



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

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

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FBMK 2011 5

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ABSURD PLAYS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE**



By

MAS RYNNA WATI AHMAD

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2011

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

**WESTERN EXISTENTIALISM IN SELECTED TRANSLATED MALAY
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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 be 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
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Oleh

MAS RYNNA WATI BINTI AHMAD

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Kajian ini membincangkan elemen absurd yang terdapat di dalam karya-karya terjemahan Dinsman, Mana Sikana dan Anuar Nor Arai. Pengkaji ingin memfokuskan skop kajian kepada teknik absurd dan pengaruhnya kepada perubahan sosial dan politik negara. Kajian ini juga mendedahkan percanggahan latar belakang sosio-budaya masyarakat yang menjadi penyumbang utama kepada sambutan dingin karya-karya absurd tempatan. Methodologi kajian adalah dengan mengkhususkan kajian kepada teks terjemahan dan sesi temubual bersama penulis-penulis yang terlibat dalam kajian. Penggunaan falsafah eksistential Jean Paul Sartre, *The Existentialism and Human Emotions* dan Albert Camus's *Concept on Meaninglessness* digunakan untuk melihat lebih lanjut tentang teknik dan pengaruh teater absurd dalam karya-karya tempatan. Pengkaji mendapati bahawa Dinsman, Mana Sikana dan Anuar Nor Arai telah mengolah idea-ideanya untuk menghasilkan suatu teater yang tersendiri, iaitu teater yang lebih optimistik terhadap kehidupan berbanding teater absurd yang berasal dari barat. Bukan itu sahaja, karya-karya yang dihasilkan sarat dengan persoalan eksistential yang berunsurkan agama Islam. Oleh yang sedemikian, perspektif Islam bagi membincangkan subjek ini adalah perlu. Ini penting bagi membincangkan subjek ini dengan lebih khusus. Untuk tujuan ini, Al-Ghazali *The Alchemy of Happiness* dan Al-Attas *Concepts of Happiness in Islamic Metaphysics* di gunakan untuk pendekatan analisa yang lebih mendalam dari subjek

yang diutarakan oleh dari dramatis-dramatis ini. Walaupun karya mereka mendapat tentangan dan kutukan yang hebat, namun karya mereka mampu mengetengahkan isu-perihal agama Islam dan kepercayaan kepada tuhan yang menjadi asas kukuh dalam pegangan orang Melayu yang beragama Islam. Kajian ini mendapati karya-karya yang difokuskan mencari jalan penyelesaian bagi persoalan penderitaan hidup yang penuh dengan konflik peribadi kesan dari kemodenan yang mengubah kehidupan masyarakat sekarang ini. Jalan penyelesaian yang di beri oleh penulis-penulis ini ialah menarik; masyarakat kembali kepada asal usul budaya Melayu dan menghayati agama Islam untuk kehidupan yang lebih nikmat dan sejahtera di dunia dan juga di akhirat. Maka sehubungan itu pengkaji berpendapat karya-karya tersebut memenuhi istilah Teater Absurd 'ala' Malaysia, seperti yang telah didefinisikan oleh pakar-pakar teater.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Allah for granting me the strength to complete this thesis. It is a great challenge and yet a wonderful experience in embarking on the journey to completing my doctoral degree. I give my special thanks to Dr. Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya for her great volume of faith in me. Special thanks to my two best friends, Cheong Hsin Yi and Halimatul Saadiah Abdul Razak for their kindness in going through the manuscript.

I owe a very special gratitude to my husband, Amir for his patience, love and support. For unending prayers and encouragements, my parents deserve special mention. Their unconditional love gives me the courage especially in confronting any obstacles and inspiring me to go further. To my little unborn son, you are my strength in finishing my journey strong.





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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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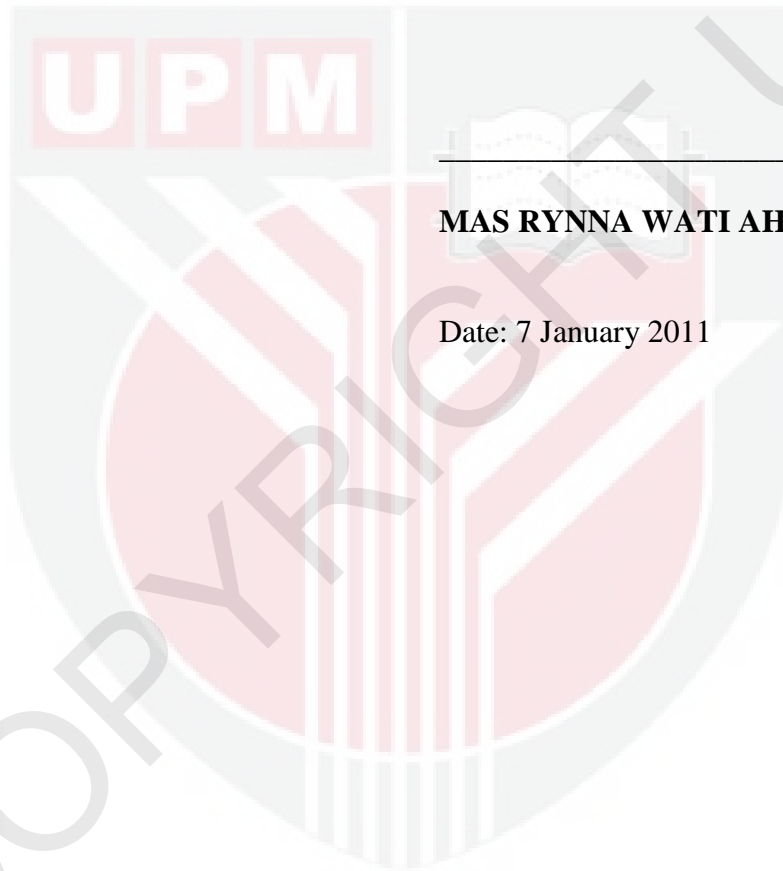
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DECLARATION

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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Date: 7 January 2011

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ABSTRAK	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
APPROVAL	vii
DECLARATION	ix
CHAPTER	
1	
	INTRODUCTION
1.1	Brief Background Study 1
1.1.1	The Rise Of Absurd Theatre in Modern Malay Theatre 2
1.2	Literature Review 6
1.3	Statement of the Research Problem 22
1.4	Objectives of Study 25
1.5	Scope of Research 26
1.6	Rationale 27
2	
	THE HISTORY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABSURD THEATRE IN THE WEST AND MODERN MALAY THEATRE
2.1	Introduction 29
2.2	The History of Theatre of The Absurd and Its Development in The West. 30
2.3	The Birth of Theatre of The Absurd 32
2.3.1	The Definition of the Absurd Theatre 36
2.3.2	Features of Theatre of The Absurd 37
2.4	The History of Modern Malay Theatres in Malaysia 39
2.4.1	<i>Zaman Sandiwara</i> (Sandiwara Period) 42
2.4.2	<i>Zaman Realistik atau Moden</i> (Realistic or Modern Period) 44
2.4.3	<i>Zaman Kontemporari</i> (Contemporary Period) 46
2.5	Conclusion 52
3	
	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY
3.1	Introduction 54
3.2	Absurd Theatre Techniques 56
3.3	The History of Existentialism 60
3.4	The Western Existentialist Philosophy 60
3.4.1	The Western Existentialist Exponents 62

	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.	73
	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	232
REFERENCES		236
APPENDICES		245
BIODATA OF STUDENT		254

