quran: "It concerns the tale of the seven sleepers of Ephesus who, in order to escape the Roman persecution of Christians, take refuge in

a cave. They sleep for three hundred years, and wake up in a completely different era -- without realizing it, of course. In its use of overarching themes -- rebirth into a new world and a predilection for returning to the past -- al-Hakim's play obviously touches upon some of the broad cultural topics that were of major concern to intellectuals at the time, and, because of the play's obvious seriousness of purpose, most critics have chosen to emphasize such features (see Allen). Al-Hakim handles an intrinsically intellectual issue: the struggle between Man and Time, the attempts of Man to overcome chaos represented in the idea of decay and maintain order through an indefatigable insistence on living in a chaotic milieu and how, in the end, Time survives. In the text, Time is pregnant with ties, relationships and traditions -- matters which give essential and meaningful sense of purpose to Man's life. Once these things are lost, Man suffers from chaos and death in life. The play opens with a setting that draws an image of the would-be chaos from which the characters are going to suffer: the people of the cave suffer from unconscious and psychedelic vision; first they experience this unconsciousness in their profound sleep. After getting up, they still keep the same vision of their life as they discuss their situation. Their feigned stability is debunked the moment they feel hungry. Chaos shows itself. Yamlikha, the shepherd, deems it necessary to fetch food. The three people of the cave become conscious when they get in contact with the outer world, when Yamlikha goes to fetch food. He returns with news which changes the state of their in-itself, which represents dormant order and stability, into chaos. Yamlikha says: "You sit in the dark waiting for dawn and the sun is in the middle of the sky!" (29). This statement brings in a chaotic atmosphere and the sunlight, the opposite of darkness, represents chaos since it disturbs the stable condition they are in while sleeping in the dark cave. Moreover, they begin to have doubts concerning their situations: "Mishlinya: I am beginning to have doubts. Marnush: About what? Mishlinya: About the time we've spent in this cave. Don't you remember that I came to it clean shaven? Look at me now with my flowing beard and my hair hanging down. I did not notice it before now, when I scratched my head with my fingernail.... Marnush (touching his head): You're right! I, too, don't remember coming to the cave with this much hair on my head or beard" (29-30). Being aware of their shabby appearance introduces and sustains the chaotic situations they will soon be involved in. Doubt beats hard at their brains whether they fall asleep for one night, a month or more. Things develop fast when the people follow Yamlikha and call him possessor of the treasure (a chorus shouting from within): Possessor of the treasure! Show yourself to us! Possessor of the treasure! Don't be afraid! Come out to us, and don't be afraid!" (32).

Misunderstanding results into chaos: the people mistake Yamlikha for a possessor of a treasure owing to the fact that he has old coins which date back three hundred years. On the other hand, the three refugees in the cave cannot understand what the people mean by treasure since they do not know that they have slept for ages. Their sense of chaos gets worse when the people outside the cave mistake them for ghosts: in a second, light bursts into the cave. The clamor rises, and the crowd bursts into the cave, torches in hand. But no sooner have the newcomers set their eyes on the three men in the light of the torches than they are filled with fear and fall back with the others in total dismay. Chaos ensues. They shout with terror in their voices: Ghosts! The Dead! Ghosts! They rush out in chaos, leaving some of their torches behind. The place is empty but for the three men and their dog. The cave is fully lit, but they stand still like statues. It is as if they themselves were terrified by these two words: 'Ghosts, the dead!' Or as if they did not understand a thing of what they saw and heard" (32). The three men are led out of the cave to the king's palace. Chaotic as it seems, the outer world attracts every one of them in a way: Marnush wants to see his wife and his child, Yamlikha his sheep, and Mishlinya his beloved Priska, the king's daughter. Scenes that take place in the palace provide vivid examples of chaos, misunderstanding, and failure in communication. The king and his retinue, especially Gallias, the man of religion, mistake them for priests. Their perception of Time isolates the protagonists away from the people: their aims are different. The king, Gallias, and the rest of the people are in desperate need for a religious symbol of God's blessing which means spiritual order, stability and peace of mind. However, the protagonists' order is deeply rooted in their past lives and relationships. Consequently, achievement of each group's order means creating the other's chaos. The three men ask politely to leave, each for some urgent business to handle: "(Marnush insistingly) Will Your Highness give us leave? King (taken aback, confused, and looking for Gallias): Gallias! Gallias! Marnush: No need for that. Your Highness; I know the way to my house. (He bows and exits presently). Yamlikha seizes the opportunity and exits behind Marnush. Mishlinya remains. He comes out of his reverie and addresses the King. Mishlinya: Your Highness, I am not worthy to stand before you and address myself to you in my present sad condition. With Your Highness's permission I will go to my room, change my clothes, shave my beard and get a hair-cut. King (astounded): Gallias! Mishlinya: No need for that. Your Highness. I know where my room is in this palace. I beg Your Highness's forgiveness, I didn't give a thought to my shabby appearance until this moment. No doubt this is the

reason behind the Princess' aversion to my presence, and explains why she did not answer my greeting. (He exits, leaving the king and his followers in a state of utter confusion)" (46-47). Chaos springs from the absence of mutual understanding—a gap of three hundred years. As a for-itself they seek to achieve their being, each in his own way: Marnush searches for his family, Yamlikha for his sheep, but Mishlinya, who believes that Priska is his beloved who he left three hundred years ago, stays in the palace. When faced with the naked truth, that three hundred years separate them from their world, they are torn asunder between accepting this chaotic situation and living with absurdity and revolting against the existentialist fatality. Yamlikha, who is the first to discover the truth, tries to convince them to return to the cave. However, taken by the new life, they resist him: "Marnush: Poor man, you've gone mad! Yamlikha: I'm not mad. To the cave ... The cave is all we've got in this existence! The cave is the link that connects us to our lost world" (53).

Losing the sheep symbolizes the absence of order for Yamlikha. On the contrary the other two are still clinging to a false hope. Yamlikha points out that life is impossible for them. They have to accept absurdity, chaos, and meaninglessness so long as they are willing to live among those people. They are to be treated as anachronisms: "Yamlikha: If you had but seen me, surrounded by people in strange clothes, with strange expressions on their faces as they stared at me. It almost tore my heart apart. Staring at me as if I were a demon ... And then. I heard a stifled and faint bark. I looked up and saw my dog, Qitmir, surrounded by the city dogs. They started to eye him and sniff him as if he were some kind of strange animal ... Some of them wanted to get closer and resume their sniffing, but they were too scared to try that. That's me and Qitmir in this new life!" (59). Yamlikha's woeful experience with the new life underlines the chaos they will have to endure if they choose to go on living in that new world. Time is against them and their feigned sense of belonging does not at all seem genuine: *The Men of the Cave* represents Man's struggle with Time, as the sleepers of the cave come back to life and find all they had lived for in the past does not apply to the present. They seek in vain for a bridge between their souls and their fleeting surroundings (see Hoppe). Convinced that they are cut out of any possible mutual human contact, they seek the only place which represents order -- the cave. The people of the cave rejected and overcame the absurdity and chaos of their situation. They chose to return to the cave when they found that they lived in chaos in a world where they miss mutual understanding. This concept contradicts Sartre's idea about existence. Sartre confines existence to the present moment and cuts any possible ties with the past. Therefore, chaos ensues and the realization of a stable appearance needed for the for-itself is suspended. Sartre's empirical approach to time and existence stresses the temporality of existence since the present is doomed to become past. Order is absent since there is no relation between the present and the past. Unlike Sartre's protagonist, Al-Hakim's find eternal stability in the cave which represents their past relationships to their world. Hence, they refused to accept the absurdity of their situation.

In conclusion, the three texts -- which represent three different cultures -- show strong affinities in dealing with the concepts of chaos and order from an existentialist perspective. The findings of this paper can be summarized in three points. First, Sartre's *Nausea* and Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* reflect the Western concept while Al-Hakim's *The People of the Cave* shows the Eastern modification of the concept. In both Western novels the two protagonists, Roquentin and Paul, entertain an apocalyptic conceptualization of order in the future and seek to realize it through individual achievements. On the other hand, Al-Hakim's protagonists prefer to return to the cave, the only recognizable symbol which relates them to their world. They seek an established order in their past. Differences in handling the problem of chaos and order is intrinsically cultural: the Western culture encourages individualism while the Eastern one stresses collective relationships. However, both cultures agree on the necessity of having order. The second point underlines the contrasting relation between chaos and order: someone's order often means another one's chaos. Roquentin's achievement of order causes the Marquis's chaos. The former decides to write a novel to attain stability, therefore he will never write a biography on the Marquis whose existence is now suspended. To attain order, Paul leaves Miriam and his mother immersed in chaos. Miriam feels satisfied to sacrifice herself for Paul trying to imitate Christ who sacrificed Himself for mankind. Paul's mother dominates his life because her married life has long been turned chaotic. The three protagonists return to the cave and leave the people in a state of speculative chaos. Young Priska's fleeing to the cave achieves her order but necessitates her father's chaos. The third point reveals the fact that the very nature of chaos underscores the polarity of its manifestations. However, these cases -- when viewed as an inseparable tapestry -- form the nucleus of order. In *Nausea*, Roquentin's numerous detailed confrontations with meaninglessness and chaos finally make him take his decision to write a novel to change chaos into order. In *Sons and Lovers* the chaotic experiences Miriam and Mrs. Morel must have undergone as a result of Paul's growing sense of absurdity help the protagonist achieve order by attaining his individuality. In *The People of the Cave*



the three protagonists, Yamlikha, Marnush, and Mishliya respectively realize their chaotic predicament. Thus they are forced to seek the only possible form of order and return to the past relationship-packed cave. If order is said to lie at the heart of chaos, different cases of chaos, one can say, form and shape order. I argue that this interchangeability is best seen and analyzed through an existentialist perspective.

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