

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Review of Related Theories

In this heading, I will state several literary theories and concepts that will be used in doing the analysis.

2.1.1 Literary Theories

I will use the theory of character, characterization, conflict and setting in literary theories since they are considered as the important tools to analyze the play.

2.1.1.1 Characters and Characterization

Character is one element, which is absolutely essential, most readily intriguing; it, in fact, creates a connection between reader and writer (Bloom 8). Besides, it is “an extended verbal representation of human being, the inner self that determine thought, speech and behavior (Robert 134). Furthermore, a character is “a person created by the playwright to carry the action, language, ideas, and emotions of the play (Robert 1039). Therefore, characters can provide the movement and conflict of the story, and eventually they function as a presence to create effects, to add the texture of the plot, to illuminate the personalities of the leading characters, perhaps to enforce the narrative opposition (Bloom 9).

After giving the understanding of character, I come to the theory of characterization. Characterization is the technique that an author uses to depict clear images of a person, or character and also the personalities of the people he writes about (Robert 135). According to Hugh C. Holman, there are three fundamental methods of characterization:

- (1) The explicit presentation by the author of the character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or more often piecemeal throughout the work, illustrated by action;
- (2) The presentation of the character in action, with little or no explicit comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader will be able to deduce the attributes of the actor from the actions; and
- (3) The representation within a character, without comment on the character by the author, of the impact of actions and emotions on the character’s inner self, with the expectation that the reader will come to a clear understanding of the attitudes of the character. (Holman 81)

According to Hatlen, the character traits can be noticed by observing them in four different ways. The first way to know the character traits is by observing the character's appearance because the character's physical qualities can give the readers an immediate stimulus. The second way to understand the character traits is by observing the speech of the characters. By knowing the manner of speaking, the tone, the language, the diction, and the statements that are produced, the readers can get some ideas about the character inner motivations toward certain actions as the reflection of the individual's character traits in story. The third way to know the character traits is by observing the character's external actions. The fourth way to know the character traits is by observing the statements of others about the character, especially the statements produced as the reaction toward the character (Hatlen 18-19). From those four ways of characterization, I use the second way and third one that are by observing the speech of the characters and their external actions.

2.1.1.2 Conflict

In order to make the analysis complete, I also need conflict as the tool of my analysis besides character and characterization. Conflict, in fact, is the struggle that grows out between two opposing forces in plot which provides "interest, suspense, and tension" (Holman 107). James L. Potter states that "The term conflict is familiar; it is the result of an opposition between at least two sides". Just as it takes two to make an argument, it takes two opposing people or forces to produce the conflict (Potter 25). Edward A. Bloom writes that conflict may exist within a single character as he is forced to meet a crisis or make a decision. It may be externalized, between a character and his society or environment, or between two characters-the protagonist and antagonist

(Bloom 83). In general, there are two kinds of conflicts in the literary work. The first conflict is called the external conflict, in which the characters oppose against other characters, nature or the values of society. The second type of conflict is the internal conflict. In this type of conflict, the character struggles against some elements of his or her own personality (Potter 25,26). Conflict not only implies the struggle of protagonist against someone or something. It also implies some motivations or some goals to be achieved (Holman and Harmon 108). In the next chapter, I will show the main characters' conflicts with their own personality and with other characters in the play.

2.1.1.3 Setting

According to Pooley, setting is a place or a location where actions of a story take place (533). Setting refers to the natural and artificial scenery or environment in which characters in literature live and move (Roberts 205). Setting is also the physical, and sometimes spiritual background against which the action of a narrative (novel, drama, short story, poem) takes place (Holman 453).

In general, there are two kinds of setting, the "natural" and "artificial scenery or manufactured setting." The natural setting deals with nature as the story's background. The nature itself is the same as a tool, which can shape the characters and their actions. Some examples of the natural setting are the times, places, sun and everything that has close relationship with the nature. On the other hand, the artificial setting refers to the societies that created it (Roberts 76-77).

I use theory of setting since my analysis is focused on the social condition in the nineteenth century that related to the society that lived at that time. During the Victorian age, the attitude of people towards others could be learned from their financial

position and their education. Therefore, the rich people studied German in order to raise their position and prestige because German was a prestigious language at that time. Besides, because social status was so important, the aristocracy did not see marriage as an organ of love, but rather as a tool for achieving or sustaining social stature.

Families were very important to Victorians. Each member of the aristocrat family had its own place and children were taught to “know their place.” The parents, especially the father, were often strict and were obeyed by all without question. The children were taught to respect them and always spoke politely to their parents. The parents saw the upbringing of their children as an important responsibility [<http://www.sparknotes.com/vfam.html>].

The social condition in the Victorian age is very important for my analysis. I use the conventions and the social norms among the society to analyze the social pressures on the main characters in The Importance of Being Earnest.

2.1.2 Concepts

Besides literary theories, I also use some relevant concepts in analyzing the social pressures and their impacts on the main characters' lives. They are the concepts of ‘social pressure’, ‘hypocrisy’ and ‘lying’.

2.1.2.1 Concept of Social Pressure

We are all seeking to develop and maintain our identity, and this is done within a social context. Once we have been attracted to a social environment, and invested some time in it, we become committed and feel obliged to behave in ways that, to some degree, conform.

There are, of course, many social environments in which we live. And culture, religion, family, friends, hobbies, etc can exert pressure. If we try to conform to all these pressures, we can end up having multiple identities (this is quite normal). However, the bigger the disparity between these identities and our natural selves, the greater our level of stress is likely to be [<http://www.priory.com/mbti5.htm> page 3 of 531000]. I use the understanding of social pressure to get the meaning of it considering that my analysis is on the social pressures that are experienced by the main characters.

2.1.2.2 Concept of Hypocrisy

To understand about hypocrisy, it must be broken down into three specific counts:

1. “Conformity”: people concealed or suppressed their true convictions and their natural tastes. They said the “right” thing or did the “right” thing: they sacrificed sincerity to propriety.
2. “Moral Pretension”: people pretended to be better than they were. They passed themselves off as being incredibly pious and moral; they talked noble sentiments and lived-quite otherwise.
3. “Evasion”: people refused to look at life candidly. They shut their eyes to whatever was ugly or unpleasant and pretended it didn’t exist.

Those are the hallmark of the Victorian hypocrisy (Dennis 394-346). I use the understanding of hypocrisy in order to understand which attitude that is considered as hypocrisy.

2.1.2.3 Concept of Lying

Lying is defined as the telling of a falsehood with the intent to deceive. I use the understanding of defensive lies in my analysis. Defensive lies usually done by a person when he faces the possibility of punishment. Then, he turns to lying to avoid the consequences of his behavior (Narramore 328). I use the understanding of lying as my tool in analysis that I am going to do to analyze the impacts of the social pressures on the characters.