

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF THE HEROINE IN SAMUEL BECKET'S HAPPY DAYS

Ruwayda Gaber Al – saadany*

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF THE HEROINE IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S HAPPY DAYS

Abstract _ This paper tries to shed light on the role of Winnie, the heroine of *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett. It tries to show how Winnie's role is so influential in the play and illustrates how this character helps in sending the very absurd message of the play. In addition to this, it also clarifies how the absurd techniques of the play can be investigated by Winnie. Hence, this paper discusses Winnie's thematic and technical roles.

The Thematic Role of Winnie

Happy Days is an absurd play by Beckett. This play is analogous to other works of Beckett. All his works lack meaning, because he is not interested in meaning, but in shape only. He says:

I take no sides. I am interested in the shape of ideas. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine: "Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned. 'That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters. (qtd in Schneider173-88).

This explains why all his works lack meaning and action. All Beckett's oeuvre does not have action. They are plays in which nothing happens forever, and in which there is no meaning. But rather they express emptiness, loneliness, man's pitiful condition, and death's futility.

Keywords: *Gender, The Absurd Theatre, Feminism, Sex.*

I. INTRODUCTION

"Patriarchy as a system is historical: it has a beginning in history...it can be ended by historical process" [22] (6). Since the primary aim of this study is to trace the significance of gender role in an absurd play by Samuel Beckett; it is, therefore, appropriate to begin by defining gender and the absurd theatre. According to Encyclopedia of Feminist Theory: "Gender refers primarily to the grammatical classification of nouns" [23] (220). This illustrates that the word is used to make a distinction between nouns and verbs on the grammatical level. Harriet Bradley asserts this saying: "The grammatical use of the term seems to have led to two other former usages: one is a synonym for sex can issue in gender analysis today; and in another, to engender today" [24] (14). Thanks to Mary Wollstonecraft, this term is employed in the feminist studies, since it is used to refer to the social and cultural differences between men and women. Moreover, it is differentiated from the word sex. It is added that this word is not a synonym of the word sex. Women since the dawn of history are humiliated and suppressed by men. Thus, they began to call for their rights represented by having the right of suffrage, education, etc, exactly like men. Accordingly, some feminists who call for women's equality to men gathered in July 1848 in the United States to call for equal rights to men. Feminists insisted on

putting women on the footing of equality to men. They called for giving women the right of education, having the same jobs like males, and having the right of suffrage.

This movement spread across Europe in the same year and in the whole world later. The feminist atmosphere spread in many countries all over the world supported by great political and socialist leaders. For instance, Mahatma Ghandi who led the liberation of India was against the patriarchal system. He believed in the equality between men and woman. He added that tackling the issue of gender inequality begins from women's education. Moreover, many Indian nationalists adopted this point of view believing that: "India cannot be free until its women are free and women cannot be free until India is free" [25] (210). This exactly happened in Egypt. In 1910 Bahithat al- Badiyah, Malak Hefny Nasif, said before the Egyptian National Congress in 1911, that women should be able to go to school and train for professions. This evoked the anger of men. So, they rejected such revolutionary movement. However, women carried on their march paying no attention to such suppressive trials of men.

It is clear that feminists believe in the biological differences between men and women, while they reject the social differences represented by men's dominance and authority over women. Feminists believe that women can play the role of men and share their tasks. Feminists try to enter the field of literature. They shed light on the literary classical works. They find that these works boost the idea of males' dominance and authority over women. These works represent women as objects. They employ the social, cultural, and historical contexts for the sake of suppressing women. Accordingly, feminists reject such classical works. They negate the social, historical, and cultural contexts which represent women as inferior to men and as objects. Feminists confirm that women should be subjects. As a result of this, they reject the use of theory, because it is made by men. They begin to study literary works written by women to show whether women have their own authorial voice or not. They believe that women are capable of expressing themselves. They suffer a lot from alienation and they should be dealt with as subjects not objects.

It seems that there is a common ground between feminism and absurd theatre, because it allows the female characters to play the roles of the male characters vice versa. It is appropriate to cover what is meant by "absurd theatre".

"The Absurd theatre" is a dramatic trend that came to its climax after the great aftermath of the Second World War to express the case of identity's loss, misguidance, frustration and agony which post war man lived in. This can be expressed by women as well as men. This term was first employed by what Albert Camus wrote under the title of *The Myth of Sisyphus*. This was the main stone in the march of the history of this term [26]. This Myth expresses the absurdity of man's life. Man seeks eternity in a temporal life. Man seeks survival in an ended world. This is the core of absurd. However, the term "absurd theatre" does not refer to a literary critical school but to a dramatic trend that came as a reaction against the loss of identity which WWII caused. This is confirmed by Nadya Al-Banhawy: "... there is no artistic movement that is called the absurd theatre, so, its writers are different from one another, although they share the same pessimistic view of man's position and condition in this life" [27] (18-9).

"The Absurd theatre" came into being by a group of Avant- grade writers, like Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, et al. Those writers rejected the cultural and social basics of pre WWII. They were deeply influenced by the pessimistic atmosphere of the war. Thus, they negated the traditional techniques of the theatre. In addition to this, they mistrusted the world around them. They indulged in the absurdity of man's life and condition. Consequently, they aimed at covering the cosmos's loss of meaning. According to Samy Khashabah: "The primary aim which the absurd pioneer is interested in is keeping people away from finding a meaning in the absurd theatre...Because Cosmos itself lost its meaning and history uncovers a silly farce" [28] (25). Those absurd writers aimed at discussing the absurdity of man's life using illogical techniques. That is because:

Its writers disbelieve in the cultural and political bases of the past world, the bourgeois world; the world of wars, the bloody competitions, the allusions of the false glory, the weakness of soul and mind, the disappearance of man's individuality before the strong institutions which defends the gains of the unhumanitarian institution.[28] (10).

However, the term *The Theatre of Absurd* was employed for the first time in 1960 when Martin Esslin published a book that carries the same title [29]. This book explains the main technical and thematic features of the absurd works. All plays of absurd writers headed by Beckett, Camus, Ionesco, Pinter, et al discuss the loss of man's identity, man's disunity, and isolation in this world. Thus, they rely on untraditional techniques.

First of all, they use language not as a means of communication but as a means of isolation; absurd writers in absurd works talk not for the sake of communicating with each other but for the sake of wasting time. Second, the absurd plot is not a traditional one. There is no clear cut beginning, end, and climax. The event begins where it ends. The absurd plot is said to be a vicious circle. Third,

symbols are interwoven within the absurd works. Fourth, the stage seems to be empty except for small parts of things that serve the event. Fifth, minimalism is well noted in absurd works. The sentences are smalls. In most cases phrases and fragments are noted within the dialogue. Characters are disabled, pessimistic and frustrated. There are many other absurd features that are discussed in details in chapter two in this thesis. It is noted that the said features of the absurd works can be applied to male and female characters.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study tries to illuminate that gender is a socially made term that is made by society and accordingly changeable. Hence, the gender differences in the absurd theatre can never affect the roles of the characters. In other words, this study tries to prove that the female characters in the absurd theatre can play the role of the male characters vice versa.

III. METHODOLOGY

It seems that there is a common ground between feminism and the absurd theatre, because the absurd theatre gives no cultural, social, and historical reviews of its characters. All that is known about its characters is what is introduced on the stage. Moreover, its characters suffer from alienation. In addition to this, it is not a theatre of characters, so every character introduces itself. This allows its female characters to play the role of males vice versa.

IV. AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study aims at investigating the gender role in the absurd theatre. This paper tries to illuminate how the female characters in absurd plays can play influential roles that are equal to the roles of males. Furthermore, this study tries to illustrate how the female characters in the absurd theatre help in sending the absurd message and keeping the absurd atmosphere of the absurd plays. Consequently, this paper investigates gender role in an absurd play titled: *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett.

Adorno reports:

Beckett's oeuvre already presupposes this experience of the destruction of meaning as self- evident, yet also pushes it beyond meaning. Abstract negation in his plays force the traditional categories of art to undergo this experience, concretely suspend them, and extrapolate others out of the nothingness...Beckett's plays are absurd not because of the absence of meaning. For then they would be simply irrelevant, but because they put meaning on trial; they unfold its history. His work is ruled as much by an obsession with positive nothingness as by the obsession with a meaninglessness that has developed historically and is thus in a sense merited, though this meritedness in no way allows any positive meaning to be reclaimed. (153)[1].

Beckett's works are ruled by positive nothingness, as it is explained before. This can be applied to *Happy Days*.

This play sheds light on man's loneliness and death's futility but in a cheerful way. This play begins where it ends. It exposes the deteriorated and painful suffering of waiting for death. Man's interests turn into filling time with words until death's arrival. This happens to Winnie, the heroine of this play. This woman who is fifty years old and appears buried to her waist in sand recites and quotes emphases and sentences from the classical works to feel that she is alive. Winnie has a great aptitude for imagination. She thinks in a holistic and intuitive way.

This can be noted through her daily routines. Her daily routines are the same. She tries to fill in time until her death. She waits for death, but motionless and silent waiting are dreadful. As a result of this, she chatters to feel that she is alive. Ruby Cohn says: "Winnie's quotations comment ironically on the cruel landscape, speak of woe, and invoke the proximity of death"(18)[2]. Accordingly, Winnie repeats these quotations from classics to express her pain and to satirize the current condition of man who is not able to live this life that is raped in nothingness.

These quotations expose man's deep misery and suffering. She is buried to her waist in a mound of sand in a remote area. She is unable to move and lead a traditional life as if it were man's fate to be paralyzed in this life. Moreover, she has no romantic relation with her husband who is buried in another mound of sand next to her. All the time, she speaks and calls for him to interact with her, but he rarely responds to her. She envies him for being asleep all the time. She is alive only for waiting for "a happy day" in which one sleeps forever. Her life is rich in the daily routines that evoke boredom and annoyance. In addition, these literary quotations are repeated throughout the whole play to remind readers and audience from time to time with their pathetic condition. These literary quotations are so impressive and very important. According to S. E. Gontarski:

The themes of the failure of love, the misery of the human condition, the transitoriness of all things, the disjunction between the real and the ideal, and the misery of awareness have been carefully reinforced in Winnie's literary allusions and reverberate through the play like a constant drumbeat.(73) [3].

This indicates how Winnie is closed to her rituals. These rituals are part and parcel of her life. She makes these rituals everyday at the same times. This gives an essence of mechanism. Winnie here turns to be a machine that does the same work at the same time every day. In this way man turns into a machine in this life. This expresses the devitalized existence of man. Here, she wants to fill the time around her until the coming of the happy day. She realizes very well that all her actions, utterances, quotations, and rituals are repeated. At the same time, she sometimes grows bored of this. However, she repeats this many times, because she is sure that she has no other choice. She says: "Sometimes all is over, for the day all

done, all said, all ready for the night, and the day don't not over, far from over, the night ready, far, far, from ready" (1964, 44). It is not the day that does not end, but her suffering and waiting are those which create the eternity of the day. This employment of such rituals gives rise to the meaninglessness and nothingness of life so that man is turned into a machine that cannot protest, or refuse such repeated rituals. According to Phyllis Carey:

In *Happy Days* Beckett uses rituals to reveal both that which is inherently mechanical in human behavior and that which prescient the mechanical. Beckett's depiction of Winnie undercuts the human propensity to follow established patterns of behavior, the mechanical rituals of habit. At the same time, *Happy Days* discloses the importance of ritual as magic as an attempt to coerce through incantation. In artistic shaping of the whole, nevertheless, Beckett suggests the potency of aesthetic ritual as an agent of revelation. (144)[4].

Samuel Beckett concentrates on the style by using these views which are close to the rituals. He does this to bare the absence of meaning in this life in which everything is devoid of sense. It is felt in this play that everything has no sense. Feeling and emotions lost their way in this play. Winnie's extreme repetition of the same rituals deprives these rituals not only from meaning but also from sense. This gives a sense of mechanism. She has the same reactions while doing her various rituals. Her reaction at the time of prayer is the same at the time of clasping on her hands. Furthermore, she has the same shape without change. When a day begins, she appears as the same when a night comes. These views shed light on the complete absence of sense and accordingly of meaning. Hence, David J. Alpaguh writes: "In *Happy Days*, Beckett extends these views on style to create the implicit metaphor of a universe and a way of life in which the sense or meaning has been creamed off, leaving style without sense, form without meaning"(205) [5]. This play, as Beckett's other plays, runs around the lost meaning in this life. For Beckett, this life has no meaning. Accordingly, things have no adjectives or things to modify them. Winnie discloses this when she says: "genuine pure" (45) [6]. This absence of meaning and sense can be touched in Winnie's whole life. She confesses that her prayers which turn into rituals do not do her any favor. They are nothing but such actions of hips. They do not protect her against disability. They add no meaning to her life. She points out: "I say I used to pray (pause) Yes, I must confess. I did (smile) Not Now (smile broader) No no" (45). It is obvious here that her rituals are not a recent habit but an old habit of her. However, she still has the same empty life in which meaning is creamed off. Thus, she feels pity for herself.

Winnie here insists on talking, quoting classics and ritualized prayers to feel that her life has meaning. Prayers are nothing for her except marking the beginning and the

end of her day. She repeats the same words throughout her days to create meaning for herself. She tries to feel that there is something meaningful in her meaningless life. Unfortunately, they offer her no help. They fail to pick her up from her sufferings. They fail to protect her from the brutality of waiting for the happy day that puts an end to her agony. Toni Johnson says:

...its inherited words promise to create meaning for, her, yet fail to make sense out of her situation. Her prayers being ritualized are necessary signals for the beginning and ending of her days, apparently interchangeable with song, with which they are replaced at the end of the second act. (4) [7].

Accordingly, Winnie mistrusts everything around her. She feels that her prayers are useless. They have no benefit. Even God's mercy does not fall upon her. She loses confidence in everything around her thinking of her rituals as mere words to feel that she is alive. Thus, she says: "They are all empty words" (29). What happens on the part of Winnie expresses diminished benignity of man in the world. Man is unable to do anything except talking to feel that he is alive. Even words are reduced to be a sign of life's continuity whether life is meaningless or meaningful. This is understood when she says: "I can do more. (Pause) say no more. (Pause). But I must say more. (Pause). problem here. (Pause). No, something must move, in the world, I can't anymore" (44). It seems that she does not trust her rituals and consequently everything around her. Thus, she feels pity and elegy.

Winnie feels elegy and pity. She returns to quote classics like *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost* for finding solace in them. Such use of quotation expresses her holistic thinking, in addition to man's frustration, failure, deteriorated life, and death. *Hamlet* is a classical play that tackles political and philosophical themes through exposing the deterioration of the medieval Denmark, while *Paradise Lost* is a religious poem that expresses man's divine misguidance and disobedience. She finds solace in such quotations. Accordingly, she says: "That is what I find so wonderful, a part remains of classics to help one through the day" (34). Those quotations help her to stand against time's constancy, silence, the blazing light and isolation. Hence, it can be said that this play illustrates the agony and solitude which contemporary man suffers from. Here, it is indicated that man is waiting for death. However, Winnie is happy. She tries to amuse and please herself while waiting for death. She says:

What would I do without them? (Pause). What would I do without them? (pause.) What would I do without them, when words fail? They are a boon, sounds are a boon, they help me... through the day. (smile) The old style! (smile off) yes, those are happy days, when there are sounds.(40).

She tries to be patient and to reduce the cruelty of waiting. In spite of the boredom that raps her life, Winnie seems to be pleased with her tools and shows no sadness.

Winnie's smiles and pleasant sentences dismiss sadness from her life. Although this play covers a gloomy, sad and black theme; man's isolation, devitalized existence and bitter waiting for death, this play has an optimistic atmosphere that can be noted from its title. According to Harold Clurman, "Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* is a poem of despair and forbearance. It is to be seen and suffered" (233) [19]. Despite despair, frustration, loss of hope, and waiting for death that are felt in every line in this play, this play has a pleasant attitude. Beckett does not allow his audience to forget their agony represented in the main idea of the play, regardless of having a funny attitude. It seems as if he satirizes despair and gloominess in this life. Wolfgang Iser comments: "... a mockery of unhappiness"(22)[20].

It is referred above to the cheerful element in this play. Winnie here suffers a lot and is indulged in pain and bitterness. However, she feels happy. Or it is better to say that she tries to please herself. Samuel Butler believes that Beckett's characters create their world which illustrates that man in this life tries to feel pleasant in this meaningless world, despite its nothingness. Beckett's world is concerned with "existence" not "essence". All what obsesses him is to be existent in this life not what is the purpose of this life or how it can be lived. This play does not show ways for finding meaning in this life, but rather it shows ways for being existent in this life. Tjen Tan says: "the main idea of this play shows that existence precedes essence and man creates himself" (74) [8]. Man is not responsible for having essence in this life but for being existent in this life, as man can find his way in this life and deal with life's disparity, frustration, and deterioration. Man is able to break the silence of life. That is what Winnie does in this play. All the time, she chatters, repeats extremely her rituals, and speaks to her silent husband. She does this only for feeling existent and alive because she has no purpose in this life and finds no meaning in it. Tan adds:

Thus the Beckettian character Winnie attempts to invent herself. She tries this by asserting her existence through language and the presence of another character Willie. She has no pre-determined meaning in her life. Thus, she is deprived of purpose. Also, she has a big challenge posed by her existence that she is buried in earth and is completely immobile. Under these conditions, she finds herself questioning herself, although she tries to avoid this to some. (75-6) [8].

Therefore, man tries to search for a purpose of his existence in this life. He has a deep feeling of the loss of identity. In his search for meaning in a meaningless world, Man spends time doing meaningless an action to feel that he is existent. Furthermore, Winnie utters meaningless words to break silence around him. It can be said that existence is a great pain that this play shows. Winnie suffers a lot in this life. All her words express her deep

suffering and agony. For example she says :
 There is a problem here. (Pause). One cannot sing... just like that, no (pause.) It bubbles up, for some unknown reason, the time is ill chosen, one chokes it back. (pause.) One says, now is the time, it is now or never, and one cannot. (pause.) Simply cannot sing. (pause.) Not a note. (pause.) Another thing, Willie, while we are one this subject. (pause.) The sadness after song. (Pause.) Have you run across that, Willie? (Pause). No? (Pause). Sadness after intimate sexual intercourse one is familiar with of course. (Pause). You Would concur with Aristotle there, Willie, I fancy. (Pause). Yes, that one knows and is preferred to face. (Pause).(42-3).

It is clear here that she tastes deep bitterness and suffers a lot in addition to a deep agony of being existent in this life. Immobility and sadness that strike all moments in her life even those of pleasure like moments of copulation trouble her and increases her agony. She is very sure of such agony and of her disability of defeating it, so she says: "So little to say, so little to do, and the fear so great, certain days of finding oneself (27). Despite such anguish of existence, she clings to words to break silence and defeat her immobility, and also to feel that she is alive. Hence, she tries to live life in a way that is proper to her immobility and disability. Consequently, man is responsible for the way of being existent in this life. This is absurd, as one should find a way in this gloomy, meaningless, and immobile life. According to Robert Richmond Ellis: "...absurd hope of endowing being with necessity and thereby saving from contingency" (8).

In a Nut shell, Happy Days is an absurd play in which its female character helps in sending the real absurd message of the play, although she thinks in a feminine way. She succeeds in exposing the deep suffering of being existent in this life. She also helps in showing how existence comes before essence in the meaningless life that is raped in nothingness and how she is able to break silence in this life. Despite being a female character, Winnie plays a very magnificent role in this play exposing the absurd idea of the play. Her role is as influential and successful. Winnie succeeds in showing how death is the futile thing in this world and how man can tackle such sorrows and pain that rap life in general. Winnie realizes the absurdity of life and accordingly its deprivation from meaning, hope, and pleasure. Consequently, she gets sure that death is the futile and the true reality in this world. Accordingly, she is in a dire need for it. She longs for it. She thinks of it as her rescuer from this horrible world. Hence, Winnie gives rise to the absurd atmosphere of Becket's Happy Days.

The Technical Role of Winnie:

Happy Days is an Absurd that should be pregnant with incongruous elements. This appears in Happy Days. Winnie appears to be buried up to her waist in the first act;" imbedded up to above her waist in exact center of

mound, Winnie" (7), while she appears to be buried up to her neck in the second act, "Winnie imbedded to her neck" (49). There is no reference that shows why she is buried and who put her in such place. Moreover, there is no hint that shows why she is buried to neck in the second play. Katherine Burkman says:

In Happy Days we are moved into this area of mystery, beginning in the first act, and we experience its deepening in the second, when, as Beckett says,"... the dark moves in. "We don't Know why Winnie is where she is, or how long she'll stay there, or why we see her from the waist up in act 1 and from the neck in act 2, but we accept it because this is the image before us. (50) [9].

Failure of Language is an absurd feature that can be expressed in this play; Winnie also clarifies the failure of language. All the time Winnie is in a case of chattering. Her chattering takes the form of monologue. Most times she uses fragments or phrases in addition to short or incomplete sentences, such as " ah yes, ah well, no worse, I suppose, no pain, hardly any, human weakness, I have my" (9-23) etc. Kennedy says: "All her utterances occur between phrases of consolation, fragments of prayers, hymns of praise, lyric poetry and song" (70) [10]. This shows that she uses language not for the sake of revealing certain truth or giving information but for the sake of spending time. Winnie clarifies that language is not a means of communication saying:

She talks to her husband Willie, who gives her no answer, or interacts with her. For instance, she says: Could you see me, Willie, do you think, from where you are, if you were to raise your eyes in my direction? Lift up your eyes to me, Willie, and tell me you can see me, do that for me, I'll lean back as far as I can. No? (28).

Willie (her husband) pays no attention to her. She completes her talking as if he were not there. Moreover, Winnie proves that language keeps only its linguistic feature that is signifier\ signified relation. She asks her husband twice "what is hog?" (19). He answers her: "A castrated swine" (47). He adds no further information for clarification. But she says: 'Ready for slaughter" (47). Such definition of the word expresses decay in language. It is not only the flesh of the swine that is decayed, but it is also language and words. This is a clear exposure of the poverty of language. According to Kennedy,: "Beckett uses mechanism to expose the comicality and poverty of dialogue that accompanies the decay of flesh, mind and words" (88).

What she adds functions as a determiner of the signified. Hence, language fails to refer beyond itself. Furthermore, she uses words, like Shower and Cooker. These words do not refer to real actions or certain events that really occurred in her life. But rather, they increase" the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign" (31) [11].

Moreover, both Winnie and Willie have feelings of gravity. However, their feelings are different. When she

asks him whether he has her own feeling or not, he answers her with no. This shows that every one of them has his own reactions towards this natural phenomenon. This expresses that man is not a unified unit. This is an absurd attitude. The following monologue concludes this:

Winnie: No? (Pause) You don't? (Pause) Ah well, natural laws, natural laws, I suppose it's like everything else; it all depends on the creature you happen to be. All I can say for my part is that for me they are not what they were when I was young. (46).

This confirms the failure of language as a means of communication. Winnie expresses this clearly saying: "words fail" (24). In another situation, she confirms that "...words must fail" (32). Winnie babbles to feel that she is still alive. Thus, she asks herself more than one time to sing her past song which she used to sing; "Sing your song, Winnie" (60). However, she feels that she is unable to do this. Moreover, she diverts the reader's attention to the naiveté of her own words by putting the following question: "What's the idea of you, she says, what are meant to mean?" (50). She asks about the intended meaning of her continuous speech. Her speeches are meaningless. They are for spending time and feeling that she is still alive. From time to time, Winnie confirms that language is not the only way for communication. She refers to objects as alternatives for communication. She clings to her past objects to help her when language fails. Hence, she says: "What would I do without them? (Pause) What would I do without them, when words fail?" (53). R. Charles Lyons illustrates this saying: "...She, Winnie, has the resources of a multitude of objects at her disposal in combination with a sense of time that encompasses the idea of a past in which these objects play meaningful roles" (119). Here, Winnie is closed to her objects. Such objects show that Winnie and Willie do not live in an isolated world, but they have features of modernity. They please her and help her in wasting time. Furthermore, they are signs of end. Everything even world moves towards its end. They are those that will help her when words fail. Jan Kott comments on Winnie's objects saying: "The world of Winnie and Willie is not a closed one... the world is easily reduced, not to a man's own self, but to what surrounds it" (142) [12].

Winnie is a talkative character. An introspective study of her speeches uncovers the excessive use of pauses in her speeches, in addition to the excessive use of phrases. This employment of pauses has a dramatic function; giving the audience a chance to take part in the events, and move from one idea to another. Thus, the reader and audience's movement from one idea to another gives rise to the absurd atmosphere of the play. This can be noted in the following monologue:

Winnie: The old style! (Smile off) And now? (Long Pause).

Is gravity what it was, Willie, I fancy not.

(Pause)... If I were not held - (gesture) – in this way, I would simply float into the blue. (Pause) And that perhaps some day the earth will yield and let me go. (33).

Thanks to the absurd atmosphere of the play, language here seems to be away from its real function; a means of communication. In addition to this, Winnie repeats her phrases of consolation in the form of fragments; "no pain... no change" (36). This expresses the precarious nature of language. Thus, Winnie says: "Words fail, there are times when even they fail" (24). This confirms the weakness of language. Moreover, such employment of pauses and silence allows the audience to think of the purpose of their being and existence. Cohn explains this saying: "One of the clues of the play is interruption. Something begins, something else begins. Winnie begins, but she doesn't carry through with it. She is constantly interrupted or interrupting herself. She is interrupted being". (187) consequently, language is expected to fail; language is not rich enough with various expressions that enable her to use different synonyms to express her own sorrow and agony. Here, the mere traditional use of words expresses Winnie's existence. Iser says:

It is language that must delineate the special quality of this incident {incident to be removed from ordinary context} as well as its significance. Incomplete events, personal self- expression, peculiarities of communication, and reciprocal influence of characters must all be bound together in such a way that the spectator can grasp the total intention that is to be fulfilled by the combination of the separate functions. (145) [20].

Therefore, Winnie, the only female character in the play, is the one who allows the readers to notice the absurd impact on language in this play.

Absurd plays are characterized by its circular plot; the play ends where it begins, vice versa. This can be noted by Winnie in *Happy Days*. *Happy Days* begins with the entombing of Winnie. In short, what is applied to Bihana can be applied to Winnie. In the first act, Winnie appears to be imbedded up to her waist in exact center of mound" surrounded by scorched grass and with a hat over her head" (Beckett7). She appears to be asleep waiting for the bell to ring. This action is repeated in the second act of the play. She appears to be" imbedded up to neck, hat on head, eyes closed" (7- 49). Such repetition of the same action reflects the development of the plot which is part and parcel of the absurd technique. Winnie plays a very illustrative role in *Happy Days*. Such idea of circularity is a reference to time's interrelation.

Absurd plays are characterized by time and place's interrelation. Time seems to be stopped in absurd plays. It is possible in absurd plays to note that the past is interwoven within the present and the future. Time has no impact in absurd plays, because it does not pass. This is employed in *Happy Days*. From time to time, Winnie quotes classics. Her quotations mix the present with the

past. According to Kennedy: "The quoted fragments from the classics similarly evoke at least a time stretching back beyond time present" (81) [10]. She seems as if she accompanies the audience and readers to a journey to the past. All what can be said is that she brings the past to the present. She asks them what identity means. She shows them how life is full of contradictions and paradoxes. Moreover, such recalling of the past diverts attention to the futility of death. She says: "...the happy days to come when flesh melt..." (18). Those authors of the mentioned quotations were alive. However, with the passage of time, they became just memories.

This indicates that everything including body and mind decays and turns into memories. Kennedy describes this saying: "... the paradoxes of living: the conscious sense of identity even as the whole body- mind can be seen and felt to decay" (82) [10]. From time to time, Winnie stresses that time is constant. Sometimes she describes it as ill saying: "time is ill chosen" (57). This expresses the constancy of her life. She feels no difference between the past, the present, and the future, as if time were stopped. No change, no difference, and no variety give a sense of boredom and constancy that is a deep absurd attitude. Her interior monologues are trials for controlling time and the decay of personality. She shows how time is a heavy burden. For her, time seems to be silent, motionless, and moves very slowly; she feels no change in her life. She expresses this saying: "It is no hotter today than yesterday, it will be no hotter tomorrow than today, how could it, and so on back into the far past, forward into the far future" (38). Hence, she tries to spend it by playing with phrases and old objects including an old tube of toothbrush, lipstick, and glasses. Above all, her monologues, objects and classics mark the interrelation of time. She says:

I saw I used to pray (pause) Yes, I must confess I did. (Smile) not. Now, (smile broader). No no, (smile off pause) Then... now... What difficulties here, for the mind. To have been always what I am- and so changes from what I was (pause). I am the one, then the other (pause), now the one, then the other? (38).

The employment of words like "now" and "then" motivates the case of constancy which she lives in. Time is lost here. Such loss of time is influential. As its passing creates hope in this hopeless life, Adorno says: "...time can be lost because time would contain hope" (46) [1]. It is clear that time does not pass by her. It does not impress her because of its immobile motion. Moreover, Winnie appears to be in the same place. She is buried in the same sandy mound through the play. Thus, Bihana and Winnie, in spite of being females, succeed in exposing time's interrelation in the two plays. Such disunity of time and place that is well expressed in the play requires a deep focus on the stage.

Stage in the absurd plays is an unconventional one. It seems to be empty except for small things. This is

achieved within the course of *Happy Days*. In *Happy Days*, the stage contains nothing but just a mound of sand where Winnie and Willie are entombed in, in addition to small objects. This stage is just: "Expanse of scorched grass rising center to low mound. Gentle slopes down to front and either side of stage. Maximum of simplicity and symmetry" (7). It is clear that the hellish light covers Winnie. This means that darkness does not fall upon her. Lyons says: "She [Winnie] seems suspended at a point of infinite noon" (124) [21].

In *Happy Days*, the stage is very suggestive and impressive. The stage seems to be very simple. It includes nothing except a mound of dust where Winnie is buried, in addition to her old objects. Such image expresses man's imprisonment in this life. It also gives a feeling of bareness, starkness and sterility. According to Ahmed: "Hence, the nakedness, starkness, sterility, and simplicity of the staging as a whole are more striking here than any of the two previous plays" (29) [13]. Winnie appears to be buried in the grave mound. This image is more valuable than words. It gives a deep feeling of man's immobility and disability in this sterile world. Here, Winnie is delineated as to be there against her will. She faces her own fate; disability and immobility. According to Steven Conner: "Winnie's mound is a new stage metaphor for the old human condition—burial in a dying earth, exposure under a ruthless sun" (122) [14]. Such image diverts people's attention to the futility of death. She sinks deeper in her grave mound with no passage of time. What happens to Winnie happens to all people. Such image of entombing is so striking and suggestive in this play. The image of Bihana is another expressive one. She is sixty years old with white hair. All the time, she appears in a green dress. She is described as "She is about sixty; her hair is white and her dress is green" (6). This image represents life with all its contradictions. The white hair is a symbol of sterility and barrenness, while the green dress is a symbol of hope. Such image of Bihana expresses the two faces of life and nature. She is a symbol of nature. As a result of this, she appears in a green dress all the time. Accordingly, Winnie in *Happy Days* creates absurd image that plays a symbolic role.

The symbolic aspect is an important element in absurd plays. Eid says: "Inside the dramatic structure of all types of Absurd drama, there is a symbolic aspect" (109) [15]. *Happy Days* also contains symbols that support its absurdity. "Winnie is a symbol of a handicapped woman who is existent in a desert of solitude. "She is full of words and memories"(78) [10]. She symbolizes the pitiful condition of women who are victims of the universe and troubled about their perplexing conditions. In general, Winnie is a symbol of "human weakness" and man's continuous deteriorated conditions" (304) [3]. By Act II she is buried to her neck and seems to lose her partner. However, her monologues confirm continuity and

acceptable existence. She says: "No better, no worse no change... any pain" (Beckett13). Kennedy reports: "she seems to be as he who praises paradise after putting an end to torture. He saw some sort of torture and nothing of paradise' (77) [10]. In addition, Winnie symbolizes man's misguidance in this life; she appears to be afraid. All the time, she uses phrases of consolation because she leads uneasy life. Her tube of toothpaste is running out, her teeth are in bad condition, and her husband Willie has no joy in life. Accordingly, she utters three threads of corresponding consolation: " can't be helped, just can't be cured, and no change... no pain" (48). These words of consolation reflect her feelings of inadequacy. She fails to read what is written on the toothbrush. She feels that she will be blind. Accordingly, she quotes John Milton's *Holy Light*. Hence, she seems to be aware of light. Such awareness of excessive light puts before us hellish light. Her own phrases of consolation including " can't complain, mustn't complain..., and so much to be thankful for no pain" support such interpretations (60). This shows that Winnie lives in a constant present. Her role is a symbolic one.

Making use of couples is an absurd feature that is used here. Most absurd writers introduce their characters in couples; either two males, like Didi and Gogo in *Waiting for Godot* a male and Female, like those in *The Chairs*. These couples are represented in *Happy Days*. In *Happy Days* there are two couples; the wife Winnie and her husband Willie. There are no other characters in the play. The employment of such pairs creates some sort of parallelism that supports the absurdity of the plays.

The technique of repetition is a key absurd characteristic that can be discussed in *Happy Days*. The repetition of Winnie's daily routine is another important absurd aspect. Every day Winnie repeats the same rituals; her prayers, and playing with her magnifying glass, tube of toothbrush and lipstick. Every day she sleeps when the bell rings and gets up also when it rings. According to her:

Sometimes all is over, for the day, all done, all said, all ready for the night, and the day not over, far from over, the night not ready, far, far from ready. (smile) But not often. (Smile off.) Yes, the bell for sleep, when I feel it at hand, and so make ready for the night...I used to think- I say I used to think- that all these things- put back into the bag- if too soon- put back too soon- could be taken out again if necessary- if needed- and so on- indefinitely- back into the bag- back out of the bag- until the bell- went. (44-5).

She confesses that she does the same action every day. She realizes that there is no change in her life. Thus, she addresses her husband saying: "The bag too is there, the same as ever, I can see it... The bag is there, Willie, as good as ever, the one you gave me that day...to go to market" (50). Such quotation clarifies that her bag is given to her by her husband. However, she uses hers at the present. This expresses repetition, in addition to time's interrelation. For more confirmation, Winnie confesses

that such objects are part and parcel of her life. She adds that she cannot feel alive without them. She says: "what would I do without them? (Pause) What would I do without them, when words fail?" (53). Winnie feels that her life is the same at the present as it was in the past, because she repeats her past rituals and daily routines. She addresses herself saying: "I say I used to say, Winnie, you are changeless, there is never any difference" (60). Repetition on her part is not limited to her daily routine also, but it is also related to her bubbling. She repeats the same words, like "Happy day, great mercies", and phrases of consolation such as "no worse, no pain no change, etc" (61). Such repetition of the same action proves that the plot is undeveloped and creates a sense of boredom that is an important absurd feature. Kenner says: "Beckett's characters are characterized by amputees, battered hats, and the letter" (13) [16]. This is not proper to Beckett's characters only but to all characters of absurd plays. Absurd characters are supposed to be "isolated, clown like characters, static and motionless" (1) [17]. This can be applied to Winnie. She appears wearing a hat over head like clowns. She is unable to move. She seems to be a handicapped woman; she is buried in a mound of sand. She lives with no one except her husband who is isolated from her and does not take part in what happens to her. Winnie is the exact absurd character who gives rise to the absurd atmosphere of the play, in spite of being a female character.

Parody is another absurd technique. Parody is an absurd feature" (1) [18]. It can be applied to the heroine of *Happy Days*. Winnie's character is different from all Beckett's characters; she is a comic gamut. Regardless of her isolation, disparity and suffering, she makes some comic actions. She notices the emit that is crawling on the rubbish mound. As she has nothing to be interested in, she is interested in it. The emergence of it is God's sardonic sense of humor. She enjoys it as she says to Willie: "Were we perhaps diverted by two quite things?" (31). According to Alpaguh:

This ridiculously elaborate process, by means of which Willie and Winnie manage to have relations, despite overwhelming barrier, emphasize the impossibility of spontaneous sex in the modern world. Sex has underground in this world of psyche, where, ironically, it still operates as a mechanical reflex which eternalizes the human absurdity. (4) [5].

She notes its ironic crawling on the rubbish mound comparing it to her (Winnie) and to her husband Willie. Such ironic action is so expressive. It exposes ironically how spontaneous sex is an impossible process. It turns into a mechanical process that guarantees the eternity of such absurd life of man. While she is describing sounds, she seems to be comic; while she is smiling, she cries loudly grinning. She says: 'they are a boon, sounds are a boon, they help me... through the day. (Smile) The old style!

(Smile off) (53). In another position, she says: " Not mine. (Smile) Not now. (Smile broader.) No no (smile off) (58). These behaviors on her part evoke laughter. Despite she suffers from "hellish light", she describes the day in a comic way as a happy day. She says: ' oh this is a happy day! This will have been another day!' (47-8). She suffers a lot and, all the time, uses words of sorrow and consolation. However, she behaves in a comic way that gives rise to the tragic comic atmosphere of this absurd play. She quotes Ophelia's lines: " O' woe is me\ to have seen what I have seen, seen what I see" (20). This creates the tragic- comic atmosphere of the scene. She wipes out and quotes at the same time only for wasting time. Winnie supports the absurd technique of this play through her sense of humor.

Irrationality is an absurd element that is used in Happy Days. Winnie lives in a pile of sand. This pile of sand is her own house. This is something irrational. How does it come for a human being to spend his life in a pile of sand? This is something untraditional and irrational that is imposed by the absurdity of the play.

The absurd features in Happy Days can be discussed through Winnie. Her symbolic role adds to the absurdity of the play. Moreover, her role gives rise to congruity in the play, in addition to the comic aspect of the play. Despite being female character, she play she absurd role very well. Her femininity does not prevent her from confirming the absurd attitude of the play. Female characters are influential in absurd drama and are able to play masculine roles also.

To sum up my words, Winnie is the Heroine of Happy Days. She is about fifty years old. Winnie's character unveils the ugly face of life. She confirms how life is wrapped in sorrows and pain. She is entombed in a pile of sand. She loses hope in life. She finds nothing to do except recalling her past memories. Every day, she repeats the same action of praying and reciting lines of poetry. She declares that she waits for the happy day that will put an end to her life. She enjoys nothing even the sexual relation with her husband. Nothing can please her. Hence, she longs for the end of her life. This character asserts that everything in life enhances boredom and the loss of hope. This gives rise to the absurd atmosphere of the play. Notably, Beckett is excelled in portraying this heroine.

V. Results

1-The study has proved that literature is part and parcel of the long social debates concerning women's issue. The thesis has proved that the idea of gender role can be investigated in the absurd drama, respectively in Beckett's Happy Days. This selected absurd play is an absurd play with the very meaning of the word. Although the play under study is not considered to be a feminist play that discusses women's issues, the idea of gender role can be discussed in it. Tracing the theme of gender role in the selected absurd play showed that the female character in

the absurd theatre can play the role of the male character vice versa. Moreover, the female characters can play more vital and decisive roles than the roles of males in the absurd theatre. This is exactly the case in Beckett's Happy Days.

2- The play under study is critically appreciated and studied. This adds to the importance and success of this play so that it is being staged until the present time.

3- Notably, this play runs around the idea of the absurdity of life. This can be noted from its title: "Happy Days" is also so connotative. It stands for the last day in man's life. It appreciates the day when one dies. This title confirms the futility of death. This confirms the absurdity of life and its mortality. This idea is illustrated by Winnie, the heroine of the play.

4- Winnie is the Heroine of Happy Days. She is about fifty years old. Winnie's character unveils the ugly face of life. She confirms how life is wrapped in sorrows and pain. She is entombed in a pile of sand. She loses hope in life. She finds nothing to do except recalling her past memories. Every day, she repeats the same action of praying and reciting lines of poetry. She declares that she waits for the happy day that will put an end to her life. She enjoys nothing even the sexual relation with her husband. Nothing can please her. Hence, she longs for the end of her life. This character asserts that everything in life enhances boredom and the loss of hope. This gives rise to the absurd atmosphere of the play.

5- As for language, Winnie expresses an excellent manipulation of language. Language in the selected play gives rise to the absurd atmosphere of the play. It loses its function as a means of communication. It turns into a mere chattering for the sake of wasting time. It takes the forms of phrases and statements. It is rich in pauses and long pauses. This can be investigated through both the male and the female characters in the plays under study equally. Such manipulation of language allows the gender role to be investigated in the play in question; the female character in the Happy Days uses the same language of the male character.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adorno, Theodor W. "Trying to Understand Beckett". *Beckett and Philosophy*. Ed. Richard Lane. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- [2] Cohn, Ruby. *Back to Beckett*. New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973.
- [3] Gontarski, S. E. *On Beckett: Essays and Criticism*. New York: Grove Press, 1986.
- [4] Carey, Phyllis. "The Ritual Technique in Happy Days". *Myth and Ritual in the Plays of Samuel Beckett*. Ed. Katherine H. Burkman. U.S.A: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1987.

- [5] Alpaguh, David J. "Negative Definition in Samuel Beckett's Happy Days". V. 1. No.4. Jan, 1966. March 22, 2013.<http://www.jstor.org/online> Jstor stable 440844.
- [6] Beckett, Samuel. *Happy Days: a Play in Two Acts*. U.S.A.: Grove Press,1961.
- [7] Johnson, Toni O'Brien. " An Ante Text for Samuel Beckett's Happy Days". *Irish University Review*. Vol. 19, No. 2. Autumn 1989. P. 302-9. [Http://WWW.jstor.org/stable/25484312](http://WWW.jstor.org/stable/25484312).
- [8] Tan, Tjen."Existentialism and Samuel Beckett's Two Plays: Endgameand Happy Days". Diss. The Graduate of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University, 2007.
- [9] Burkman, Katherine H. Ed. *Myth and Ritual in the Plays of Samuel Beckett*. London and Toronto: Associated Univ. Press, 1987.
- [10] Kennedy, Andrew K. *Samuel Beckett*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- [11] El- Sherif, Amr Amin. "The Ascension Towards Nothingness: A Reading of Samuel Beckett as a Postmodernist". Thesis. Cairo: Faculty of Arts, 2002.
- [12] Kott, Jan. "A Note on Beckett's Realism". *Critical Essays on Samuel Beckett*. Lance Butler. Ed. Alder shot: Scholar Press, 1993.
- [13] Ahmed, Mohamed El- Said." Beckett's Bleak Universe and Its Objective Correlatives: A Study of Godot, Endgame, and Happy Days". Diss. Cairo: A. U. C. Univ. Press, 1984.
- [14] Conner, Steven. *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988.
- [15] Eid, Ragaa. *A Study in Tewfik Al- Hakim's Literature: Analysis and Criticism*. Alex: Knowledge Association for Publishing, 1977.
- [16] Kenner, Hugh. *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett*. 1973. First Syracuse Univ. Press,1996.
- [17] Petty, Ryan." From Beckett to Stoppard: Existentialism, Death and Absurdity". notes. com. March 10, 2010. Jan 25, 2012. [Http://www.Enotes.com/jax/index.php/enotes/ search](http://www.Enotes.com/jax/index.php/enotes/search).
- [18] Al- Yasery, Ismail. "The Theatre of the Absurd and Its Impact on the Arab Theatre. "*Modernized Dialogue*. Jan. 29, 2012. April25, 2012. <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=293311>.
- [19] Clurman, Harold. *Late Theatrical Works: Theatre Review of Happy Days*. Ed. Cathleen Culotta Andonian. London: Greenwood Press,1998.
- [20] Iser, Wolfgang. "Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Language". *Critical Essays on Samuel Beckett*. Lance Butler. Ed. Alder shot: Scholar Press, 1993.---. *Samuel Beckett: a Critical Study*. U.S.A.: University of California Press, 1986.
- [21] Lyons, R. Charles. *Macmillan Modern Dramatist: Samuel Beckett*. London: Macmillan Press, 1983.
- [22] Lerner, Gerda (1986). *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [23] De Lauretis, Teresa (1997). *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory*. Ed. Elizabeth Kowalesk. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- [24] Bradley, Harriet (2010). *Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- [25] Freedman, Estelle B (2002). *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*. New York: The Random House Publishing Group.
- [26] Camus, Albert (2013). *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Trans. Justin O' Brien. U.S.A.: Penguin Books Limited.
- [27] Al- Banhawy, Nādiyah (1994). *Women in the Theater of Al- hakim and Rushdy, and their Analysis According to the Musical Structures*. Cairo: The Egyptian General Assembly for Book.
- [28] Khashabah, Samy (1977). "The Avant- Grade Theatre and Absurd". *The Issues of the Contemporary Theatre*. Iraq: Publications of the Ministry of Information.
- [29] Esslin, Martin (1969). *The Theatre of the Absurd*. New York: Anchor Books.