

Framed by Existentialism: Dissecting Absurdity and the Search for Meaning in *The Island of Missing Trees*

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Abstract

This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology, relying on interpretive analysis to explore existential themes in The Island of Missing Trees. Framed through the lens of Albert Camus's philosophy particularly his concept of absurdism the study analyzes how characters like Ada, Kostas, and Meryem find meaning in this absurd and meaningless world. The researcher specifically uses Barnet and Cain's (2014) textual analysis model as a guiding framework, focusing on close reading, character analysis, thematic exploration, symbolism, and narrative structure to uncover layers of meaning within the text. The study addresses how Shafak transforms existential anguish into perseverance and human connection. Ultimately, the research highlights how, in this absurd world where nothing makes sense, human actions still find meaning and literature clearly embodies this philosophical struggle, making abstract ideas emotionally tangible.

Keywords: Existentialism, Absurdism, Albert Camus, Elif Shafak, The Island of Missing Trees, Meaninglessness, Philosophical Literature, Search for Meaning.

Introduction

Despite the surge of progress, people living in this modern world are always in search of questions to solve the mystery of their lives. And they discovered that the very existence of human is meaningless. Camus (1942) one of the renowned philosophers introduced the concept of absurdity. Absurdity refers to the meaningless nature of living. It entails the feeling that life lacks meaning. People with many questions in their minds but unable to find answers for them. He presented the chaos of human mind through his absurd hero. The Myth of Sisyphus the book written by Camus presented Sisyphus as absurd hero who did the same task again and again. Apparently his situation portrays the situation of every human being with same tasks to repeat with same consequences. Camus diverts the meaninglessness of life to meaningfulness. He argued that the struggles towards the goal or towards our routine jobs are unique in itself. The unique struggles towards goal make life meaningful. Sisyphus finds meaning in the repetitive struggle of pushing a rock to the top of a mountain. Different characters in the novel *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) faces the same situation to think about the scenarios which make their life meaningful. The distinct characters in the novel faces existential crisis but they try to resolve the problems.

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Summary of *The Island of Missing Trees*

The Island of Missing Trees follows the forbidden love of Kostas, a Greek Cypriot, and Defne, a Turkish Cypriot, set against the 1974 division of Cyprus. Their separation due to political conflict leads Kostas to England, while the trauma of their past continues to shape their lives. Central to the narrative is a fig tree—a silent witness to history, love, war, and loss—which symbolically carries Defne's soul and reflects the novel's themes of memory and nature's resilience. Shafak gives voice to plants and animals, blending the natural world with human emotion in a unique storytelling style. Years later, their daughter Ada confronts the legacy of silence and buried secrets after the arrival of her aunt Meryem. As Ada unravels her family's hidden past, she confronts her own identity crisis. The novel explores existential themes through characters shaped by war, love, and displacement, revealing that meaning is found not in resolution, but in the endurance of struggle.

Rationale of the Research

While many studies have focused on existential crises, this study specifically examines how humans cope with problems and, in turn, find purpose in their lives. The issue arises from the confusion about what the purpose of one's life is. This research not only explores existentialism in the literary context, as has been done by numerous scholars, but is an attempt to demystify 'existentialism' through the lens of Albert Camus—particularly his concepts of absurdity, the human confrontation with meaninglessness, and the conscious creation of meaning through rebellion and personal choice.

Significance of the Research

By applying Camus's thought to a selected literary work (e.g., *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak), this study creates a bridge between philosophy and literature, offering readers a deeper understanding of how abstract philosophical ideas are dramatized in human experience. It shows how characters' struggles with grief, silence, memory, and belonging mirror the existential conditions that Camus described. Such a study not only enhances the appreciation of the novel itself but also revitalizes Camus's philosophy for a new generation of readers and thinkers.

Statement of the Research Problem

At some point in life, every individual contemplates the purpose that defines their existence. Existentialism, a philosophical discourse delving into freedom, responsibility, absurdity, and anguish, provides diverse perspectives on this existential query. Characters like Kostas, Meryem, and Ada face difficulties due to the hard times that they live and navigate a profound search for meaning, showcasing the universal human quest for purpose. The exploration will help to show how they felt that they actually existed by understanding the virtue of meaning out of the chaos in life. The research investigates how these characters confront feelings of absurdity, search for meaning, and assert their sense of being, offering insight into the human condition through an existential lens.

Research Objectives

The following objectives are set for the prospective research project:

1. To dissect the factors responsible in making different characters think that life is absurd and meaningless in the context of *The Island of Missing Trees*.
2. To explore that how characters find meaning in the absurd world in view of *The Island of Missing Trees*.

Research Questions

The prospective research will be guided by the following research questions:

1. Which factors do make different characters think that life is absurd and meaningless with relation to *The Island of Missing Trees*?
2. Why do different characters in *The Island of Missing Trees* find life valuable and meaningful?

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective of this research provides a framework for understanding the existential themes in *The Island of Missing Trees*. The concept existentialist philosopher has been used by the researcher to highlight the theme of existentialism in the novel *The Island of Missing Trees*. Albert Camus (1942) absurdity and meaninglessness of life has been applied effectively in the studies.

The concept of absurdity tells us that human nature of finding meaning is not applicable here. Absurdity refers to the state of being irrational and illogical. It describe those situations where there is no reason, no sense and no congruous. Absurdity lacks coherence, leading to difficulty in understanding. The concept is used deliberately in literature as well as in other fields. This is the well-known concept of existentialism by Albert Camus.

Albert Camus was a French philosopher, author and journalist best known for his contributions to existentialism and particularly towards absurdism. Absurdism is key concept in existentialism. It says that life is meaningless at all. Absurdity is searching for answers in the answerless world. Absurdism believes that there is no religion, no reason and it doesn't exist for a reason. They then argue that if there is no reason, then there is no cosmic justice, no rules, no justice, no fairness, and no order. It is human nature to find meaning in life but the concept negates the notion by saying that life is meaningless. Albert Camus supports the statement in his work particularly through the character of Sisyphus. Sisyphus is an absurd hero who repeats the same task again and again despite knowing that it will happen again. But the beauty lies in the fact that he accepted it cheerfully. Human being go through the same set of processes every day, they have the routine Monday to Sunday knowing that they will do it again and again but they still accept it and end in dust. Camus argues that the answer to meaninglessness of life lies in the struggle. Human can find the struggle in their life meaningful although the actions and results are meaningless and same but every human have their unique strategy towards it which make it meaningful. Sisyphus case of boulder is being compared with human life in which they repeat the same actions again and again, and accept it like Sisyphus.

Like the rejection of essentialism, existentialism also rejects nihilism which says that life is completely meaningless while Camus's existentialism says that life is meaningless and absurd but advocates living with it. He suggests that response to absurdity is not resignation but a conscious decision to live fully and embrace life. In his novel he highlights the characteristics of absurdity through the character of protagonist i-e Meursault. Meursault portrays the absurdity of life and arbitrary nature of societal values. In essence, Albert Camus adds up a new dimension to the existentialism negating nihilism. He highlights the realities and suggests the acceptance of meaningless life.

Literature Review

Camus and the Choice of Meaning

It is disconcerting to realize that our weekly routine involves working from Monday to Friday, yet it becomes intriguing when we acknowledge our consciousness in this process. This awareness signifies our ability to choose and engage in these activities willingly. Camus (1942) finds this

consciousness fascinating, drawing parallels to the condition of Sisyphus, who, despite the seemingly futile task of rolling a rock uphill repeatedly, holds the power of choice that shapes his destiny. Sisyphus emerges as an absurd hero, triumphing over his fate by embracing the task and uncovering meaning within it. As Camus eloquently puts it, “the struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (Camus, 1942, p. 111). Although, apparently he was repeating the same task again and again but still he find meaning in life because he was conscious of what he was doing which make his struggle meaningful. Camus argue that human is free to choose their own tasks and equally responsible for his choices. In essence, it is the inherent struggle that gives our lives meaning and significance.

Exploring Themes of Existentialism in Anita Desai Novels

Anita Singh (2007) presents an argument on how the central characters in Anita Desai’s novels explore existential themes, addressing the quest for meaning in life, accompanied by anxiety and responsibility. Singh argue that in novel, (Desai, 1963) Desai picturizes the psyche of a woman on the brink of insanity. Almost her every image has a doubled existence with certain variations. Maya, the central character, overwhelmed with anxiety and confusion. She embarks on a journey to find meaning in her life, despite having a caring husband. Sita, the protagonist (Desai, 1975), grapples with loneliness, inspiring her to reflect the purpose of her existence. Despite anticipating the birth of her fifth child, Sita finds unhappiness in her married life, leading her to search for meaning, a quest intertwined with anxiety. Characters in the other novel of Desai (Desai, 1965) are tortured by the meaningless and desolate existence. The protagonist of the novel; Nirode like true existentialist, he keeps on experimenting with failures in search of an amiable meaning in life. He is obsessed with failures. The character’s marital life in Japan was marked by loneliness and silent treatments for one another. Singh explores majority of the novels of Desai through the lenses of existentialism, in which she examine different characters especially women in existential crises.

Camus’s Absurd Hero

Albert Camus’ *The Stranger* epitomizes absurdity through the character of Meursault. Hayder Saadanm and Ridha Al-Hasani (2023), argue that Camus’ work serves as a comprehensive guide to absurdity. The goal of their paper is that the readers should reflect their relationship with the society which is the objective of Camus. His novel introduces readers to a new sort of hero, one who is helpless to overcome the boredom and absurdity of ordinary life. The character of Meursault exemplifies the meaninglessness of life, evident in his decisions and attitudes toward life. When he was asked about his mother death he totally was unfamiliar of her death date. It shows absurdity in its purest form. According to him what society considers important is totally unimportant for him. His ignorance for societal norms and refusal to conform to expectations highlight the absurd approach of the main character. According to Camus life is purposeless, which can be clearly seen in the character of his novel. The approach of Meursault toward life give us a lucid image that life has no value and it is evident in the decision of his death when he was sentenced to death and he did not rebel against the situation. In essence, Camus crafted a literary bible that clearly explores the concept of absurdity.

Existentialism through the Lens of Anita Desai’s Characters

Anita Desai’s characters in the novel embody existentialism. Nagappan Sethuraman (2005) argues that Desai’s novel explores existential themes through the character of Nanda Kaul. Nanda protests in various ways, grappling with the isolation, alienation, and meaninglessness of life—central

themes of existentialism. She is consumed by existential angst, a constant struggle heightened by the challenges of her faithless husband and irascible children. At the end of the novel fire is set on the mountain which symbolizes the inner conflicts and existential angst of the characters. The fire signals that something old in characters mind especially Nanda Kaul is to be consumed to make space for something new paving way for the birth of something new. The novel also talks about the inner chaos of a small girl, Raka, who is tormented by the sense of purposelessness. Desai's characters in the novel undergoes a relentless search for meaning in life, a quest made particularly challenging by her circumstances. At its core, Desai's characters especially female characters are the epitome of existentialism.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The researcher's focus is to make use of explanatory research design. Shafak's novel *The Island of Missing Trees* is explained, the researcher answers the question that how are the characters existentialist. She also answers that why are the characters existentialist. Shafak's characters are existentialists in nature as they represent confused state of mind and absurdity. The selected research design will provide a structured way to uncover and explain the underlying reasons and mechanisms within the narrative.

Research Paradigm

The researcher used interpretive paradigm for the research to extract something new from the given paragraphs of the novel *The Island of Missing Trees*. This study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes the understanding of reality through the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals.

Data

The researcher has used the data of the selected novel. In the case of this research, the researcher collected data in the form of text from the novel *The Island of Missing Trees*. Only the important and related paragraphs are selected for the interpretation and analysis by the researcher.

Data Collection

The researcher has gathered the data through skimming. Skimming is the technique in which the researcher read the text to establish a general idea.

Primary and Secondary Data

In this case the researcher has collected the data from the novel *The Island of Missing Trees*. The data which is used for the support of the primary data is called secondary data. The researcher gathered the secondary data from the other sources like books, articles, different data bases and from the official reports etc.

Research Method

Close reading serves as a core of the research methodology. French critical methods are in the view that close reading has an extensive history as the core characteristic of interpretation. In *A Short Guide to Writing About Literature*, Barnet and Cain outline several key tools of literary analysis that help readers explore and interpret fiction deeply. Some of the main tools include:

1. *Explication*: This approach involves close reading, where readers dissect a passage line by line to uncover its meanings, symbols, and nuances. It is a way to explore how every detail contributes to the story's broader themes and emotions.
2. *Analysis of Themes*: Barnet and Cain emphasize identifying central themes, which are the main ideas or messages the author seeks to convey. Recognizing themes provides insight into the underlying concerns and values within the text.
3. *Character Analysis*: This involves examining the motivations, actions, and development of characters to understand how they drive the plot and reflect larger themes. Analyzing characters can reveal the author's views on human nature or social issues.
4. *Narrative Structure*: Barnet and Cain recommend evaluating how a story is structured — its timeline, pacing, and sequence of events — to see how these elements impact the reader's understanding and emotional response.
5. *Point of View and Perspective*: By analyzing the narrator's viewpoint and reliability, readers can better understand the story's biases, limitations, and the degree of objectivity or subjectivity.
6. *Symbolism and Imagery*: Identifying symbols and imagery helps to uncover the deeper layers of meaning in a text. These literary devices can add emotional and intellectual depth, enhancing thematic resonance.

Data Analysis

"Her mouth drawn into a tight line, her jaw clenched, she clutched the edge of her desk, desperate to ... be her own surged from somewhere inside her —loud, hoarse, raw, wrong. She screamed". (Shafak, 2021, p. 24).

Analysis

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that explores the freedom of choice and the search for meaning in life, despite the perceived absurdity of human existence. From the very beginning of the novel, Ada's character presents a clear picture of a teenager struggling with identity and existential crises. Her thoughts are distracted by the unresolved past of her parents. When that emotional burden becomes too overwhelming, she suddenly screams—an act that embodies her inner turmoil.

Through Ada, Shafak explores the absurdity of living with inherited trauma and the struggle to find stability amid existential confusion. The scene encapsulates the core of absurdist thought: the confrontation between the human need for clarity and a world that offers none.

This scream is symbolic; it is not merely a cry, but a desperate plea for the answers to the unresolved "loopholes" (Shafak, 2021, p. 24) her parents left behind. It carries existential undertones, reflecting the deeper themes of confusion, instability, and the need for meaning. Ada's scream suggests she is searching for emotional stability and resolution to the chaos in her life.

The imagery in the passage is powerful. Shafak evokes strong sensory detail, allowing readers to visualize Ada's pain vividly. Lines like "her mouth drawn into a tight line, her jaw clenched, she clutched the edge of her desk, desperate to hold on to something...each inhale...rolled in her lungs" (Shafak, 2021, p. 24) capture the raw intensity of Ada's emotional breakdown, making it possible for readers to picture the moment as if it were unfolding before them.

Thematically, it explores the overwhelming force of panic, emotional repression, and release. It's not just a scream—it's a build-up of everything she's held inside, finally breaking through.

In essence, Ada carried chaos and turmoil in her mind, which is the result of the questions, left behind her parent's history. The paragraph complies with question one of the research which deals with the absurdity and meaninglessness of life, and her scream is the result of existential crisis.

"Both men had ... as if she were not, and had never been, confined to the limits of her body". (Shafak, 2021, p. 25).

Analysis

In this passage, phrases like "chosen emptiness" and "weightless shell" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) signify Ada's feelings of detachment and void. The imagery of "emptiness" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) suggests a conscious rejection of external beliefs imposed by her parents, choosing a blank, undefined space rather than aligning with either side. Her scream in the "last hour of the last day of school" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) reflects a climactic release, symbolizing her inner turmoil. This choice of expression could imply both a personal rebellion and a desire for liberation from the confines of imposed identity. The analysis reveals how Ada's rejection of her family's religious and cultural identities emphasize her desire to understand herself independently of these inherited labels. For Ada, it is the awareness of a self-unbound by imposed identities, an existential "emptiness" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) that she consciously embraces. Rather than align with her parents' expectations, she chooses a void — a deliberate blank state that represents her autonomy in defining her essence, resonating with Marcel's belief in "being" over "having." Ada's experience reflects a dawning awareness of her "being," distinct from societal expectations or religious dogma. Her choice of "nothingness" can be seen as an existential embrace of her individual essence, separate from external influences.

Analyzing the theme reveals a central existential motif: the search for identity amidst cultural conflict. Ada's choice of "nothingness" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) over familial expectations signifies a rejection of rigid identities and an exploration of what it means to exist independently. The theme of alienation resonates as she feels "hedged in" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) and distanced from others, a concept often explored in existential literature where individuals confront meaninglessness and seek purpose. The transcendental sensation she feels hints at the theme of self-liberation, as she briefly imagines her beyond physical and social limitations.

In the passage where Ada chooses "emptiness" over aligning with any specific belief, Shafak seems to explore the existential concept of "nothingness." (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) According to existentialist philosophy, especially as described by Gabriel Marcel, "the consciousness of being" does not simply about exist but involves awareness of one's place within the world, including feelings of alienation and transcendence. Ada's feeling of being in a "weightless shell" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) reflects a sense of alienation — she feels separate from those around her and is, metaphorically, floating in a void of meaninglessness. Her scream could be read as a reaction against this emptiness, an attempt to assert her existence and break out of isolation, which aligns with the existential desire to find or create meaning in an absurd world. This scream is a manifestation of her inner struggle for purpose, hinting at a transcendent need to assert her existence.

Ada's character is shaped by her internal conflict, torn between familial expectations and personal autonomy. Her rejection of both her parents' religious affiliations represents her struggle with identity in a bicultural setting. Choosing "nothingness" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) reflects her desire to create her own path, unswayed by others' beliefs. Ada's scream can be seen as an assertion of her individuality, a reaction to the pressures she faces. Her characterization aligns with existentialist themes of self-discovery, where a person seeks to define their essence through choices, even amid

existential uncertainty. For Ada, absurdity arises from the impossibility of fitting into predefined molds. The contrasting identities of her family, rather than giving her a sense of belonging, intensify her alienation, leading her to embrace nothingness as a statement of resistance. This rejection echoes existentialist ideas that life's inherent contradictions often push individuals to seek personal meaning rather than conform to imposed frameworks. Characters, like Ada, encounter the absurdity of life through family conflicts, cultural divides, and trauma. Shafak's narrative positions these elements as catalysts for existential reflection, pushing characters toward feelings of alienation and, at times, absurdity.

Symbolism is prevalent in this passage, with "emptiness" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) and the "weightless shell" representing Ada's sense of isolation and disconnection. The "transcendental" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) feeling suggests a fleeting escape from earthly limitations, symbolizing an existential yearning to connect with something beyond ordinary experience, resonating with Gabriel Marcel's concepts of "being" over "having." (Shafak, 2021, p. 25)

The narrative structure here contributes to Ada's existential experience. Shafak's nonlinear storytelling and shifts between past and present emphasize disorientation and uncertainty, which can intensify Ada's alienation and search for meaning. By placing this intense, introspective moment at the end of a school day, Shafak aligns Ada's journey with a familiar life transition, symbolizing the shift from societal expectations (school, family) to individual identity. The structure thus reflects Ada's emotional state, highlighting the disjointedness that often accompanies existential exploration.

The third-person point of view offers insight into Ada's psyche while preserving a certain distance, allowing readers to observe her isolation objectively. This non-linear structure could amplify the theme of disconnection and emphasize how characters confront existential despair. Ada's transcendent moment at the end of the passage — feeling she "had never been confined" (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) to her body — suggests a brief encounter with what Marcel might call "*being*" rather than "having." (Shafak, 2021, p. 25) This resonates with existential transcendence, as Ada momentarily grasps her own consciousness and existence outside of imposed structures.

"She looked away, and asked, 'but why do you always talk to the fig? ... 'Don't worry, Adamou, I don't talk to trees with other people around'". (Shafak, 2021, p. 39).

Analysis

When people get older, they care less about society's opinions and do what they truly want. They understand the real meaning of freedom in later life. When Ada told her father that he looked weird talking to a fig tree, he replied that as you age, you care less about what people think. Kostas's response to his daughter portrays existentialism. The conversation between the daughter and father shows how the perspectives of the young differ from those of the mature. Ada believes that talking to a tree is strange and inappropriate for a healthy person, whereas for Kostas, the act signifies freedom. He is in a phase of life where his true and authentic emotions guide him, not societal norms.

Existentialism emphasizes the freedom of human choice. It argues that individuals are free to make their own decisions and shape their future. The act of talking to a tree is existentialist in itself because Kostas expresses his authentic self by doing something unconventional. He chooses to express himself genuinely. This passage addresses both research question two and question three, which explore absurdity and the search for meaning in life, respectively. Ada's reaction mirrors how society might respond—by viewing such behavior as absurd. Talking to a tree may not be normal for many people, but for Kostas, it holds personal meaning. His act gives meaning to a

seemingly meaningless existence. According to Sartre, humans are responsible for their own lives through the actions they take—actions that are fully within their control (Research Question No. 02).

This passage explores the theme of grief, silent endurance and absurdity. Kostas's pain is profound, yet he doesn't allow himself to express it openly. The garden becomes a private space for mourning, a place where he can grieve without burdening his daughter. There's a quiet dignity in his suffering—he contains his sorrow not because it's any less, but because he chooses protection over release.

The garden serves as a powerful symbol here. Traditionally associated with life, growth, and healing, it ironically becomes the space where Kostas grieves a loss. His sitting there each night suggests that the garden may also represent memory, love, and an emotional connection to Defne. The act of returning to it, again and again, shows that grief, like the seasons, is cyclical and quietly ever-present.

The blanket wrapped around him is another symbol—it suggests vulnerability, an attempt to seek warmth or comfort in the face of emotional coldness. His “red and raw” eyes, though not openly crying, reveal a sorrow that is visibly etched on him.

The phrase “as if he had been dredged against his will from the bottom of a lake” (Shafak, 2021, p. 39) is especially vivid—it evokes the image of someone pulled from the depths, emotionally and physically heavy, drained. This line gives weight and depth to his pain, making it not just psychological, but somatic and visible.

Kostas is shown here as a man of emotional depth and restraint. His listless movements, his decision to hide his tears from his daughter, and his nightly ritual of sitting in the garden all point to a character who is deeply grieving but also deeply considerate. This adds layers to his personality—he's not only mourning a partner, but also protecting a child. He is clearly a round character, governed by both emotion and intention.

The passage is told through first-person narration, though the narrator is not the primary subject of the paragraph. This distance creates a sense of quiet observation—it's intimate but not intrusive. The narrator's silence also reflects respect for Kostas's mourning, reinforcing the emotional tone of gentle witness rather than commentary.

This moment is reflective and linear. It shows a recurring behavior “for months after Defne was gone, and still every now and then”, reinforcing how grief does not fade quickly—it lingers, finds routine, and settles into the quiet spaces of daily life.

In essence, when Kostas talks to the fig tree he embraces his maturity and accepts his true self. He searches for meaning in life and by talking to a tree found so. Although the act was absurd for the society.

“Humans have always ... when in need or in trouble, and tie velvet ribbons or strips of fabric on our branches”. (Shafak, 2021, p. 62).

Analysis

The paragraph can be interpreted through an existential lens. The narrator here is the fig tree, and it talks about what people think of it. People find the tree mysterious, and for that reason, they start coming to it and tying ribbons on its branches. It is human nature to become suspicious when they encounter something cryptic—they begin questioning and assuming that there must be supernatural forces inside the tree.

The fig tree experiences this scenario when people come to it seeking help. According to Sartre, humans are created in such a way that they define their own meanings. The act of seeking from

the fig tree implies that people are in constant search for meaning in their lives. The combination of mystery and the search for meaning aligns well with existential themes. Mysteries and suspicions arise from absurdity.

According to Camus, existentialism is the search for meaning in the face of a meaningless and chaotic universe. He does not support nihilism but encourages us to accept life's uncertainty and still give it meaning. The belief in the fig tree's supernatural powers reflects the absurdity of the human condition in the novel.

People, according to Sartre, shape their lives through their own choices and, in doing so, create meaning. This passage addresses Research Question No. 01, which asks about the factors responsible for the absurdity and meaninglessness of life. In essence, the mystery and absurdity of the situation compel readers to reflect on the absurd nature of existence.

The phrase “my kind” suggests that the speaker is a tree, or perhaps even a fig tree, which adds depth to the symbolism. Trees here become more than just nature—they are vessels of history, emotion, and ancestral energy. The imagery is soft and reverent—“velvet ribbons,” “strips of fabric,” and “branches” (Shafak, 2021, p. 62) conjure a visual of quiet rituals performed with care. The use of the word “uncanny” (Shafak, 2021, p. 62) adds a slight edge, reminding the reader that this connection between humans and trees is not only emotional but also mysterious and slightly eerie, rooted in ancient traditions..

In a nut shell, the paragraph gives an idea of existentialistic themes like human nature is uncertain, life is meaningless and it is in hand of human to shape their life according to their own will and choices.

Conclusion

The Island of Missing Trees captures the absurdity of human existence shaped by war, loss, and displacement. Shafak presents absurdity through fragmented identities, silenced voices, and the surreal blending of nature and memory. The absurdity of the characters' struggles mirrors the irrationality of a world where love and pain coexist. Yet, within this absurdity, the novel uncovers moments of hope, connection, and quiet resilience.

On analysis through the lens of existentialism, it becomes evident that meaning is not something passively received but consciously constructed by the characters. Whether it is Ada confronting the silence of her family's past, or Kostas choosing to grieve by speaking to a fig tree, each character embodies the existential act of rebellion against meaninglessness. Their journeys illuminate Camus's belief that even in a universe devoid of inherent logic or justice, human beings have the power to define their own essence through choice, resilience, and authentic expression. This study finds that Shafak does not merely depict existential despair she transforms it into a quiet insistence on human dignity. In moments of absurdity, her characters do not surrender but instead carve out slivers of hope, love, and identity reminding readers that even in a fragmented world, meaning is still possible, because we choose to create it.

Recommendations

Different characters in the novel go through trauma in the novel. The psychological study of the characters will be a good topic for further studies. Studying their minds will help researcher to investigate their inner problems.

Given the ecological themes present in *The Island of Missing Trees*, future research could investigate the relationship between existentialism and environmentalism. This would involve

exploring how the existential search for meaning is connected to the broader existential question of humanity's place in the world and its responsibility toward nature.

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