

The Search for Identity in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Sartre's *No Exit*: A Study from the Perspective of Absurdity

البحث عن الهوية في مسرحية بيرانديلو "ستة شخصيات تبحث عن مؤلف" ومسرحية
سارتر "لا مخرج": دراسة من منظور العبثية

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Authorization

I, Amjad Al-Naqrouz, hereby authorize Middle East University to provide libraries, organizations and even individuals with copies of my thesis upon request.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amjad', written over a dotted line. The signature is stylized and includes a large loop at the end.

Thesis Committee Decision

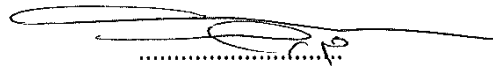
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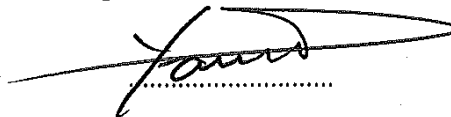
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Dedication

To the souls of my father and mother..

To my sons who endlessly enlighten my life..

To my wife who provides me with endurance..

To my brothers, sisters and friends..

To everyone who helps complete the MA journey..

I dedicate this work..

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Abstract

This thesis explores Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* from the perspective of absurdity alongside the existentialist philosophy. In terms of Pirandello's play, it exclusively focuses on the investigation of reality and illusion as a major theme as well as the interpretation of the characters' being nameless in the play. Whereas in Sartre's play, it tackles the effect of other on self in addition to the interpretation of the characters' tendency toward punishment and torture. After an analytical discussion, the results indicate that Pirandello employs reality and illusion as a manner of making a well-built influence on the spectators by depicting seemingly realistic actions merged with illusory ones. The characters in Pirandello's play appear nameless as an indication of the incompleteness of their identity. As for Sartre's play, the effect of other on self is portrayed as a sort of tormenting the residents of Sartre's hellish room, and showing the inevitability of others on the existence of self. Moreover, the discussion finds out different reasons for the characters' tendencies towards punishment, the most notable of which are their realization of having been sinful in real life, and the lack of faith.

Finally, the study indicates that the search of identity in the two sampled plays entails a method and a process and the characters have a loss of identity, attributed to social, religious, cultural, psychological and national variables.

Key Words: Pirandello, Sartre, absurdity, existentialism, reality and illusion, the effect of other on self.

البحث عن الهوية في مسرحية بيرانديلو "ستة شخصيات تبحث عن مؤلف" ومسرحية سارتر "لا مخرج": دراسة من منظور العبثية

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الملخص

تستكشف هذه الرسالة مسرحية لويجي بيرانديلو "ستة شخصيات تبحث عن مؤلف" ومسرحية جان بول سارتر "لا مخرج" من منظور المسرح العبثي إلى جانب الفلسفة الوجودية. تركز الدراسة فيما يخص مسرحية بيرانديلو حصرا على التحقيق في الواقع والوهم كموضوع رئيسي، فضلا عن تفسير إعطاء الشخصيات أسماء مجهولة. بينما تتناول الدراسة مسرحية سارتر من حيث تأثير وجود الآخرين على الذات بالإضافة إلى تفسير ميول الشخصيات نحو العقاب والتعذيب. إن الغرض من هذه المواضيع البحث عن هوية الشخصيات وفقا لتصور الكاتين. نشير النتائج بعد مناقشة تحليلية إلى أن بيرانديلو يوظف الواقع والوهم كوسيلة لتأثير قوي على المتفرجين من خلال تصور أحداث واقعية اندمجت مع تلك الوهمية. تظهر الشخصيات في مسرحية بيرانديلو بدون أسماء كدلالة على عدم اكتمال هويتهم. أما بالنسبة إلى مسرحية سارتر، فإن تأثير وجود الآخرين على الذات يصور كوسيلة لتعذيب سكان غرفة سارتر، ويظهر حتمية وجود الآخرين على وجود الذات. وجدت الدراسة علاوة على ذلك أسبابا مختلفة لميول الشخصيات نحو العقاب، وأبرزها

إدراك أنهم كانوا مذنبين في الحياة الحقيقية، بالإضافة إلى افتقادهم الإيمان. تشير الدراسة أخيرا إلى أن البحث عن الهوية في المسرحيتين المختارتين ينطوي على طريقة وعملية، كما أن الشخصيات في المسرحيتين قد فقدت الهوية، وذلك لأسباب اجتماعية ودينية وثقافية ونفسية ووطنية.

الكلمات الرئيسية : بيرانديلو، سارتر، العبثية، الوجودية، الواقع والوهم، الغير والنفس.

Chapter One

Background of the Study

Chapter One

Background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Absurdist theatre is a dramatic-staged form that has acquired its popularity in the second half of the twentieth century. Absurdism is a philosophical trend of existentialism, involving comic and nonsensical literary structure to present life as meaningless or to allude to the unreality existing in the real world. Mostly, the correspondence of the absurdist ideas to existentialism is to emphasize the existence of humankind as being meaningless and nonsensical. Even though many critics believe that Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) has brought this trend of writing drama to prominence, Sagar (2008) asserts that anything that is unjust and inexplicable without meaning is absurd and absurdity cannot be labeled for certain piece of writing or certain decade, since it was a major component in Greek tragedy and later (3).

One of the common thematic concerns not only in absurdist theatre, but also in literature in general is identity, which can be operationally defined as the characteristics that distinguish one person or thing from another. According to Abrams & Hogg (1988), identity is "one's conception or definition of who one is (One's identity) is largely composed of self-descriptions in terms of the defining characteristics of social groups to which one belongs" (7). The personal qualities, beliefs, expressions, looks, and psyche make a person known and recognizable and these characteristics represent the personal identity of that person. The common expression "loss of identity" suggests itself when a

person or a thing has a change in the special characteristics, which make him/it distinct. Thus, the search for identity is a concept, entailed when there is emotional, social or psychological loss of one of the characteristics of the identity.

Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) profoundly tackles the issue of identity and the search for identity. The play, being classified as an absurdist and existentialist drama, opens with the arrival of six nameless characters who express the reason behind coming to the acting company as they are in search for an author. According to them, the need for an author is as essential as the need for finding out their real identities. In the daytime on a theatre stage, the acting company prepares for the rehearsal of Pirandello's *The Rules of the Game*, while the six characters just interrupt and start arguing with the play's director. The director first tries to expel the interrupters, but becomes more curious when they start describing their dramatic stories. Actually, the play stages the play's staging within a play to generate six characters' stories, and to signify the relationship between the characters, actors, manager and the missed author. More specifically, Pirandello's masterpiece searches for the relationship between the author and characters, as first indicated by Father who expresses the core theme of the play in his reply to the company's manager. He demonstrates that the six characters are in search for an author, interpreting his absurdity by holding that life is full of absurdities, which do not need to seem plausible since they are true.

Many critics deem Luigi Pirandello, an Italian playwright, poet, and novelist, the forerunner to the absurdist theatre. Pirandello was born in 1867 and died in 1963, leaving behind him works of extraordinary literary quality, especially in the field of drama. The 1934 Nobel Prize Winner, Pirandello, undoubtedly, provided the library

with prominent absurdist plays the most perplexing and important of which is *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

Like Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Sartre's *No Exit* (1944) is another existentialist play, concerned with the search for identity. The one-act play has three central characters, locked in a mysterious room behind a closed door. They await their punishment in the room, which is a symbol of the afterlife according to Sartre's view. The characters engage in private discussion in which they reveal their sins through being one another's tortures. In characters' discussion, spectators find that characters' identities are lost, and they only represent an exploration of existence. In this regard, Young (1946) praises the entire play of the French dramatist as a phenomenon of the contemporary theatre, which deeply probes into existentialist issues (764).

No Exit is not the only literary work by Jean-Paul Sartre to direct attention to existentialist matters, but also he produced more crucial literary works such as *The Condemned of Altona* (1959), *The Devil and the Good Lord* (1951), *Dirty Hands* (1948), *The Flies* (1943) and *The Respectful Prostitute* (1946). Sartre is a famous twentieth century French philosopher, dramatist, novelist, political activist and literary critic. He was born in Paris in 1905, and died in 1980. Throughout his career, many philosophers see him as one of the leading figures of existentialism.

Accordingly, this study examines two selected plays from the Italian and French theatres. It mainly deals with one of Pirandello's plays from the perspective of the search of identity, as well as the investigation into reality and illusion as a thematic concern in the play. It also explores one of Sartre's plays from an existentialist angle to interpret the reason why the play's central characters exist imprisoned in a room without trying to exit, as well as their tendency towards tortures, neglecting their real identities.

Furthermore, a discussion on the effect of other on self in Sartre's play is taken into account in the analysis of the play.

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is about six characters who search for both an author and a stage on which the author completes their stories. Actually, this idea makes the six characters' existence limited from freedom and identity, being given certain roles according to the author's perception. Thus, they lose their real identities for the sake of staging. Similarly, the characters in Sartre's play have a tendency to torture and to retiring real life in the closed room, which makes their existence limited as well. Thus, they become deprived from freedom and real identities. In this way, it can be said that both playwrights focus on existentialism each one in his own way, presenting real identity and illusion as tools to symbolize the meaninglessness of life. Reality in Pirandello's literary work is represented in the characters' search for an author who would complete something missing in their characters as they think, while illusion is represented in the characters' loss of identity. In Sartre's literary work, reality is represented in the characters' tendency for punishments and illusion is represented in the characters' loss of identity. The dramatic tone in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* functions as death in Sartre's *No Exit*, which suspends existentialist freedom. The two plays are stable in the view of others with no possibility of liberation. Accordingly, the major problem the current study deals with is the search for identity, considering reality and illusion as well as the effect of other on self as the core thoughts of the two sampled plays.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

The current study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To make a special reference to reality and illusion for the sake of interpreting the search for identity in Pirandello's play.
2. To investigate the reasons why the six characters in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* remain nameless.
- 3- To read between the lines, analyzing the three characters' tendency and pleasure for tortures, and neglect of their real identities in Sartre's *No Exit*.
- 4- To take the effect of other on self as a platform for searching for the characters' real identities in Sartre's play.

1.4 Significance of the Study:

Although many scholars have long been conducted many studies on Pirandello's and Sartre's plays since the first premiers of their literary works, the significance of this study that it probes into two selected plays from the European Theatre, focusing on one of the contemporary themes in literature, that is, identity. Additionally, the findings of the discussion might provide a new contribution to the field of studying the search for identity, its loss and reality vs. illusion in drama, in general, and in Pirandello's and Sartre's dramas, in particular.

1.5 Questions of the Study

1- To what extent is there a correspondence between the two themes of reality and illusion, and the search for identity in Pirandello's play?

2- Why do the six characters remain nameless in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*?

3- To what extent do the three characters have a tendency for tortures, neglecting their real identities in Sartre's *No Exit*?

4- How does the effect of other on self lead to an insightful explanation of the characters' real identities in Sartre's play?

1.6 Limits and Limitations of the Study:

The study is based primarily on one of Pirandello's and one of Sartre's plays. For this reason, the findings of the study cannot be generalized or even applied to other plays of the two playwrights. It is also limited to the place and time of its investigation. The time is the Academic Year 2017/2018, and the place is the Middle East University in Jordan.

1.7 Definition of Terms:

Identity: It is "one's conception or definition of who one is (One's identity) is largely composed of self-descriptions in terms of the defining characteristics of social groups to which one belongs" (Abrams & Hogg, 1988:7).

It is also defined as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. It defines the relation established by psychological identification. (Merriam Webster Dictionary)

Absurdism: It refers to the conflict between the human tendency to seek inherent value and meaning in life and the human inability to find any. In this context, absurd does not mean "logically impossible", but rather "humanly impossible"

Existentialism: It is a term applied to the work of certain late-19th- and 20th-century European philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject—not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human individual. (Oxford Dictionary)

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

The review in this chapter is devoted to the critics' views on matters relating to the subject topics discussed in this study. It is classified into two sections: a review of the theoretical literature and a review of the empirical studies.

2.1 Theoretical Literature

Literature Review on Pirandello's Play

Caesar (1998) points out that the play purports to be the product of an earlier failure to produce an artistically feasible collaboration between the characters and their original author. The characters illustrate Pirandello's belief that people either in literature or in reality cannot be separated from their life story (27). Insisting on his view, Caesar holds that the "character and plot are inseparable, the author cannot adopt the one without the other, and by rejecting the story the characters bring with them, he has barred their way to a literary existence" (37).

According to Lorch (2005), Pirandello as a playwright has a special mode of producing a complete literary work. His ideas and knowledge are closely related to the opposition between art and life which are always central to his writing (3). Pirandello in his dramas makes it clear that identity is a collection of masks and forms imposed upon the life within us by ourselves or by others.

Commenting on the play's themes, Sargar (2008) contends that the living man in general has no fixed identity, and has a degree of existential freedom to choose and change things. The characters in the play wish to be characterized in a play with a fixed role and identity. Thus, they decline their freedom and real identity. In this way, they are defined with regard to the requirements of the play, not with regard to self-justification as they seek (2). Sargar demonstrates that the six characters cannot agree as to what their story is. In the case of Father, it is the story of his tragedy, while in the case of the daughter it is the story of her violation by her father.

Haney (2008) asserts that Pirandello blurs the distinction between reality and illusion by presenting the play in a more realistic way. He challenges the spectators coming to the play's premiere and expecting to watch an illusion. As Haney explains, one of the play's topics is the habit most people have of taking the illusion of the stage for granted. In his play, Pirandello questions the spectators' ability to distinguish reality from illusion just by having the characters' claim that they are born more realistic even though they themselves want to be actors (126).

In his study guide to Pirandello's play, Cummings (2012) states that the play's central characters keep up their reality even though they search for an author who would make them products of his imagination. This critic sees that the characters can perceive their roles more than the actors who have never experienced what they perform in reality. The process of completing any story is a matter of script the actors read, understand then rehearse. In contrast, the characters search for the author who would complete their tragedies and also stage their real experience.

Mahmoudpour and Zarrinjooee (2014) are concerned with self-identity in Pirandello's play. They indicate that the escapist characters escape from reality to find an author for the sake of completing their life stories, and that the lack of identification can change the reality to illusion. In other words, Pirandello used the metaphors of life as a stage and the individual as a player to convey a philosophical insight into the human condition. Pirandello portrays the border line between reality and illusion in an attempt to emphasize the assumption that "when someone answers what is reality and what is illusion then he can answer who he really is" (782).

Mortimer (2014) praises Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* along with *Henry IV* as the most characteristic and influential achievements, for they are established as seminal classics of the modern stage. He argues that *Six Characters* is not the only dramatized attempt to stage characters imposing their dramas on the director, but also the short stories *The Tragedy of a Character* (1911) and *Conversations with Characters* (1919) were about characters who impose themselves upon the author. Mortimer interprets that the Italian dramatist's insightful pessimism about man's capacity to distinguish reality from illusion is the essential source of all innovations and experiments in the theatre.

Nellhaus and others (2016) take the view that "Pirandello did not directly attack the representational link between characters and actors, but rather subverted the believability of the conventional theatre through metatheatricality" (412). In his well-known play, *Six Characters*, Pirandello attempts to dramatize the conflict between the reality of art and the illusory qualities of lived experience. What he wants from his play

is to make a disparity between the lives of the actors and the factious characters in the sense that the actors have no firm identity, whereas the characters' identity has been written for them.

Literature Review on Sartre's Play

Lavine (1984) describes the huge success *No Exit* has achieved after its first performance in Paris in 1944. Lavine confirms that the one-act play which has no scenery is the best introduction to Sartre's view of the way conscious beings relate to one another. The characters of the play are driven to the brightly lighted room, knowing that they are dead and sent to hell. Later the truth dawns upon them that they are one another's tortures.

The play explores the writer's philosophical and political ideas on a dramatic form. After being taken as a German prisoner of war for several months in 1940s, Sartre continued to study philosophy and wrote *Being and Nothingness* in the year before the first premiere of *No Exit*. In these works, Sartre developed his philosophy of existentialism, clarifying that every human is alone in the world and is free to make the choices which redefine himself or herself, but ultimately morally responsible for his actions (Cengage Learning Gale, 1999).

Sartre reveals that personal identity emerges exclusively within a social context. One's relations with others are essential to the formation of self. Sartre admits that self cannot exist save in relation to others. Though he recognizes one's need for others, he worries that others often practice damaging influence on the formation of self. In *No exit*, the three characters are imprisoned together in a closed room, being sentenced to stay alert

for eternity. In the course of actions, each character feels anxious, threatened and oppressed by the existence of others (Irwin, 2000).

O'Neil (2004) describes the play, which was written in only two weeks, as it sustains its dramatic tension as both the audience and characters wait for mortal secrets to be revealed and for the torment of hell to start. The play puts on show major ideas of existentialism like the absence of divinity, the ineluctable nature of misery and the impossibility of evading one's freedom. This critic comments on the play's title which suggests that there is no escape from one's self, one's actions and one's judgment by others. The real torture in Sartre's hell is the look and judgment of the others. There is no exit for the three characters, for they can no longer change their actions, characters or even fate (1350-1351).

Markey (2013) refers to the period when Sartre's *No Exit* was written. He implies that the play's first performance in Paris was in the final dark days of the Second World War when Paris was a Nazi-occupied city. The play is a drama featuring three sinners, all dead to the world, who learn that hell is not a land of fire, brimstone and devils, but an oddly furnished living room where they are sentenced to tormenting one another. Markey attributes, the reason of the characters' staying in the room and not escaping when the room door swings open, to the claim that the sinners recognize that moment as an illusion. They believe that "the only possible path to salvation is through struggle against their special tormentors" (1).

2.1 Empirical Studies

The fact that Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Sartre's *No Exit* are undoubtedly of extraordinary literary quality is the reason behind attracting the attention of scholars from different places and in different times. In fact, it cannot be denied that the two plays confirm the artistic creativity of their dramatists, that is why they have been long studied from different perspectives.

Previous Studies on Pirandello's play

One of the scholars who examined issues in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is Hatt (1999). This scholar investigated Pirandello's major dramas including *Six Characters* to confirm that Pirandello extends the function of mirror imagery beyond his predecessors. The plays selected for the investigation were *If You Think So* (1917), *Six Characters* (1921), *Henry IV* (1922) and *The Mountain Giants* (1937). Hatt believed that Pirandello in his dramas comments on issues facing the modern man in an industrialized society such as illusion and reality, art and life, the multiple dimensions of reality and the dehumanization of a man among others. The results of the analysis concluded that these issues are meant by Pirandello as a mirror providing the vehicle for characters to find truth. Pirandello employs mirror imagery to clarify the nature of the modern man and the world where he exists. In other words, mirror imagery is the extension of the Aristotelian concept that drama mirrors life.

Nelson (2008) explored the dysfunctional family in Pirandello's *Six Characters* as a single entity and each of the family members individually. The aim of the study was to indicate how the family's tragedy unfolds and the part each individual of the family

plays. As the play focuses on the struggle of the six characters to see how their stories are staged, they found their reality, which is the fact that they were born as literary characters abandoned by their author. The study also focused on defining the six characters' reality and their delusional beliefs plus their rational behavior. Finally, the study found that the six characters walk the line between the concepts of the delusional beliefs and rational behavior for the sake of finding their reality and performing their story.

Martinescu (2013) conducted a study to compare between Luigi Pirandello's and Michelangelo Antonioni's characters, illustrating how Antonioni's characters display those of Pirandello. What is in common between the characters of both is that they are depicted lifeless, having aimless absurdities, inner restlessness, and inability to cope with reality. Their insanity as they appear is an attempt to hide behind this mask. The study concluded that Pirandello's characters originate in a chaos of ideas and not the chaos of birthplace of their author. Their sense of existential anxiety and alienation is the result of the perception of the absurd aspects in their lives, or their problematic role in society.

Mahmoudpour and Zarrinjooee (2014) probed into the problem of identity in Pirandello's *Six Characters*, clarifying the image of a family being just alive in a world with having no clear notion of their identity. According to the research, the reason why the characters search for an author to rewrite their story is that reality of their illusion about their identity needs a kind of recognition. The study finally figured out that

Pirandello indeed looks for the notion of self-identification, and how the lack of which causes the misunderstanding of the world.

Nesari (2014) selected Pirandello's play for an analytical study. In the discussion, Nesari analyzed the play from a deconstructionist perspective, looking for the binary oppositions in the text. The researcher believed that the text seems to be consciously aware of the arbitrary nature of the opposition in each of the binary sets. The study concluded that the binary sets that can be extracted from the text are author and text, author and character, actor and character, husband and wife, father and daughter, reality and delusion alongside life and art.

Madahian and Pirnajmuddin (2014) inspected the play from a postmodernist standpoint, concentrating specifically on the ontological foregrounding in the play. Ontology can be defined as a philosophy to study the nature of being, existence, reality and issues related to the categories of humans and their relation. The researchers believed that the poetics of the play foregrounds ontology and the different ontological plans are conceived in its world. The ontological foregrounding signifies breaking the ontological boundaries between the worlds in the play and the reality. The study found out that the world logic of the characters does not meet with that of the actors, which brings ambiguity and ontological tension between their worlds.

Previous Studies on Sartre's play

The purpose of a study conducted by Ray (1966) was to determine to which extent three existential dramas by Sartre can be significantly classified as modern tragedies in the Aristotelian mode. The selection included Sartre's *The Flies*, *No Exit* and *The Condemned of Altona*. The researcher claimed that there seems to be a correlation between Sartre's ethics of existentialism and Aristotle's concept of tragedy since the theories of both emphasize the moral or ethical choices of men in action. They are based on the concepts of freedom, sufferance, conflict and authenticity. The study concluded that *No Exit* cannot be classified as a tragedy, but simply as a modern serious drama.

Cardy (2003) explored the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre on Paul Bowles' novel *The Sheltering Sky* in terms of the existential mutual elements available in the works of Sartre and the selected novel. The selection from Sartre was *No Exit* and *Nausea* to be compared to Bowles' novel for similarities in tone, imagery and theme. Sartre's concept of consciousness, bad faith and the effect of the other are correlated to certain details in Bowles' text. The conclusions indicated that Bowles' novel corresponds to Sartre's philosophy of existentialism in the sense that it implies that loneliness and emptiness are underlying conditions of existence.

Mart (2012) attempted to define what existentialism is according to a selection from Sartre's existential plays. The study focused on existential issues such as death, anxiety, freedom and responsibility. Finally, the study found that Sartre, as an existential

dramatist, shows in his plays that life is absurd which makes no sense and has no purpose or meaning, but human beings need it to make sense or to have a purpose.

Semab and Attia (2016) investigated the process of being, self-awareness and enslavement in Sartre's *No Exit* and *The Respectful Prostitute*. The study mainly concentrated on Sartre's concepts of self and other. The results of the discussion showed that the only way to survive in this modern world is being for others since man lacks the confidence and courage to face the sufferings and pains in real life.

Lastly, this study is distinguished from the previous ones in the sense that it creates a communal standpoint from which two different plays, written by different dramatists who have different cultures and trends, are analytically discussed. The standpoint is indubitably the search for identity which is lost in Pirandello's characters because of illusion, and in Sartre's characters because of the tendency to retire life and have punishment. Moreover, what would make this study different from the previous ones is that it looks at various issues in the two sampled plays from the perspective of absurdity alongside existentialism.

Chapter Three

Methods and Procedures

Chapter Three

Methods and Procedures

3.1 Methodology of the Study:

The major methodology used in the study is both analytical and descriptive. It seeks to explore the two selected plays from the Italian and French theatres, dealing with one of Pirandello's plays from the perspective of the search of identity, as well as the investigation of reality and illusion as a thematic concern in the play. It also explores one of Sartre's plays from an existentialist angle to interpret the reason why the play's central characters remain imprisoned in a room without trying to exit, as well as the characters' tendency towards tortures, neglecting their real identities. Also, reading, discussing, and analyzing the plays from the perspective of the absurd is utilized as a major method in this study.

3.2 Sample of the Study:

The sample of the study consists of one of Pirandello's plays, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), and one of Sartre's plays, *No Exit* (1944).

3.3 Procedures of the Study:

- Reading the original text of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.
- Reading the original text of *No Exit*.
- Reading previous studies and critics' views related to the main topics of the study.
- Reviewing the theoretical literature and the empirical studies.
- Discussing the subject matters of the study, utilizing absurdity and existentialism as the major methods.
- Drawing the conclusions and recommending for further studies.
- Writing references according to the APA style.

Chapter Four

Discussion and Analysis

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This chapter is analytically devoted to discuss Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Sartre's *No Exit*. More specifically, it inspects Pirandello's play with a focus on reality and illusion to interpret the characters' actions, the events and the playwright's perception of meta-theatre. The meta-theatre is a dramatic form in which the playwright draws attention to the performance's circumstances and the address of the audience through speech. In the case of Sartre, the focus is on the effect of other on self to interpret the characters' tendencies for torture and punishment. In both plays, the ultimate objective is to reach an ultimate conclusion about the reality of the characters' identities in the both plays.

4.1 Reality and Illusion in Pirandello's Play

It can never be disbelieved that the opening of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is exceptionally mystifying. The proof is simply the critics' and audience's reactions against the first premiers of the play when the audience got shocked from the six characters' interrupting a rehearsal of one of Pirandello's play. The spectators seem

confusingly unaware whether the play started or there is something wrong happening on the stage. Relating this bewilderment to reality and illusion, it would be said that the curtains were actually raised with a real scene while the audience expects illusory one. The six characters break into a play's rehearsal and the scene seems real for the watchers, but in reality, it was the Pirandello's illusory opening of his philosophical play.

In reading *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, it would be noted that the play mainly generates the six characters' drama through the conflicts between the characters, the actors, the director and the missed author on a company's stage. One of the play's main concerns is the references to reality and illusion or life and art in the sense that art almost seems detached from reality. According to Pirandello, the absorption of reality and illusion is a key topic in his play, Pirandello wants the spectators to experience the reality of the scenes, so that the scenes leave a well-built influence on them. As Lakhdhir (2012) states, Pirandello presents a meta-theatre to investigate the philosophical dialectic between performance and reality. The twentieth century Italian dramatist destructs the proverbial fourth wall between those on stage and the audience in an attempt to create a more authentic form than that of the conventional theatre. This concept of metatheatricality pertains to Pirandello's play, which largely aims at presenting a play within a play where the audience watches seemingly realistic actions and engages with the characters in their roles. In his avant-garde play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Pirandello lets the audience watch a generalization of a dramatic form elsewhere from the theatrical elements, or an allegory of the theatre. In line with this, Halperen (2010) declares that the play starts with a bare stage in order to mystify

the spectators between the real actions and the inventive illusion. The playwright in this process confronts the audience's ability to distinguish reality both in and outside the theatre.

Even though the characters insist on their being realistic during the play's actions, the audience is, actually, aware of the fact that they are mere actors, acting as if they were real. Furthermore, Cummings (2012) argues that the six characters maintain their reality in spite of the search for an author who would make them products of his imagination. This critic sees that the characters can perceive their roles more than the actors who have never experienced what they perform in reality. The process of completing any story is a matter of script the actors read, understand then rehearse. In contrast, the characters search for the author who would complete their tragedies and also stage their real experience.

By going beyond the play's actions, before the characters' interruption of the rehearsal occurs, spectators feel that everything was usual and the ones who come for watching one of Pirandello's plays faced an empty and dark stage, awaiting the new play to run. What is unusual is that the characters bring the text not the author since they believe if the text, which will be acted by them, is their real drama, the performance would be better than that out of the author's fantasy.

The Father. No, for Heaven's sake, what are you saying? We bring you a drama, sir.

The Step-Daughter. We may be your fortune.

The Manager. Will you oblige me by going away? We haven't time to waste with mad people. (Act one)

At the beginning of the play when Father disputes the manager, he points that there is no need for a text, simply because the drama lies in the characters' real life. As noticed in the previous lines, Father claims that the characters bring the director a drama to be staged; it is the realistic drama they experienced in real life. In the world of drama, no real characters can be performers of their own stories, that is why the director considers father's speech as nonsense and a mere waste of time with a group of wild people. Father's speech ostensibly relates to reality in his response that life is full of infinite absurdities, which do not even need to appear plausible since they are true. In this early time of the play, the manager gets the impression that the characters are mad as it is no longer standard to let real characters perform their own real dramas or to search for an author to complete their life stories. In fact, this is the distinction between life and art in which life is reality and art is a plain illusion, or in like manner, reality follows illusion as a substantial deal. In this situation, Pirandello hints at the distinction between life and art in the portrayal of the six characters who express an obsession and persistence to stage their dramas. Heims (2012) interprets the characters' persistence on staging their stories as they have been given existence by having been conceived. The real existence of the characters entail portraying their life stories in a performed form, which would make it more definable. However, they are still prevented from realizing that existence when the author has not completed their life stories. Heims adds that the characters attempt to realize themselves through a staging of a fragmentary story of which they are part, thereby, affirming the superiority of their reality over that of the actors.

In defending his view against the manager, Father confirms that the six characters have dramas like the dramas the actors used to perform on stages. The characters' drama is realistic and the actors' drama is artistic.

The Father [hurt]. I am sorry you laugh, because we carry in us a drama, as you can guess from this woman here veiled in black.

The Father [determined, coming forward]. I marvel at your incredulity, gentlemen. Are you not accustomed to see the characters created by an author spring to life in yourselves and face each other? Just because there is no "book" [Pointing to the PROMPTER'S box.] which contains us, you refuse to believe . . . (Act 1)

Illusion integrates with reality in this case as drama is only an illusion to a real life story, but it might not necessarily be identical. According to Father, reality is the characters' drama and illusion is what is expected from the author in the completion of their stories. The reason why the characters seek illusion is that reality has been painfully tragic for them, wherein they have found no identity. To interpret the characters' choice of being part of a literary work of art, Sargar (2008) implies that the characters in the play wish to be characterized in a play with a fixed role and identity, declining their freedom and real identity to escape from any sort of sufferance in life. Father continues his argument with the manager, indicating that the characters in art are more alive than those who breathe and wear clothes. They are less real, but rather truer. He believes that one is born in many forms such as a tree, water, stone or even a

character in a play. Therefore, the characters need an author to identify their form or, more accurately, to clarify their lost identities.

The Manager: [interpreting the rising anger of the COMPANY].
Nevertheless, I would beg you to believe, my dear sir, that the profession of the comedian is a noble one. If today, as things go, the playwrights give us stupid comedies to play and puppets to represent instead of men, remember we are proud to have given life to immortal works here on these very boards! [The ACTORS, satisfied, applaud their MANAGER.]

The Father: [interrupting furiously]. Exactly, perfectly, to living beings more alive than those who breathe and wear clothes: beings less real perhaps, but truer! I agree with you entirely. [The ACTORS look at one another in amazement.]

Insisting on the idea of staging the characters' real drama, Father demonstrates in the first act that what the characters want from the manager is to complete their stories, so they live for a while in him and for eternity in life. He means that the characters come to the company to live as characters out of the author's fantasy for a while and for eternity in the literary text itself. Before the characters ask the manager for an eternal life in art, the manager talks proudly about the illusive characters who live for eternity, just because he gives life to the immortal works in which they appear by staging them over time.

Unlike, the real characters become nonexistent once they die, while the illusory characters in dramas live for eternity. As Father says, the characters come for the company to be work of art not real characters, for they have objections about their reality. The

characters find that living in illusion would make them a creation of the author and thus their lives would be easier and less miserable. They think he who was born a character can laugh even at death. In this respect, Heims (2012) indicates that the characters seek to be unchanging by being subject to the director's interpretation. He argues that identity is unstable for real persons, for they are neither the persons they were yesterday nor the ones they will be tomorrow. As for the characters, they want to overcome any change in being players of stable roles in a script.

Additionally, what seems more realistic about the six characters is that they start generating their dramas in an improvised speech in front of the actors who become the audience. The actors laugh at once, get shocked and even feel pity with what they watch from the characters. The drama performed on the stage is a realistic one, borne in the characters' minds who come to recount it to the managers and the actors. For example, in her story, the step-daughter indicates when she was young; she used to see the father, waiting outside the school. He used to come there to see how she was growing. The father replies, describing how awful his life was when abandoned by the mother. The house was suddenly empty and he was like a dazed fly left in empty rooms. In this time, the father had followed the step-daughter on the street and smiled at her face, while she did not really know who he might be. The son describes the situation as literature. Truly, it is in a literary work of art to see the father and the step-daughter on the stage together at the end, presenting the situation as if it was an illusion. The story itself is realistic for them, but it would not be seen except in illusory written texts.

At the beginning of the second act, the characters appear on the stage meanwhile the manager orders a rehearsal by the actors. The actors in the first act look like the audience as if they were limited to watch and listen to the characters, arguing about their past. Rather, in this act, they appear preparing for acting the characters' dramas on the stage. The roles become clearer in the sense that the actors perform other's stories and the characters seem again realistic because what are transformed into a theatrical show are their life stories. Although they perceive that the story's holder is more realistic when staging his, yet they finally accept to let the actors play the roles. At this point in the play, the manager assures that the actors do not improvise, but transfer what they watch from the characters as if they rely on a book. In this case, it can be noted that the process of improvising logically occurs in reality when a real person speaks freely about a certain issue, while the transference of a text into a staged performance is the actors' job in which they are never allowed to improvise. In other words, reality is seen in the characters' improvising in the first act, whereas illusion is seen in the actors' relying on books in the rehearsals.

In the same act, there are two rehearsals performed by the actors before the characters on the stage. One of them is a scene, consisting of a silent exchange between Madame Pace and the Step-daughter. The scene is marked by a smile, which represents the reality outside the conventional theatre. It is the reality of the characters' drama that cannot be spoken loudly; for that reason, the two characters appear smiling. As for the actors, they can act the father's betrayal with Pace in front of the daughter, because they act others' story to entertain the audience, or because it is a part of a script written out of the playwright's imagination. In the case of the characters, in particular, the father and

the step-daughter cannot see a real betrayal relating to them. The smile then seems a realistic illusion, and in this way, Pirandello breaks the convention of theatre by making a disparity between reality and illusion, and between art and life. Gnarra (2009) remarks to the two scenes, focusing on the repetition of the shows. The critic states that the father rejects to be judged on one act and that the step-daughter seeks revenge. The critic then elaborates that the scenes are intended to question the veracity of subjective interpretation of reality.

In the third act, reality and illusion as a theme is still an apparent subject. In a dialogue between the father and the manager, the father bristles at the word "illusion". He explicates that the characters have no life outside illusion and their illusion is realistic, depicted in the comedy of life. In this situation, the father makes a distinction between the comedy performed on the stage and the comedy of life as the former is an unrealistic illusion coming from a piece of written text, whereas the latter is a realistic illusion coming from a real dramatic story. The father insists on the fact that the characters' stories are realistic and these stories are the humor of their life. According to the manager, he says that the father's tale of being abandoned by the original author is nonsense; in turn, the father replies that he does not know his author. For this reason, the characters want to live in illusion, so that they could put an end to their sufferance in reality. Father pretends that the reason why the manager thinks he philosophizes to the assumption that the manager would not realize what the characters really feel in reality.

Finally, the play ends with recurrent interruptions by the characters on certain details of the performance, which make the completion of the drama impossible. These

interruptions are likely the indication of the incompleteness of the characters' identities. In the Merriam Webster Encyclopedia of Literature (1995), it is stated that the characters object to their reenactment, claiming that it is a distortion of the truth when the actors step forward to portray the six characters' stories. Meanwhile, the tragedy of the family starts by the scene in which the drowning child in the fountain and the boy's suicide in the garden occur. The two words "pretence" and "reality" are said many times in the final scene.

Actually, the death of the two characters is realistic as the scene is not from those, which were discussed between the characters and the manager. However, by ending the play with the death of the child and the boy, everything becomes more sensually obvious that Pirandello's play is not an ordinary play, rather a play within a play. The play in which the six characters' dramas are depicted is an illusion presented in the form of reality, and on the other side the play in which the actors rehearse Pirandello's *Mixing It Up* is an illusion. In this way, it can be noticed that Pirandello mixes reality and illusion to create a new genre of writing drama that is the metatheatrical drama. Heims (2012) considers the final act as a violent and melodramatic ending to the twisted family drama and not the real climax of the play. The climax itself comes with the reiteration of theatrical confusion when the actors are hesitant either the boy is dead or only "make believe" of that. The problem is left unsettled for the audience. Nevertheless, an intelligent reader may recall that earlier when it was pointed out that a character cannot die, even if part of his role is to die.

The second matter in discussing Pirandello's play in the current study is the exploration of the characters' being nameless throughout the play's actions. In fact, this matter seems more crucial because the mother's name is mentioned at the beginning of the play. However, the characters mostly keep referring to her as the mother. In relation to all of the characters' identities, in general, it can be discussed that Pirandello does not reveal the characters' real names as a way of indicating the incompleteness of the characters' identities. Pirandello links the names with the characters' existence in a way that without names, the characters lack a real existence. Consequently, the characters are short of the state of being self-defined in terms of the identity. In point of fact, the one who has no genuine identity cannot take part in society as self-identification is an essential need for the social integration. Nesari (2014) is concerned with the lack of identity in Luigi Pirandello's plays. The critic holds that self and identity are concepts, which are lost and unachievable in human beings who wear masks hiding identities. In accordance with what this study proposes, the characters in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* searches for a mask to prevent them from any social integration since they find themselves defined by their creator in a way that is never pleasant to them.

In Pirandello's play, the characters suffered from depression which motivates them, searching for an author who would complete their stories better than their original one. They have an inside conflict between their real personalities and their essential needs which make their identities more changeable in order to get these needs without caring about the way of achieving them. Another thing is that the characters have a sense of alienation experienced by them before coming to the company. This state is a main

cause for the characters' escaping from their reality into a drama. The characters declared that their author left them undefined, that is why they are in search of another one to have their characteristics defined.

What can be noticed here is that the characters seek to leave their original author since they are unsatisfied with what he has written for them. They have lost hope and become desperate, then gradually lost faith in their original author. They neglect their real personalities to create new personal qualities by an author whose eventual role is to choose the characters' new features minimally like the feature of being dramatically characterized. The author here is expected to play the role of the creator of immortality. The evidence for the characters' state of despair and alienation as a main reason for looking up another author is as clear as the tragic tone of their stories, which strongly proves that the characters are escapist as a result of their feeling of misery in life. Mahmoudpour and Zarrinjooee (2014) take the view that "Pirandello portrays a symbolic play to show direct and indirect sorrow of people suffering from deluding themselves" p777. According to the characters, the search of a new author is meant to search for their real identities, or in the same way, there might be no need for clarifying the characters with real names as long as their identities are still unfulfilled.

4.2 The Effect of Other on Self in Sartre's Play

The investigation of certain literary works sometimes necessitates special concentration on certain issues, without it the analysis might appear a bit deficient. For instance, it is no longer usual to inspect Sartre's *No Exit* without looking at its details from an existentialist perspective. The one act play, which was entitled *In Camera* as well, is one of the clearest models of the philosophy of existentialism that Sartre is regarded its leader. Although many philosophers have long developed the theories of existentialism, the French dramatist is still the one who notably contributed to its popularization in the world of literature in general and in the world of drama in particular. One of the existentialist ideas, discussed as a core topic in Sartre's *No Exit*, is the effect of other on self. The fact that the three characters are set in a closed room where there are no instruments for physical punishments is simply an allusion for tormenting the three characters by being together, and it is their personal responsibility since they were sinners in real life. The characters are set to let their feelings and actions define whom they really are. As pointed out in the play, the characters are dead and sent to hell each one for different sins, narrated throughout their speeches. What matters are not the characters' sins in real life, rather the effect each one has on the other in the well-furnished drawing hell, which seems the way of receiving punishment in their hell. To assert the effect of other on self in Sartre's play, Staub (2003) implies that the form of torture in Sartre's hell is the intense exchanges between the characters in a tiny room,

while the circumstances outside have no power to affect human beings' lives. The characters are responsible for their destiny, and unable to escape that responsibility.

By referring to the first lines in the play, spectators can find out that the three characters start exerting an effect on one another once they are gathered in the room. When Inez joins Garcin, she first believes that he is her tormentor since she had previous knowledge that the tormentor could be another person. They wonder about the instruments of torture, but there are, in fact, no instruments for that in the room except the Second-Empire Style Furniture plus a mantelpiece. Even when the third character joins the other companions, each one suggests why they are put together. Inez's notion proposes that they have been placed to torture one another. Hence, Inez is the first one to realize the effect of other on self by stating that the characters' being together is a punishment itself and that it is not necessary to meet official physical torture in hell.

INEZ: Mere chance? Then it's by chance this room is furnished as we see it. It's an accident that the sofa on the right is a livid green, and that one on the left's wine-red. Mere chance? Well, just try to shift the sofas and you'll see the difference quick enough. And that statue on the mantelpiece, do you think it's there by accident? And what about the heat here? How about that? [A short silence.] I tell you they've thought it all out. Down to the last detail. Nothing was left to chance. This room was all set for us. (p9)

In this quotation, Inez is about to reach the reason why the three characters are put together. She starts thinking about every single item in the room, which relates to every personality of them. The characters first start narrating unreal stories about themselves through which they try to hide their truth of being sinners in life. Inez is

the only character who puts an end to the characters' lies to one another when she stops them from talking and declares that they are sinners, that is why they are brought to hell. Inez later recognizes that the characters are together for representing the tormentor for each other like the costumers in a self-service cafeteria who serve themselves. In Sartre's hell, the characters serve as tormentors for themselves for eternity.

INEZ: It's obvious what they're after—an economy of man-power—or devil-power, if you prefer. The same idea as in the cafeteria, where customers serve themselves.

ESTELLE: Whatever do you mean? INEZ: I mean that each of us will act as torturer of the two others. [There is a short silence while they digest this information.] (p10-11)

Sienkewicz (1990) remarks to the purpose of putting the three characters together, explaining that the characters are meant to represent concepts of the self, seeking its validation in the sight of other people. From his views, it appears that Sartre does not believe in afterlife; his attention is on the present of human life. In his hell, the present is eternal and the characters are dead to present freedom or free choice. In accordance with this view, it can be discussed that time is suspended in the play and the characters have no development through the actions of the play. The past only plays a role to help identify the characters' as sinners. From another point of view, time could mean existence as humankind exist in a process of development, which is the gradual

approach to self-identification. The characters have developed in the present time together, which lead to the discovery of their identification.

Later, at a certain scene, Estelle asks Inez for a mirror, stating that she cannot feel she really exists without seeing herself in a mirror. Inez in turn proposes to be her own mirror.

ESTELLE: Ah yes, in your mind. But everything that goes on in one's head is so vague, isn't it? It makes one want to sleep. [She is silent for a while.] I've six big mirrors in my bedroom. There they are. I can see them. But they don't see me. They're reflecting the carpet, the settee, the window—but how empty it is, a glass in which I'm absent! When I talked to people I always made sure there was one nearby in which I could see myself. I watched myself talking. And somehow it kept me alert, seeing myself as the others saw me. . . Oh dear! My lipstick! I'm sure I've put it on all crooked. No, I can't do without a looking-glass forever and ever. I simply can't.

INEZ: Suppose I try to be your glass? Come and pay me a visit, dear. Here's a place for you on my sofa. (p11)

The significance in this quotation is that the characters act as if they are each one's mirror through which they can show their identities. Their real existence is associated with the relation between any other on self in the sense that if any mirror or other does not affect any self, it would not be truly defined. Therefore, it can be said that no oneself would appear authentic without the existence of others. In general, the lack of

mirrors in the room seems to be a way of not polishing the individuals' truth with any affect. To prove that, at the point when the characters attempt to cheat each other, Inez declares that they should stop lying, for they are in hell because of their damned souls and sins in real life. Sienkewicz (1990) elaborates that the room having no mirrors is to stress on the lack of any possibility for escaping the others' vision. He adds that the open eyes for the characters symbolize that no exit from seeing or being seen is on hand. In the play, it is obvious that the characters cannot sleep and their eyes are always open, which hints at the assumption that they are supposed to stay in their present time where they tease one another by overseeing anyone's behavior, appearance, feeling, psyche and even attitude.

It comes as no surprise that the characters, later in the course of actions, become fully aware of their being tormentors for one another. Inez demonstrates that it would not be possible for her to ignore Garcin's existence who first rejects to indulge with the others' speech. This means that the existence of others in life cannot be denied since they have an inevitable existence and thus they must have an effect on selves even if they decide to keep silent or not conduct any behavior.

INEZ: To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I feel you there, in every pore. Your silence clamors in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out—but you can't prevent your being there. Can you stop your thoughts? I hear them ticking away like a clock, tick-tock, tick-tock, and I'm certain you hear mine. It's all very well skulking on your sofa, but you're everywhere, and every sound comes to me soiled, because you've intercepted it on its way. Why, you've even stolen my face; you know it

and I don't! And what about her, about Estelle? You've stolen her from me, too; if she and I were alone do you suppose she'd treat me as she does? No, take your hands from your face, I won't leave you in peace—that would suit your book too well. (P.13)

In the case of the characters, if Garcin wants to keep up quiet, not taking part in others' speech, yet his existence cannot be denied. In other words, the idea that he exists in a certain place with others means that he must affect and be affected with anything happening, that is why Inez assures that it is illogical to ignore his presence in the room. Commenting on Inez's incapability of neglecting the existence of Garcin, Parsell (2009) refers to Sartre's most popular quotation in the play "hell is other people". Parsell believes that the characters are put to set up a hell without receiving any kind of physical punishment. Their existence as sinners is the hell of afterlife. The characters are united to reconsider their botched lives. (14)

The concerning relationship between Inez and Estelle, becomes apparent that Estelle's attractiveness would be a reason for tormenting Inez for eternity. The characters are supposed to stay together immortally and Estelle's being a seductive lady will not change by time. Therefore, this attractiveness is one of the things that could make an effect for one at the expense of the other. In her response to that fact, Inez pretends that she wants to face hell on her own terms, refusing sympathy from any other person. Asserting the effect of Estelle's attractiveness on Inez, she recurrently attempts to seduce Garcin, making him finally give up. Consequently, Inez's trying not to look at them while kissing each other is a strong proof that she is affected by Estelle's charm. At this point, the characters seem having more effect on one another, especially when

Garcin demonstrates he wants more from Estelle. He asks her for more trust, so he can make any confession unhesitatingly. As for Garcin, he gives up Estelle's attempts to start an affair with him, in addition to achieving an effect on her by captivating more trust, so that he would make his confessions generously. Later, Garcin confronts Estelle, narrating his story when he ran away at the border of desertion. What he wants from telling his story is to let her agree with him that he is not a coward. After she agrees, it is disclosed that she was not with him, but she only wants to be close to him as Inez claims. In this time, Garcin begins ringing the bell, asking for any kind of torture. This once again asserts the idea that hell is other people, and not the place where there is a bodily chastisement.

GARCIN: Open the door! Open, blast you! I'll endure anything, your red-hot tongs and molten lead, your racks and prongs and garrotes--all your fiendish gadgets, everything that burns and flays and tears—I'll put up with any torture you impose. Anything, anything would be better than this agony of mind, this creeping pain that gnaws and fumbles and ca-resses one and never hurts quite enough. [He grips the door-knob and rattles it.] Now will you open? [The door flies open with a jerk, and he just avoids falling.] (p24)

In these lines, it is clear that Garcin understands the temporariness of a physical punishment, which is more endurable than being deceived by others who pretend something for a pragmatic reason. Estelle wants to be close to him for the sake of making Inez more jealous of her attractiveness. On line with this, Seinkewicz (1998) declares that Garcin is exposed in his fear of judgment of his people in life as well as his

companions in the afterlife. He employs a variety of tactics to stave off recognition of this fear by his fellows in hell.

At the end of the play, every character still has an effect on one another. Garcin makes it clear that Estelle's judgment on him being coward or not is greatly significant for him. As for Inez, she resolves to make him miserable for staying in the room. Even though Garcin declares that he made his choices in life deliberately, yet he surrenders his free will to other people. He shows that his essence is built upon others' look at him. For that reason, he insists on others' agreeing that he is not a coward, and this reason prevents him from leaving the room when the door is opened.

Not only is Garcin unable to feel his existence without others' judgment on him, but also Estelle and Inez show that their existence is built upon the judgments taken by others. In this regard, it can be elaborated that Sartre's *No Exit* evidently defines the relation between existence and essence. In general, humans have the free will to choose and their choices help define their identities, while in the case of the characters in Sartre's hell; their essence is defined relying on the gaze of others and not on their free choices. The bad faith might be the reason why the characters seek a definition of their own selves from others. For instance, Inez pretends to be Estelle's mirror at the beginning of the play as a result of her bad faith, which makes somebody else define her essence. In an article titled as "No Exit" (1995), it is discussed that Sartre's play is mainly about bad faith and self-deception. The characters sometimes tend to seem misunderstood, and what is plain is that Sartre wants his play to say that "many people are encrusted in a set of habits....., that they harbor judgments about them which make them suffer, but do not

event try to change them" (1). It is also discussed that Sartre suggests it is difficult to define oneself except through the eyes of other people.

The second concern the current study tackles about Sartre's *No Exit* is the interpretation of the characters' tendency toward punishment and torture. As discussed previously, once Garcin bursts into anger and rings the bell, it is opened for everyone to leave the room. What happened is that nobody tries to leave, simply because the characters are aware that they are already dead. In this moment, it can be noticed that Garcin decides to stay in order to convince Estelle that he is not coward. What seems truer is that he has a tendency to stay under others' torture, and that he knows very well that he, as a sinner, has nothing to do outside the room. Therefore, neither he nor any other one tries to exit the room when the door is open at their free choice. Webber (2010) justifies why the three characters do not try to exit the room, seemingly having a tendency to receive a castigation. Webber states about Garcin's reason that "he is simply finding painful the process of coming to recognize, confess and regret his sins" p48. Generally speaking, the characters are led to the room at the beginning of the play to stay for eternity in their new hell. They know that they were sinners and should stay for punishment regardless of its form. The characters decline freedom for their willingness to be condemned by one another, and everyone reaches later to a conclusion that being set together is the kind of punishment they should accept. According to Sienkewicz (1990), the reason why the characters have a clear tendency toward punishment is that their lives in the past have frozen into cautionary figures. They live in a present of the afterlife where they are entirely convinced of receiving any expected or unexpected kind of punishment.

From another perspective, the reason why the characters have a tendency toward punishment or accepting it is built with accordance to Sartre's philosophy of lack of faith. The characters realize that happiness can be impossibly achieved in real life or in afterlife in their case. Therefore, they find it worthy to purify their souls from the sins they committed in their past. They, in the course of actions, realize that they cannot stand together for eternity. Sartre portrays three characters that would never be able to adapt with one another in a closed place as an indication of the characters' bad faith, which groups them together. In their case, it is ambiguous which is more realistic life or death. Regardless of their being dead, the formation of each one's identity is affected by others, that is why they accept to be one another's torture. Each one has not come to a fully defined identity in real life, and they accept to clarify one another's identity in the afterlife hell. In fact, the characters are put together in a social context which has defined their real identities. In reality, one can lie, hide truth, or even behave artificially for the sake of keeping some aspects of his/her identity undefined, while in Sartre's hell it seems that there is no need to lie or hide any personal quality because they are gathered to be punished. Irwin (2000) confirms that identity emerges within a social context as what the characters' identities which become defined through being socially integrated. In conclusion, in order for the characters to reach a self-identification, they tend to accept their fate as being one another's punishment.

4.3 The Search for Identity

In literature, identity has been taken for granted as a key topic in different literary works throughout history. Writers have occasionally presented the subject taking into account their cultures and times. In the case of Pirandello and Sartre, particularly, in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *No Exit*, identity appears as a more decisive concern since they both set up dramas, mimicking the absurdity of life or the existence of human being. To make things clearer, it can be stated that the search for identity requires a method as well as a process. In Pirandello's play, the characters think that the right method to search for their identity is to go to the theatre where they can meet a director who is the only one with a capability of creating characters of well-defined identities. The process for the characters is to be directed and given the time to let their stories dramatically performed by certain actors on a stage.

It can be supposed that the nature of any identity tends to be cultural, social, national, religious or even a combination of all these aspects. It is normally shaped up by a combination of factors of nature. In case of the six characters, their identity is of great ambiguity. It would seem religious in the interpretation that the characters search for another author instead of their original creator. This simply means that they have never been complacent with their original creator who has left them undefined as they think. From the eyes of the absurdity, the fact that the characters can live eternally is a fault and a man is incomplete of a life that seems absurd. The characters have no faith that life is a mere short journey in which a man keeps struggling possibly and uselessly to

reach a full personal identification, but with no result. A man is not a character and a character cannot live eternally since what is true is that life is insignificant and a man is little in comparison to the nature.

The nature of the characters' identities would be cultural or social if the characters search for an author because of the rejection of certain cultural aspects in their society such as the state of family before and after being assembled all together. In the play, the characters come together to the director as a family, but each one holds a different drama, which is the cause of what they have experienced since the mother's abandonment. The characters feel that if the author completes their life stories, life would be more pleasant because the completion would not be out of their free choice or out of their original author's characterization, and not affected by any social integration. Finally, the nature of the characters' identities cannot be national since there are no references in the play to politics or issues that touch their original nation. However, in all cases, whatever the nature of the characters' identities is, their loss of identity cannot be denied, that is why they search for an author.

In Sartre's play, the characters' method to reach their real identities is the acceptance of staying in the well-furnished room where there should be a kind of punishment for them. The process is then the effect of each other on self, which is the real punishment in Sartre's hell. When the characters gather in the room, each one implicitly reveals that his identity is still undefined. At a certain point in the play, the characters try to hide truth, which confirms their loss of real identity.

INEZ: Yes, I see. [A pause.] Look here! What's the point of play-acting, trying to throw dust in each other's eyes? We're all tarred with the same brush.

ESTELLE [indignantly]: How dare you!

INEZ. Yes, we are criminals—murderers—all three of us. We're in hell, my pets; they never

make mistakes, and people aren't damned for nothing.

ESTELLE: Stop! For heaven's sake—

INEZ: In hell! Damned souls—that's us, all three!

ESTELLE: Keep quiet! I forbid you to use such disgusting words.

INEZ: A damned soul—that's you, my little plaster saint. And ditto our friend there, the noble. (P.10)

Garcin is unable to make a decision whether he was a coward or not. For that reason, he has been concerned to hear that from his companions. Inez appears having a hostile attitude toward men. She keeps despising Garcin while she tries to seduce Estelle. The damned bitch has the interest to seduce women rather than men, which proves her loss of identity as a lady. She searches for the fulfillment of identity through anomalous relationship with another lady. Estelle, the other female in the room, is totally different from Inez. She expresses that she needs a man to have an affair with. However, her loss of identity is seen in her willingness to see her reflections in a mirror. In all cases, it can be concluded that the three characters in Sartre's hell are with undefined-identity, and the search of it occurs through being grouped together in an isolated place.

The nature of the characters' identity in *No Exit* can be interpreted differently. It would be religious in the case that the characters accept staying in the room for being sinners in real life. Throughout the play, it becomes plain that Garcin does not reject his damnation, easily recalling how awful he was to his wife. Inez, the former postal clerk, believes that she is in hell for seducing a friend's wife. Her lover kills them both by leaving the gas on while Inez is asleep. Finally, Estelle confesses that she drowned the baby of her lover. In conclusion, the three prisoners show an awareness of their having been sinful in real life, that is the cause why they are in hell together. From another perspective, the nature of the characters' identities would be religiously interpreted with regard to Sartre's concepts of existentialism, which are absolutely applicable to the character's identities. According to Sartre, existence precedes essence. This assumption relies upon Sartre's view that there is no creator. In *No Exit*, Sartre portrays a hell that serves his existentialist notions. In that hell, the character's existence inevitably precedes essence. The characters as humans are depicted with being condemned to be free. They are separated from their past. Even if the past is the cause behind grouping them together, yet their existence is present and eternal.

In contrast, the nature of the characters' identities would be seen as cultural or social as well. The social or cultural identity of the characters is affected by the national identity since the play's time refers to a critical political period in the nation, France. In this period, the daily life was never easy in the French society during World War II. A large part of the country was under the Nazi Germany occupation including Paris where Sartre lived. Sartre faced a sense of humiliation and the sufferance of war and occupation. In *No Exit*, he examines many of his questions about existence with respect

to World War II and the German occupation. The play takes place in a room in hell where three persons who cannot stand each other, has often been compared to living in Paris during the German occupation. In this context, Sartre inspects questions of freedom, self-deception, and the nature of time in the play to help French people adapt with the tribulation of crush both during the war and after. Therefore, the nature of the characters' identities, in this way, correlate with the state of people in the nation in that period.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

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After the analytical discussion of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Sartre's *No Exit* from the perspective of absurdity along with the existentialist philosophy, this chapter is devoted to shedding light on certain important notes, results, conclusions and recommendations for further studies. These results and conclusions are associated with the four questions raised at the beginning of the study. The questions are "To what extent is there a correspondence between the two themes reality and illusion and the search of identity in Pirandello's play?", "Why do the six characters remain nameless in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*?", "To what extent do the three characters have a tendency for tortures, neglecting their real identities in Sartre's *No Exit*?", and "How does the effect of other on self-lead to an insightful explanation of the characters' real identities in Sartre's play?"

5.1 Conclusion

In accordance with the first question of the current study, the first issue the study tackles is the investigation of reality and illusion in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. This issue is intended to show how Pirandello merges real actions, characters and dramatic elements with illusory ones, which makes his masterpiece more inventive in the world of drama. The discussion of the play's details from the

perspective of absurdity proves that Pirandello does not only destruct the fourth wall between the audience and the performers, but also manipulates the minds of the spectators through employing reality and illusion as a core theme in the play. Pirandello provokes negotiable questions about what is realistic and what is illusory in his play, and the spectators of the play feel confused whether what they are watching is authenticity or fantasy. The study found that the characters are depicted as if they were real in order to make a well-built influence on the audience. According to Pirandello, the integration between reality and illusion in drama in general and in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in particular is the new convention of the dramatic show by which the spectators watch what is realistic and what is beyond realism, merged to stress on his perception of the absurdist theatre.

The second issue about Pirandello's play the study looks into is the exploration of the characters' being nameless in the play. The discussion indicated that Pirandello wants to insist on the incompleteness of the characters' identities by presenting them with no real names. The characters come to the director, searching for an author to complete their life stories, which confirms their loss of personal identity. Alike, for instance, the end of the play, in which the characters repeatedly interrupt the actors' performance, is a strong evidence for the characters' loss of identity. The fact that the characters' dramas, being acted by the actors and will never end, means that the characters' identities will never be fully defined. From an existentialist outlook, the characters have no names because they lack the real existence, and that is why they seek the life of the literary characters. Additionally, the study indicated that the characters suffer from a sense of alienation, and in searching for another author there is no need for their original names. They reject

or think that their original author left them undefined; therefore, the responsibility of giving them life, identities, eternity and even names is for the new author.

As for Sartre's *No Exit*, the discussion of the study concentrates on the effect of other on self from an existentialist standpoint. The analysis showed that the effect of other on self is the mode of tormenting the residents of Sartre's room, which is supposed to be the characters' hell. The characters are grouped in a closed room to be one another's torture. Being isolated in a closed room is to let their actions, behaviors, and feelings define who they really are. In their effect on one another, Garcin who prefers silence at the beginning insists on being defined through others' eyes. He asks his companions many times about whether he is coward or not. Correspondingly, Estelle asserts that she cannot live without a mirror, which means that she would not be defined in terms of the identity without others' gaze. To conclude, the effect of other on self is Sartre's way of showing the inevitability of others on the existence of self.

The second matter about Sartre's play is the interpretation of the characters' tendency towards punishment. Actually, what seems to be more accurate is that the characters only accept the punishment regardless of its form. They are aware of their having been sinners in real life. Therefore, they express no objection against being one another's torture in the closed room. Moreover, the characters have already known that they are dead, and grouped in hell in the afterlife for eternity. Another interpretation for the characters' acceptance of chastisement and not trying to exit the hellish room is their lack of faith. It comes after the characters' realization that their bad faith groups them, each one with others whom he/she cannot stand with. Once the characters understand their bad faith, they start understanding that this bad faith is the form of punishment,

awaiting them in hell. Thus, they accept the kind of punishment in which each one torments the others by his existence in the same place eternally.

Finally, as the study mainly directs the centre of attention to the search of identity in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Sartre's *No Exit*, the analysis of the two plays, utilizing the subjects of the study's four questions, indicated that the search of any identity entails a method and a process. It is true that the characters in Pirandello's drama are different from Sartre's ones, yet they all have a loss of identity. In Pirandello's play, the six characters' method of searching for identity is to go to the company where they can find an author who would complete their life stories. The process then is to stage their dramas themselves as they are convinced that the holders of the drama are more worthy than the actors of performing it. In the case of Sartre's characters', the method of searching for identity is each one's acceptance of staying in a closed room with the others as the form of the deserved punishment. The process is then the effect each one makes on the others, which contributes to the definition of their identities both in life and in afterlife.

5.2 Recommendations

Finally, this thesis has dealt with the search for identity in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Sartre's *No Exit* from the perspective of absurdity along with the philosophy of existentialism. Although the sampled plays have been universally studied since their first premiers until today, but still there is more to be added especially in terms of the search of identity due to the high degree of complexity of the characters. In addition, I recommend paying attention to the historical context of the authors, which inspired them to produce their sophisticated works of art.

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