WESTERN EXISTENTIALISM IN SELECTED TRANSLATED MALAY ABSURD PLAYS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

MAS RYNNA WATI AHMAD

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By

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Chair: Associate Professor Wan Roselezam binti Wan Yahaya, PhD
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This study focuses on the adaptations of the absurd techniques applied by the three playwrights, Dinsman, Mana Sikana and Anuar Nor Arai during the period of Experimental Theatre. The research aims to give a new sphere of study in the area of theatrical arts, that not many intend to see further than the appropriation of absurd theatre in highlighting the most fundamental problems significant to the philosophical perspectives. The thesis focuses on the techniques used that are applicable to the theatre in Malaysia, especially in relation to the local social changes and political scenarios. The methodology of this research is carried out by focusing on the translated drama texts and interview data of the three playwrights. It is argued that these three playwrights are inclined to use the Western framework of the Theatre of the Absurd. For this study, Jean Paul Sartre’s The Existentialism and Human Emotions and Albert Camus’s Concept on Meaninglessness are adopted here to examine the western absurd theatre technique and its influence. It is found that Dinsman, Mana Sikana and Anuar Nor Arai have evidently adapted their own version of absurd plays. Nevertheless their works reflect a deeper discussion on existential issues through the perspective of Islam, hence an Islamic perspectives on the subject of existentialism is called for to analyze the texts. For this purpose, Al-Ghazali’s The Alchemy of Happiness and Al-Attas’s Concepts of Happiness in Islamic Metaphysics will able to highlight the findings of this study. Though these
absurd dramatists have been heavily criticized for their experimentations, their works reflect authentic personal predicaments in finding the meaning of existence especially in a society that ignores the self in its efforts at social cohesion and religious discipline. This research also has found that these playwrights’ highlight their search for solutions for the personal meanderings as a result of modernization. Their solution incorporates the idea of persuading the society to return to their roots and adhered to the teachings of Islam in a fulfillment of a blessed life. Thus their works adhered to what is termed by theatre scholars as Theatre of the Absurd ‘ala’ Malaysia.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah.

WESTERN EXISTENTIALISM IN SELECTED TRANSLATED MALAY ABSURD PLAYS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or other institutions.

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MAS RYNNA WATI AHMAD

Date: 7 January 2011
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Brief Background Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1</td>
<td>The Rise Of Absurd Theatre in Modern Malay Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Statement of the Research Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Objectives of Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Scope of Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>THE HISTORY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABSURD THEATRE IN THE WEST AND MODERN MALAY THEATRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The History of Theatre of The Absurd and Its Development in The West.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The Birth of Theatre of The Absurd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>The Definition of the Absurd Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>Features of Theatre of The Absurd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>The History of Modern Malay Theatres in Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>Zaman Sandiwara (Sandiwara Period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>Zaman Realistik atau Moden (Realistic or Modern Period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>Zaman Kontemporari (Contemporary Period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Absurd Theatre Techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>The History of Existentialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>The Western Existentialist Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>The Western Existentialist Exponents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.2 Sartre’s Concept of Individuality and Absolute Freedom 66
3.4.3 Albert Camus and The Concept of Meaninglessness in The Myth of Sisyphus 70

3.5 Islamic Metaphysics on the Meaning of Life and Happiness.

3.5.1 Al-Ghazali and The Alchemy of Happiness 79
3.5.2 Al-Attas and The Concept of Existence in Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam 87
3.5.3 Al-Attas and The Concept of Happiness in Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam 92

3.6 Method of Analysis 97
3.7 Conclusion 99

4 STUDY TEXTS: REVIEW OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Introduction 102
4.2 Review of Related Literature 102
4.3 Review on The Playwrights: Dinsman, Mana Sikana and Anuar Nor Arai Review on The Playwrights: Dinsman, Mana Sikana and Anuar Nor Arai 110
4.4 Review Of The Playwrights’ Aspirations On The Four Selected Works 115
4.4.1 Findings of The Interview: Dinsman, Mana Sikana and Anuar Nor Arai 116
4.5 Conclusion 120

5 ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR PLAYS

5.1 Introduction 122
5.2 Absurd Techniques in the Four Plays 123
5.3 The Analysis of Sartre’s Concept of Individuality and Absolute Freedom in the Four Plays 141
5.4 The Analysis of Camus’s Concept of Meaninglessness the Four Plays 158
5.5 Islamic Perspectives and Approaches in the Four Plays 177
5.5.1 The Analysis of Al-Ghazali’s the Knowledge of Self and the Knowledge of God in the Four Plays. 179
5.5.2 The Analysis of Al-Attas Islamic Metaphysics in the Four Plays 199
5.5.3 The Analysis of Al-Attas The Concept of Happiness In the Four Plays 207
5.6 Conclusion 223

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion 227
6.2 Recommendations and Implications of the Study

REFERENCES 236
APPENDICES 245
BIODATA OF STUDENT 254