

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the thesis writer will review several literary theories and the supporting concept of the Theatre of the Absurd, which is applied in the whole part of this analysis. The literary theories consist of characterization. Characterization is used to analyze what behavior, thought, speech of the main character that can be categorized as absurdity also to find out the ways of the absurdity is expressed through the main and supporting characters in this play. The last is the supporting concept of the Theatre of the Absurd that is used to help and to understand deeply in analyzing the absurdities as seen in the main character.

### 2.1. Literary Theory.

According to Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs (1986) in his book, *Literature, An Introduction to Reading and Writing 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Literary theory has many elements such as “characterization, conflict, setting, plot, tone, theme, point of view and symbolism” (p. 1009), but the thesis writer will use one element only which consist of characterization, as her tool in analyzing this play deeply and helping the thesis writer in answering her statement of the problem.

#### 2.1.1.Characterization.

There are many meanings of characterization according to Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs (1986) in his book, *Literature, an Introduction to Reading and Writing*. The first meaning of characterization is “the author’s way to make the readers understand the personality and the image of a character in a literary character”(p.135). The second meaning of characterization is “one of the important elements in making a story to be called alive and interesting.”(p. 136). A character itself is “the author’s representation of human being, especially of those inner qualities that determine an individual’s reaction to various conditions or attempts to shape his or her environment” (p.138.). The third meaning of characterization according to Harry Shaw (1972) in his book, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, is “the

method that an author uses to create a fictional through describing the character's actions, speeches, thoughts, physical appearance, what the other characters say or think about the character”(p.71). By analyzing the character, the thesis writer can understand the character well. It may help her to understand the character from his or her thought, attitude or speech.

According to Harry Shaw in his book, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, there are five ways to reveal a character; first, “a character is revealed by his/her action”(p. 71). The author gives a clue to a person's character by letting the readers know how that person reacts to various situations and events. Second, “a character is revealed by his/her speech” (p. 71). The author gives the readers an insight or knowledge and image into a character through what a person says such as opinion, point of view, and so on. Third, “a character is revealed by what other characters say or think of him or her” (p. 71). Fourth, a character is revealed by “his/her physical appearance” (p. 71). The last, a character is revealed from “person's past life.” (p. 71). The character in each story can be found in the way of a character thinks, acts, speaks, and from his or her background or even from other character's opinion.

The characterization is applied to explore the character of Winnie. The character of Winnie can be seen in her way of talking, thinking and behaving. Analyzing Winnie's ways in talking, thinking and behaving can reveal the absurdity in this play, so that the thesis writer uses theory of characterization by Harry Shaw.

## **2.2. The Supporting Concept for the Analysis.**

The thesis writer will review the Theatre of The Absurd including the definition and the traits of absurdity.

### **2.2.1. The Theatre of the Absurd.**

In this part, the thesis writer wants to explain what absurdity is, how the absurdity exists, who the originator toward this concept is and what the traits of the Theatre of the Absurd are. The Theatre of the Absurd is a term coined by the critic Martin Esslin for the work of a number of playwrights, mostly written in the 1950s and 1960s. The term Theater of the Absurd derives from the philosophical use of the word absurd by such existentialist thinkers as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre.

Camus who is popular with his book *The myth of Sisyphus*, particularly argued that “humanity had to resign itself to recognize that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach; in that sense, the world must ultimately be seen as absurd” (Esslin, 1969, p.1).

The first trait of The Theatre of the Absurd is it departs from realistic characters, situations and all of the associated theatrical conventions. “Time, place and identity are ambiguous and fluid and even basic causality frequently breaks down. Meaningless plots, repetitive and nonsensical dialogue and dramatic non-sequiturs are often used to create dream-like or even nightmare-like moods” (Esslin, 1969, p.2). So in other words, the trait of the Theatre of the Absurd is it departs from the conventional drama with meaningless plots and repetitive or nonsensical dialogue. According to Martin Esslin (1969) in his book, *Theatre of The Absurd*, the four defining playwrights of the movement are Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, and Arthur Adamov. All of them share the view that man inhabits a universe with which he is out of key. Its meaning is “indecipherable and his place within it is without purpose. He is bewildered, troubled and obscurely threatened.”(Esslin, 1969, p.8). The thesis writer uses the supporting and the basic concept of the Theatre of the Absurd to help her in analyzing and understanding this play. Martin Esslin presents four quotations, which suggest the definition of the absurdity. First, he records the dictionary definition of absurdity: “out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, and illogical” (p. xix). This can be true in some sense, but then Esslin is not satisfied with this and he adds it with Ionesco’s definition of absurdity and become the second definition: “absurd is that which is devoid of purpose [...] Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, and useless (p. 5). The third definition in common usage states that “absurd’ may simply means “ridiculous” (p. 5). The last definition of absurdity is: “metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition is [...]” (p. xiv), but this is not the sense in which Albert Camus uses the word, and in which it is used when Esslin speaks of the Theatre of the Absurd. This play also has the similar situation as stated in *Waiting for Godot* such as the sense of purposelessness in life. Absurdity is a key word in Beckett's dramatic writings as well as of the whole Theatre of the Absurd. In other

words, absurdity talks about a feeling of the purposelessness of life. The second trait of the Theatre of the Absurd can be said as illogical, ridiculous, devoid purpose, and unreasonable.

If one realizes the absence of sense, and this is the expression “of the spirit of epoch”, in which the Theatre of the Absurd is rooted, the world becomes “irrational and the conflict between the world and the human being who begins to be estranged from it arises here” (Esslin, 1968, pp. 350-351). Thus absurdity arises from a natural unit composed of "I" and "the world", by comparison of these two elements, which leads to the resulting decomposition. This view of the world characterized by the subject-object dualism has its roots in the philosophy of R. Descartes. He was the first one who was engaged in the problem of the relationship between man and the outside world, and who was trying to solve the question of the connection of these two essentially different substances between “res extensa (body) and res cogitas (mind)” (p.352). Consequently, absurdity has been born out of a comparison. A man stands opposite to the world of things, which permanently makes an attack on him. Absurdity is a divorce and it does not lie in any of the two elements. Absurdity appears in the moments when man realizes his situation, in the moments of awareness of his position in the world. Camus describes this situation of realization and understanding in these words:

Rising, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday  
Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm-  
this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the "why" arises  
and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.  
...Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the  
same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness”. “The workman of  
today works of everyday in his life at the same tasks, and his fate is no less  
absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious.  
(p. 353).

In other words, absurdity arises from moments when all the acts of life that flow mechanically stop, and when consciousness starts to wake up and move. This means that the non-sense of life has been opening in the only one incomprehensible feeling. “Beginning to think is beginning to be undermined”(p. 353). Albert Camus

(1913-1960), a French novelist and essayist, who works out the concept of absurdity and deals with the absurd fate of man and literally demonstrates it with the legendary ancient Myth of Sisyphus in his stimulating analysis *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus goes into the problem what the absurdity is and how it arises. He also gives:

“The characteristics of human basic ontological categories as the feeling of "denseness" and "the strangeness of the world", which are the feeling of the Absurdity of man in a world where the decline of religious belief has deprived man of his certainties. Camus sees absurdity in a bilateral relationship between the human being and the world he lives in. Absurdity does not reside in the world itself, or in a human being, but in a tension which is produced by their mutual indifference. Human existence is in its essence completely different from the existence of things outside the human subject. The world of things is impenetrable and because of its impenetrability it is also alien to man”. That means:

“If I were a tree among trees, a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should be this world to which I am now opposed by my whole consciousness and my whole insistence upon familiarity. This ridiculous reason is what sets me in opposition to all creation” (Esslin, 1968, pp. 374-375).

The world becomes alien and the human being becomes estranged from it, he feels isolated and limited. Absurdity consists in permanent conflicts, which are a contradiction and a struggle. It can be faced only through struggling with it and disagreeing with it. That is why, as Camus says, to commit suicide means to agree with absurdity, it means to give in, because the sense of life is looked for in another world. (None of Beckett's characters commit a suicide or die in any way.) It seems that it is impossible to escape from the absurd fate, to stay means to face the absurd, to commit suicide means to consent to it, and therefore it must be accepted. That is the basis of human freedom. Absurdity does not have any sense, does not have any reasons, any aims that is why it does not reflect yesterday or tomorrow. The absurd man misses any hopes, plans, and troubles about his future. He is offered only an

instant moment and that is what his freedom consists of. The only way how to paralyze absurdity is not to ask for reasons.

Camus' Sisyphus is a typical absurd hero personifying the real quality of an absurd life. He is absurd through his passion and suffering, especially through his eternal fate and work that can never be finished:

“The Gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor.”(p. 375).

The thesis writer can see the great effort in Camus, recurring again and again, he tries to move the boulder and push it up the hill thousands of times. Finally, at the end of his long with exhausting effort, he reaches his aim. However, at the same moment, he sees the boulder rolling down back to the lower world from where it will have to be lifted again. And so he returns back to the bottom and states:

“It is during that return that pause, that Sisyphus interests me. A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself! I see that man going back down with a heavy yet measured step toward the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour...is the hour of consciousness. These moments of consciousness open up the world of the absurdity, the world of never-ending effort to go on, the world from which it is impossible to escape, the world of estrangement, loneliness, waiting, and continual endurance “ (p.375).

From that information the thesis writer involves the last trait of the Theatre of the Absurd, which is waiting, loneliness or alienation, and the world of estrangement. As a result, there are three traits of Theatre of the Absurd, and it can be said as departing from the conventional drama with meaningless plots and repetitive or nonsensical dialogue, illogical, ridiculous, devoid of purpose, and unreasonable, waiting, loneliness or alienation, and the world of estrangement. In *Happy Days*, many of the dialogues are repetitive and nonsensical, the character's action is also illogical, ridiculous and devoid of purpose. The protagonist, Winnie, is waiting for something that would never come, feeling lonely, alienated from the

world she lived on. These will be reviewed later in the analysis, what dialogues, actions, and thoughts that show the traits of absurdity in *Happy Days*.