

A CRITICAL STUDY OF EXISTENCE IN MANDEL'S APOCALYPTIC SCI-FI *SEA OF TRANQUILITY*

Sanabil Rahat Alvi^{*1}, Safana Hashmat², Sadaf Rashid³

^{*1}MPhil Scholar, Government College University, Faisalabad; ²PhD Scholar, Lecturer in English, Government College University, Faisalabad; ³PhD Scholar, Lecturer in English, Government College University, Faisalabad

^{*1}sanabilalvi5@gmail.com; ²safanahashmat@gcuf.edu.pk; ³sadaf.rasheed@yahoo.com

Corresponding Author: *

Received: 11 December, 2023 Revised: 17 January, 2024 Accepted: 22 February, 2024 Published: 29 February, 2024

ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the existentialist themes evident in the apocalyptic sci-fi *Sea of Tranquility* (2022). It reveals intricate complexities surrounding human existence and free will across different periods of time. Each character within *Sea of Tranquility* deals with fundamental question regarding individual life and existence. The narrative effortlessly intertwines multiple storylines set within various eras to explore collective human experiences. Ranging from 1912 to 2401, this work carries multiple characters who advocate feelings of solitude throughout distinct segments of the plotline. Set within a post-apocalyptic backdrop, *Sea of Tranquility* transports readers into a world lacking familiar systems and structures that once defined society. This research investigates the impact of science and technology on human condition, aspirations, and making unconventional choices. This is a qualitative research utilizing the framework Sartre's existentialism to probe the notion of meaningful existence and emancipation in a post-apocalyptic simulative dystopia.

Keywords: Apocalyptic fiction, Science fiction, Time Travel, Existentialism, Simulation

INTRODUCTION

In literature, apocalyptic science fiction often serves as a means for authors to make profound inquiries about human existence. In this regard, Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Sea of Tranquility* (2022) immerses readers in a dystopian setting where the remaining fragments of humanity struggle to find significance amidst catastrophe. This research article critically examines existential themes and motifs that underlie Mandel's apocalyptic narrative. In this narrative, existentialism empowers lives in apocalyptic fiction. In writing this novel, Mandel primarily focuses on analyzing how the characters' experiences reflect mankind's pursuit of purpose, identity, and connection among disorder. Mandel shows a world lacking familiar systems and structures that

once defined society. Against this barren backdrop, the characters' external environment and inner psyche meld together in an impactful exploration of life's absurdity. The sense of existence with such absurdity can be observed in Gaspary, Mirella, Edwin, and Olive in *Sea of Tranquility*. The loss of societal norms and the collapse of civilization present a challenging dilemma for survivors, forcing them to confront profound existential questions concerning their existence. Loneliness and isolation emerge as prominent themes in Mandel's narrative, as the remaining individuals traverse an abandoned landscape marked by solitude. The novel provokes an essence of hope and strives for existence by accepting man's

responsibility proposed by Sartre in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946) for his actions in the chaotic past, present, and future. This research focuses that everyone is responsible for one's actions while highlighting dominant power structures of society that politicizes lower class for its gains. The study proposes that man can be the future of man but not the owner of man. Although technology has changed the

lifestyle for the last two centuries yet it has brought disaster and unrest in life which is affecting future dimensions. By understanding the philosophy of existentialism, one may not interrupt others' lives. One can come to know about one's inner self and accept that no one is born to rule others. A man is always free to live in this world

Literature Review

Science fiction as a sub-genre is political and allegorical translation of real life. Till date it is one of the emerging genre since 1950 presenting numerous ideas of a futuristic world featuring an apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic dystopia. Berger's states that "apocalyptic desire is a longing also for the aftermath" (Berger, 1999, p.34) looking for a possibility of a new beginning "the triumph of apocalypse over trauma is..., of an utterly new beginning over the repetition of history" (p.53). In this context, repetition of the past is essential that allows imagining and defining things that are articulated through vocabulary. Renner (2012) writes that the neo-apocalyptic narrative charts disaster without losing the possibility of subsequent redemption. Newman (2012) defines apocalypse, as lurking behind the appeal of end-of-the-world scenarios as a half-wished descent into dog-eat-dog barbarity and the extermination of all the boring people in the world. Apocalyptic narratives propound general feelings of uneasiness as well as our desire for life. Through apocalyptic narrative, we are able to find collective beliefs that make life unsatisfied and change worthy. Raosaheb (2016) calls the debates of supremacy between existence and essence as building a bridge over the bridge. For him, it is the existence of human being from pure thought to problems and the possible ways to live. It teaches man how to live the life he knows. Many philosophers involved theological debate into existentialism leading to the possibility of man's actual self-

realization endorsing that man can exist alone. Sartre gives a vivid point of view about such existence. He believes an atheist existence. In his book *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946), he writes, "Atheistic existentialism of which I am a representative, declares with greater consistency that if God does not exist, there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is a man or as Heidegger has it, the human reality" (Sartre, 1946, p.27-28). Sartre also stresses that man's existence precedes the essence. Otto (2022) relates the novel with the pandemic Covid-19 and predicts end of the world no matter wherever a person goes, man cannot avoid death. She travels east and west, on earth and moon, in of four-time lapses through massive use of technology but could not avoid death. Zutter (2022) studies that *Sea of Tranquility* (2022) depicts a specific moment experienced by different individuals in 1912, 1994, and 2195. However, Mandel's nonlinear storytelling style crafts a series of interconnected characters that navigate both forward and backward through time. While Rutledge (2022) questions, "Is it possible to be entertained by existential questions?" (n.p) She answers with a resounding yes. For her, the book is a post-apocalyptic vision with a lyrical description. Mandel makes evidence of human existentialism. She engages the reader as Shakespeare does. Hunt (2022) in *Sea of Tranquility*, Mandel stretches her philosophy from 1912 to 2401 to manifestation of the

pandemics, wars, imperialism, failed frontier outposts, broken hearts, separation of nations, climate catastrophe, murder, and the very real possibility that we are living in a simulation. Despite all the situations, Mandel focuses on human existence. That is similar to Sartre where existence should be before all. sees that Mandel's *Sea of Tranquility* is set far off Earth. The plot story is interwoven with exiles, grieving friends, lonely authors, and lonelier time travelers. The timelines are roaming in the present, past, and future. Long and short, Mandel's characters live in a green and blue world.

Research Methodology

It is a critical study that uses the existential philosophy by French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1956) as theoretical framework. Textual analysis along with close study of the texts allows the data to be analyzed and interpret the data qualitatively. The theoretical framework has been derived from Sartre key works *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946). In this research, *Sea of Tranquility* (2022), served as the primary source, while secondary materials were taken from library books, journals, and internet.

Discussion and Analysis

Sartre's concept of existentialism renders an impeccable bridge to human actions and thought to align into one. Sartre uses the words "existence precedes essence" (Sartre, 1946, p22). This believes that humans are only responsible for their actions. They cannot blame others. There is no pre-planned destination in his life. Sartre stresses the subjectivity of humans. When a man understands his existence, he never compromises his ego and reaches cogito. Sartre's existentialism supports atheism to some extent. Where God does not give moral law. People have chances and choices to do anything. These choices are imperative. They allow human beings to enjoy freedom while

endorsing their existence. This concept of existentialism is embedded into Mandel's masterpiece *Sea of Tranquility* (2022). This textual analysis focuses on the man's current presence and his existence in future. She writes, "... seeing the way fiction can bleed into the world and leave a mark on someone's skin" (Mandel, 2022, p. 86). So, this analysis is an interpretation of Mandel's characters and their consciousness about human beings. It is all about the reflection of the world. By using this concept, unconsciously, she is a follower of Sartre's existentialism. There are few characters in this novel with manifold of life approaches. This specification of characters in number shows the confined world of Mandel. The novel builds a new world that ingeniously empowers a paradox that foregrounds a subtle reflection of reality. Mandel makes existence possible with the evidence of human presence in this world. She gives the reference to pandemics to show the mantle agony of her characters. Olive lives in the era of pandemics. She is struggling to exist for herself. Even every person of that era who is not mentioned in the novel clearly can be assumed, to be an epitome of existentialism. This is quite similar to the pandemic outbreak of 2019. Olive leaves Earth and shifts to the moon. This shows the catastrophic evolution of humans that the earth is becoming uninhabited. The story starts in 1912 with the character of Edwin. It ends with the character of Gaspary in 2401. In 1912, Edwin St. Andrew, an eighteen-year-old individual, embarks on a journey across the Atlantic as a result of being banished by his aristocratic English family due to his critical comments about colonialism during a dinner conversation. His voyage leads him to Canada and eventually brings him to settle in Caitte. One day, while strolling through the forest, he encounters an inexplicable momentary sensation of darkness akin to sudden blindness or an eclipse. The characters show human causes of the pandemics, wars, imperialism, failed frontier outposts, broken hearts, separation of nations, climate

catastrophe, murder, and the very real possibility that we are living in a simulation. The first hundred pages reveal the loneliness of each character. The novel doesn't pay much attention to them perhaps it is paying more heed to relationships. Through the character of Gaspéry, Mandel is leaving an option for humans that is the choice to live according to their own will while stressing two-pronged effects of science i.e., if gadgets can destroy us, they can save us too. In year 2401, Gaspéry-Jacques Roberts, a security expert employed at the Grand Luna Hotel in initial lunar colony, is recruited by the Time Institute to probe these inexplicable phenomena. Gaspéry journeys through time and space repeatedly, observes and investigates perplexing events. Along his journey, he encounters various individuals including an aristocrat's son, a brother of a young girl who captured a video of one such occurrence, and an author who confesses that her book was inspired by her own experiences traveling through that same portal. In *Sea of Tranquility* (2022), one notable aspect is Mirella's storyline, where multiple characters are introduced within a relatively short span. Adding to this complexity is the character Vincent, who defies conventional gender expectations. Similarly, Gaspéry Jacques, a character whose name coincides with that of Olive Llewellyn's popular novel. An exploration arises as to how this connection came about without any prior knowledge. Gaspéry Jacques raises questions surrounding his identity, apparent lack of aging, and purpose in interrogating others. The plot encompasses various themes such as life in outer space, envisioning the future, an author's experiences during pandemic, and ethical considerations related to time travel. The story shakes with different questions like why we spend much time imagining, living in limited reality, or living meaningfully within the context of limitations. The character of Mirella is a clear example of this point of view. Zoey also lives

in her imaginative world with few connections to people in the actual world.

Exile Is Existence

Exile in the literature is also a feature of the struggle for existence. All the great writers in English literature have introduced exile and banishment. It provokes the sympathies in the heart of the reader. Exile must not be viewed as an outcome rather as an opportunity to engage with different individuals and perspectives. The novel also starts with the exile of Edwin in 1912. This narrative chronicles the lives of various individuals across different periods past, present, and future. It commences in 1912 with Edwin St. Andrew, who has been estranged from his family due to his opinions on colonialism. In a perplexing turn of events, he encounters something so astonishing that he questions its reality. It is the period when colonization was at peak. Edwin used to sit indolently everywhere. He observes things and people. It has become his hobby. Edwin speaks to himself, "I have been sent into exile, he tells himself..." (Mandel, 2022, p. 3). After his exile from England, he settled in Canada. Edwin is alone all the day. He has no one to speak. Life always becomes a challenge in such a phase. But, Edwin never gives up. Edwin tries for existence. For this purpose, he adores the beauty of sea and moments of ecstasy by himself. Mandel writes, "Edwin is capable of action but prone to inertia. He likes sitting by his windows. There is a constant movement of people and ships. He does not want to leave, so he stays" (p. 5). Through the exile of Edwin, Mandel highlights the modern dilemma of existence. She represents the picture in which each person is trying to exit unconsciously. A person at the first stage of living means to know himself. Further, he interacts with others and thinks of others. This existence is a representation of Sartre's concept of "being in itself and being for itself" (Sartre, 1943, p.11). During his exile, he spent his time learning

many things. “He has time and money. It is as good an idea as any” (Mandel, 2022, p.7). His exile is not futile but productive for him. He buys things even if he does not need them showcasing his inner desires. Along with this, Edwin always waits for something but he does not know to whom he’s waiting. Meanwhile, he ponders and becomes more philosophical to console his soul.

Existence and Isolation in Simulation

Isolation is the most notable aspect of modern and postmodern writings. It is crucial to discuss it in apocalyptic fiction. The novel is an introspection of identity and an exploration of isolation. Mandel executes this theme with well-developed characters and places each character in mundane circumstances. These circumstances have become more and more complicated to understand. This particular way of Mandel’s writing springs into mind a trap for satisfying human tranquil lure in the past, present, and future. In the novel, the foremost character Edwin bears isolation. During his exile, he feels, “Getting lost is death, he can see that. No, this whole place is death. No, that’s unfair place is not death, this place is indifference” (Mandel, 2022, p. 26). Edwin experiences physical isolation across oceans and continents. He has no one to express his feelings. Even at the time of the family dinner, he was talking about the colonization and heat of oppression of the British in India. No one is going to support Edwin which shows that Edwin is always having isolation both physically and in his ideas. The text provides a wide range of characters to show modern man is living in isolation and his struggle for existence. Mirella is an innocent girl, living in a world of vicious people. She is selfless which is why, she feels isolated. She loses her friend Vincent and thinks about ways to find her. She is having feelings of abomination for everyone. Whenever she is with anyone, she only thinks about her past. Even in the party with friends, she loves to be engrossed in her imaginative

world. During her meeting with Gaspary and Paul, “Paul blinked at her as if she’d forgotten she was there” (p. 46). Through the character of Mirella, Mandel elucidates the concept of female isolation offering her vulnerability, she thinks, “For a woman alone in a park after nightfall, every neighbourhood is a bad neighbourhood” (p.49). Mandel is not only confining herself to her imaginative world she is implicitly throwing light onto the real world. The other characters are two siblings Gaspary and Zoe. Zoe only loves to live alone. It has become her custom. She is one of the characters in 2401. It predicts the future in indifference of man. She says to Gaspary about the nature of the job, “When I say it’s a dangerous job, Gaspary, I mean I wouldn’t want anyone I love to do it” (p.136). Zoey and Gaspary, despite living near each other homes, do not meet for weeks. This shows the loss of interest in the relationship of modern man. This routine becomes the now normal of the future. Even at the end of the novel, Gaspary remains alone. He claims, “Loneliness wasn’t a strong enough word for it. All that empty space” (p.254). There is a hustle and bustle of people around Gaspary. He used to live in his world. Relating to this, a writer on pandemics, Olive meets many people during her earth tour. She lives in moon colonies. During her meeting, she gives gestures to get fed-up by human interactions. At the time of the pandemic, she cut off herself from everyone. All the characters are interwoven with such a sense of indifference. Mandel does not intend to show human miseries and spreads pessimism. She is suggesting negotiation and adaptation of each character through the struggle of existence they endeavor.

Metaobjects are an Emancipatory Paradigm
Mandel takes up existential questions of time and being through metaphysics elements in her metafiction. These elements are not influencing reality but penetrating the pervasive horror in the reader. Mandel is never against

science but she is alarming for the excessive use of science. She creates magical world that distinguishes speculative fiction from others. Mandel layers on centuries one after another through time travelers. “Time Institute” (Mandel, 2022, p. 103) in *Sea of Tranquility* (2022) is responsible for all the meta creations. The characters move from one century to another century beyond of human understanding. The other thing is the settlement of Moon colonies. A person can land on the moon a few times but not for years. Despite the advancement of science, it has not been made possible yet. On the contrary, people have settled down on the moon. It can be perceived that either the living standards on earth are not according to need or it is made the worst living for the future. That is why, the masses of the earth start shifting to the moon. Mandel is providing a dual subtle context. The first thing is to criticize the excessive use of technology that brings disaster also generating the hope for living. She wants people to live as they want or wherever they want. Mandel gives many examples about meta-objects that compel readers to feel real. Olive can conversate with her husband easily from earth to the moon. Another advancement is a self-driven car and Olive was grateful for this. She was happy with it because there would not be any interaction with human beings. This progress of self-driven cars is continued in the contemporary era but not with such advancement which Mandel represents in this futuristic novel. There is irreversible flight from the moon to earth daily. Mandel has created a new land in her novel. This represents human desire for existence in the present era that results in the future. The cat of Gaspary, Marvin, was not even real. In her conversation with Laura McGrath, who is an assistant professor of English at Temple University, recorded on March 28, 2023, Mandel clears her intentions of writing such science fiction. In this interview, she says, “I am more interested in how people react to today’s where the new world I am creating”

(Interview). Naturally, Mandel is primarily providing a piece of information about human survival. The novel shows a metaobject for rain that enhances confrontation with nature. Gaspary speaks to himself, “I’ve always loved the rain, and knowing that it isn’t coming from cloud doesn’t make me love it less” (p.131). Rain is a natural element that cannot change its nature. But Mandel suggests that if someone is happy to live in the imagination, let him live. During the pandemic, Sylvie cannot conversate with anyone and she begins to communicate with a seltzer bottle to overcome her loneliness. This is Sylvie’s way of existence in the chaotic world. Mandel favors and appreciates all styles of living because, for her, the passion for existence is more important.

Existence in Absurdity of Life

In the past years, most philosophers have focused on absurdism parallel to existentialism perceiving them to be equivalent to nihilism leading towards pessimism. However, Sartre perceives existentialism as the key to optimism and discusses it in relevance to “quietism” (Sartre, 1946, p. 27) He stresses that quietism is not pessimism but a toughness of optimism. In the same way, Mandel instigates this idea through the variation of thoughts of her characters. At first glance, the characters show some objectives towards absurd life and a nihilistic approach. There are many instances in the novel that support the argument e.g., at the beginning of the novel, Edwin tells himself, “I have been sent into exile, he, and he knows he’s being melodramatic, but nonetheless, there’s a ring of truth to it” (Mandel, 2022, p. 3). Edwin admits that this is his fate, he cannot alter it but what he could do is to accept the truth and keeps on making choices for his existence. Sartre gives the idea of God or some supernatural entity in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) he believes that some things are not in the control of human beings, these are innate like one’s parents, place of birth, and death. But the decisions about ways of living are based on

his free will and this novel resonates these ideas, Olive has some instances of absurdism in her life. When the interviewer asks Olive about the purpose of writing a book and message in *Marienabad*, Olive gives an uncertain response. She says, "I was just trying to write an interesting book," Olive said "There's no message" (Mandel, 2022, p.85). It does not confine the reader to absurdism only. It is not absurdism but quiet near to it. Olive writes such things because she likes and wants to exist through such writings. Gaspary is the one who faces absurdity many times in his life like Meursault of *The Stranger* (1942) has monotonous feelings in his life. He follows the same routine and has no interest in his relationships even though he can't see Zoe for many days and forgets her birthday (p.139). The most important incident is prevailing of Covid-19. Mandel puts many examples of different plagues that lead life toward absurdity. Especially, Sylvie's conversating with a seltzer bottle; a non-living object. It shows the gap between human relationships that man has created. Even at the last of the novel, Gaspary is unable to express his feelings to Talia. Through such examples, Mandel provokes a thought the will for existence is good. On the other hand, it depends on how we prefer to exist. All these things are the delineation of absurdity.

Existence in Apocalyptic Fiction

Mandel presents speculative and science fiction in an uncomplicated manner. This fiction strikes with human nature and indispensable themes of optimism, survival i.e. existentialism, family relationships, and values of humanity. At first, we see the dis-joint of the events. Later on, Mandel has done a marvelous job to conjoin all the events. Through all the events, Mandel gives an insight into the apocalypse in the novel. Each chapter is interwoven with this theme and it throws light on human day-to-day matters that have brought disasters. Mandel does not only write for aesthetic purposes but

also becomes more diadectid with surface meanings. The novel is replete with multiple instances that predict the apocalypse. Mandel shows that war, overuse of technology, and greed to get more have become gallows for human beings. Edwin's parents are Indian and now living in England. His father vividly gives a depiction of the oppression of the past. He says, "The heat was rather oppressive, though," Edwin's father said. "That's one thing I didn't miss, once we came here" (Mandel, 2022, p.13). Colonialization is not a process of a single day it penetrates slowly into the roots of one's land and leaves dark spots on one's skin. Owing to this reason, the air of war spreads. This war had been overdue in the past and made the earth difficult place to live. So, Edwin responds to his father, "Evidence suggests they feel more oppressive by the British than by the heat, Ewin said" (p.114). Along with such incidents, all of them are trying to survive. Another glimpse of the apocalypse Mandel gives about Olive. She is a fiction writer who writes a book *Marienabad*. She visits Earth in 2203 to give an interview about her latest book. The book is the prediction of the pandemic. Later on, this is happening with Olive. Olive has to survive that pandemic. She lives in Colony Two. The colony is established on the moon. Olive, her family, and many other people move there for their existence. This is an apocalyptic theme because people are making the earth worse. The driver further asks about the book that is related to the pandemic so Olive responds yes. The driver also says, "You know, in my book," the driver said, "there's a kind of apocalypse too" (p.74). Mandel presents a clear picture of the contemporary time where every person is trying to exist only in such circumstances. In this novel Mandel predicts pandemics like smallpox, HMS Discovery, and the Antonine Plague in the year 2203. This predicts apocalyptic conditions in which 752 persons die of the pandemic. Olive repeats her fear many times, "I was supposed to die in a pandemic" (p.196). Olive discusses about the

end of the world on the contrary Mandel gives hope through the words of Olive. Olive writes, "In a world that no longer exists but whose exact end date is unclear," (p.192). Mandel is not directly speaking to her audience but she shares her point of view through Olive. Even in response to an interviewer, Olive says, "My personal belief is that we turn to postapocalyptic fiction not because we're drawn to disaster, per se, but because we're drawn to what we imagine might come next. We long secretly for a world with less technology in it" (p.193). Mandel is thinking universally and becomes futuristic through her characters, Sartre calls this phenomenon as "being-for-itself" (Sartre, 1943, p.104). In such situation, a person accepts that there is a universal relation between humans with the objects present in the world. He accepts other's presence and starts to accept responsibilities. The same case is happening with Olive and his husband Dion. After her visit from the earth, she secludes herself from everyone but she feels that living in the society, pandemics and plagues are a part of society. Afterwards, she follows the same concept of Sartre's being-for-other and he reaches "being-in-the-world" (Sartre, 1943, p.139). Mandel also focuses that in the condition of apocalypse that brings disaster in our lives, we must be tender to others. Gaspary who belongs to the year 2401, also suffers in the apocalypse timeline. Whenever he goes back in time through travel machines, "He could smell the exhaust of twentieth-century cars" (Mandel, 2022, p.227). All the chaos in 2401, is the responsibility of the invention of technology. Mandel does not devalue the use of science but her motive of writing is to warn about the misuse of science. Although Gaspary is unable to identify from which century he belongs, he suffers in every century. In many critical situations, Gaspary does not give up. He consoles himself and endeavors to exist. It even breaks all the security rules contrived by Time Institutions. So, he chooses to live according to his own

will. This is accurately discussed by Sartre in the concept of authenticity. Mandel also signals psychological implementation of existentialism proposed by Sartre through the distant era. Beyond doubt, *Sea of Tranquility* (2022) is about finding meaning and beauty in a world that is continuously dying and losing its charm.

Man Is the Future of Man

Sartre gives reference of Ponge in his book *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946). Sartre favors, "Man is the future of man" (Sartre, 1946, p. 29). Using Sartre's view on existentialism, it can be observed that without man, there would be no future. If there is a future, there will be human beings. Sartre favors that the current situation cannot evaluate the future. There is a state of oblivion for the past feelings. It is necessary because a better future is waiting for us. He mentions the "virgin future" (Sartre, 1946, p. 29) that brings hope for man. In that future, there will be the existence of other men. Like Sartre, Mandel also potentiates the same idea. She enfolds many events in time and space that start from the past and end in the future. All the events are beyond the thoughts and reality but they are useful to deem the present through certain conception. Mandel utilizes the concept of science and technology to give a better understanding of the future and man's relationships with man. Mandel starts the novel in 1912 which creates a gloomy shadow on the reader. The process of colonization, occupation of man on others, and war also pursue the abandonment of human beings on the earth. Later on, she highlights the theme of death which is a glitch. The first section of the story is set in the 2000s in which exile of Edwin creates empathy among the readers. Edwin does not know about his coming time and loves to watch people while sitting on the dock. Unknowingly, his virgin future is looking forward to him. In the future, he does not live alone but uses to live among people. In the next section, through Mirella, Mandel desires to reflect the goodwill of some people in

the world. It gives pleasure to think and live. This way of living man also compels someone to exist. The next section consists of the pandemic outbreak. Mandel becomes nostalgic to show the dual side of humanity. The outbreak of the pandemic on the Earth compels people to take refuge on the moon. The spread of the pandemic even on the moon, does not lead to the total abandonment of people. People die daily and there are new births with a certain ratio. There is balance in the rush of men on earth. So, it can be perceived that thinking about the end of the world also implies thinking of the new-borns i.e., man who is the future of another man. The final section of the book is the futuristic setting. The author includes some details about how the people spoke and wrote differently from us of that era. Gasperry-Jacques Roberts, one of the main characters of the novel, is rather dull, and the only significant thing about him is his name. Mandel predicts humans in the future with the theme of the life of Gasperry. Gasperry chooses the people of various centuries to live in. He ends his life by cutting connection with people. He always tries to solve the anomaly that is his choice of living. At the end of the novel, Mandel ties all these characters making the plot complicated. Mandel herself unties all the knots and is facile to comprehend the actual agenda of man.

Monologue Empowers Existence

Mandel's *Sea of Tranquility* (2022) is an impeccable demonstration of a wide range of tones and historical periods. These periods bind with the spectrum of alienation, loneliness, and emotions. This novel converges at pre-modern, modern, and postmodern eras together. Mandel provides a piece of detailed information about the struggle for existence in that era through monologue. Mandel extends this with the interior monologue of Edwin, Mirella, Olive, and Gasperry. Mandel uses monologues to overcome loneliness another way to embrace existence. This is a way that is based on someone's choice and free will. During his

exile, Edwin talks to himself in his tranquility. She says, "I have been sent into exile, he tells himself..." (Mandel, 2022, p.3). In the next section of the book, Mandel vividly inserts the character of Mirella when she talks to herself. Olive uses monologues when she is locked down in pandemics. Therefore, monologues or self-talk helps man to exist in this world and overcomes his loneliness.

A Life in Simulation

Sea of Tranquility (2022) has gained much importance due to its futuristic vision and notion of the simulation hypothesis (Bostrom, 2003). The idea of the simulation hypothesis is uniquely important because it leads the way to contemplation about the existence of man and the presence of life. Mandel wrote this novel after the pandemic and she combined it with life in simulation and time travelling. She conjoins past, present, and future through tragedies of history and the failure of technology to some extent. She is doing justice with the writing when men have gone through diverse relocations. This relocation starts from Earth to the moon and expects another planetary system. Mandel's delightful style compels colonization in space, travel in time, and simulation hypothesis. It convinces us to think that we are living in a computerized world that raises curiosity about existence. The thoughts about the simulation hypothesis go towards a complicated style of living. It is converting us into skeptical beings. In her interview with Ezra Klein in 2022, she stresses the importance of simulation and then she denies the fact that computers never control man and this novel is replete with such examples. When Klein asks about simulation, Mandel replies, "So for anybody who's not familiar, it's what it sounds like. It's the idea that all of our reality is a simulation. Something I love about the idea is that you can find very smart people who will passionately argue either side of that position... So a way for me to circumvent that as a novelist was to layer on

this whole other level of weirdness, and have a character say, in the year 2400 or whatever it is in the new book, we don't know why time travel works at all. Shouldn't it always create a loop? The reason we think it works is that we might be living in a simulation. So that was a way for me to write a time travel novel" (Interview, 2022, n.p.). Mandel wants to highlight the importance of technology and satire our compliance with it. She further responds eloquently, "My memory is that it has to do with the world behaving in a computer-like way. You know, the idea that there are too many similarities between the way our world works and the way we would expect a computer-generated world to work. The counterargument is, that there is not enough computing power in the universe to run the simulation" (ibid). She leaves us with a question about our identity or whether we are real or not. She utilizes the idea of the simulation hypothesis as a contemporary fascination for the reader which gives chances for existence. Mandel concludes her novel by instigating a question, "If definitive proof emerges that we're living in a simulation, the correct response to that news will be *So what*. A life lived in a simulation is still a life" (Mandel, 2022, p.246). It gives aesthetics to life because it does not matter if life is real or not. Existence is the most important of all. Edwin thinks about pre and post-war worlds, he realizes, "The trouble with Victoria, in Edwin's eyes, is that it's too much like England without actually being England. It's a far-distant simulation of England, a watercolor superimposed unconvincingly on the landscape" (p.19). Mandel represents that the condition in modern England is not the same as the previous England. She continues to ponder that someone may put England into simulation and change the situation in England. The idea of simulation is a natural thought in everyone's mind. Olive, a future writer of 2203, also thinks of an artificial way of life. She consoles herself by saying, "A life lived under a dome, in an

artificially generated atmosphere, is still a life" (p.196). Gaspary while admitting his almost dying mother in the hospital, utters "The idea with the simulation hypothesis is, that we can't rule out the possibility that all of reality is a simulation" (p.111). Gaspary thinks, "If we were living in a simulation, how would we know it was a simulation?" (p.129). The characters think again and again that they are living in a simulation. Zoey wants to investigate and Gaspary says, "How do you investigate reality? My hunger is a simulation, I told myself, but I wanted a cheeseburger. Cheeseburgers are a simulation. Beef is a simulation. (Actually, that was true. Killing an animal for food would get you arrested both on Earth and in the colonies.) I opened my eyes and thought, *The roses are a simulation. The scent of roses is a simulation*" (p.129). Mandel designs the plot in such a way that every ending leaves an intriguing expression on the reader. At some moments, we think that we are controlled by some computing organization like "Time Institute" (p.103) in the novel. This makes sometimes a person more unreal and he can engulf it by considering it fate. The crux of the matter is that Mandel tries to convey is that a life in simulation is still a life.

Conclusion

This research contemplates the nature of existence and its enigma. Emily St. John Mandel's *Sea of Tranquility* (2022) is a representation of a remarkable exploration of time, identity, and the power of human connection. It permeates the narrative of the haunting uncertainty of fate. Mandel pursues to provide comfort and solace to human lives through her characters. She tries to stress the importance of relationships. Furthermore, she exposes the inevitability of a poignant eulogy that renders bittersweet melodies which suggest the inevitability of change and emotional resonance of human experiences. Mandel tries to fabricate a place that relates to the future which are relapsing after one another. The

created closed loops harmonize the symphony of life through its characters which celebrate the efforts for existence with indoctrination i.e., a life is still a life although it is in simulation. Sartre only prefers human existence. This narrative proposes this preference as a dire need in the lives of post-war human beings. Mandel starts the novel referring exile during World War I but her text proposes that man has a firm belief in living. The priority is to be alive. Mandel considers despair as a part of human life but she demotivates all the negativity with the representation of scientific tools. Undoubtedly, *Sea of Tranquility* (2022) has served as a poignant reminiscence of the indomitable human spirit with the persistent search for meaning that transcends even in the most devastating circumstances. It deals with the complexities and uncertainties encountered by individuals within our increasingly dynamic and interconnected global environment. It facilitates an understanding of personal autonomy, liberation, genuineness, and moral deliberation which renders it a pertinent and profound source of existence.

References

1. Berger, J. (1999), *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minneapolis Press, ISBN 0816629331, 9780816629336
2. Bostrom, N. (2003). *Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?* Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 211, pp. 243-255.
3. D'Erasmus, S. (2022). "Sea of Tranquility" travels through time to explore life's biggest questions., <https://www.oprahdaily.com/entertainment/books/a39995112/sea-of-tranquility-emily-st-john-mandel/>.
4. Hunt, L. (2022). *A Dazzling New Foray into Speculative Fiction from Emily St. John Mandel*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/30/books/review/sea-of-tranquility-emily-st-john-mandel.html>
5. Klein, E. (2022), *Transcript: Ezra Klein Interviews Emily St. John Mandel*, April 22, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/podcasts/transcript-ezra-klein-interviews-emily-st-john-mandel.html>
6. K. J. (2012), The Appeal of the Apocalypse, *LIT Literature Interpretation Theory*, 23(3), 203-2011, 2012.
7. Mandel, E. S. J. (2021), *Station Eleven*, ISBN 9780593468074
8. Otto, M (2022), *Sea of Tranquility Grapples with Pandemic Existence*, July 7, 2022, <https://observer.com/2022/04/emily-st-john-mandels-sea-of-tranquility-grapples-with-pandemic-existence-review/>
9. Renner K. J. (2012), The Appeal of the Apocalypse, *LIT Literature Interpretation Theory*, 23(3), 203-2011, 2012.
10. Raosaheb, M. V. (2016), Existentialism: A Philosophic Stand Point to Existence over Essence
11. Rutledge, J. (2022). 'Sea of Tranquility' delves into existential questions, entertainingly, https://www.postandcourier.com/features/review-sea-of-tranquility-delves-into-existential-questions-entertainingly/article_3d7bdc8a-c57c-11ec-90ac-c7606360dc49.html.
12. Sartre, J. P. (1943), *Being and Nothingness*, ISBN 9780367461409
13. Sartre, J. P. (1946), *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, ISBN: 1 91 3 19 60.E
14. Zutter, N (2022), 'Sea of Tranquility' reflects our pandemic woes through a time-travel lens, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/04/1090943149/sea-of-tranquility-reflects-our-pandemic-woes-through-a-time-travel-lens> subject of inquiry in present-day society.