# CHAPTER II
# THEORY AND METHOD

## 2.1 Narrative Elements

When analyzing a narrative work, it is essential to examine its intrinsic elements. This approach focuses solely on the text in order to develop a deeper understanding of the novel itself.

## 2.1.1 Character and Characterization

Characters and characterizations are important aspects that shapes the storyline in a literary work. Character is defined as "individuals depicted in a story, whose moral, intellectual, and emotional traits are concluded by readers based on their words and actions" (Abrams and Harpham, 2009:42). Characters can be categorized into main and side characters. A main character is someone who becomes the central point of a story, while side characters support the narrative and contribute to the development of the main character. Characterization refers to "the techniques used to attribute various traits to a character within a text, either directly through explicit description or indirectly through actions, dialogue, or interactions" (Temmerman and Boas, 2018:2). Direct characterization explicitly describes a character, while indirect characterization allows readers to infer traits from the character's behavior and relationships.

### 2.1.2 Conflict

Conflict often appears in a narration as a problem that drives the plot or motivates the characters. Conflict refers to "the struggles between opposing forces that creates tension and propels the narrative forward" (Abrams, 2009:256). Conflict can take various forms, such as internal or external. Internal conflict, also known as man vs. self, refers to "the clash that occurs from the character itself" (Johnson and Arp, 2018:98). For instance, a character might struggle with guilt, identity, insecurity, or the challenge of making a difficult decision. External conflict, on the other hand, refers to "a struggle between a character and outside forces" (Perrine, 1998:42). This can manifest in various forms, such as man vs. man (conflict with another character), man vs. society (resistance to societal norms or oppression), or man vs. nature (struggle against natural forces). External conflict drives the plot by placing characters in situations that challenge their beliefs, survival, or autonomy.

### 2.1.3 Settings

The setting of a story significantly influences the narrative's tone and the characters' behaviors, as their actions and decisions are often shaped by their surroundings. The setting of a narrative or dramatic work refers to its "general background, historical period, and social context, providing the framework in which the events occur" (Abrams and Harpham, 2009:330). For instance, a story set in a war-torn country may feature characters struggling with survival and moral dilemmas, while a story set in a utopian future might explore themes of technological

advancements and societal ideals. This means that the setting of a literary work actively participates in storytelling and has a role of enhancing the reader's experience.

The types of settings involves the setting of place, time, and social context. Setting of place refers to where the story happens, including both the geographical location and the physical surroundings that influence the characters and events. While setting of time relates to when the story takes place, whether it is a historical period, a specific season, or a time of day, which can affect the mood and themes of the narrative (Therese, 2015:45). Social context includes the cultural, economic, and societal conditions that shape the characters' lives, such as traditions, social norms, and power structures (Koschorke, 2018:160). These three aspects of setting are important because they provide the foundation for the story, influencing how characters behave and how the plot develops.

## 2.2 Theories of Alienation

Theoretical framework serves as the foundation for a research. It outlines the theories that are used to understand, interpret, and examine the central issues of the research. By grounding this thesis in the theory of alienation from Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy, this framework helps to guide the analysis, focus the discussion, and give a clear way to understand the topic.

### 2.2.1 Jean Paul Sartre's Theory of Existentialism

This thesis applies Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy, focusing on the theory of alienation which includes bad faith, the gaze, existential freedom, being-for-itself, and being-for-others. Sartre views alienation as an ontological condition arising from the tension between one's self and the external world, as quoted, "the alienation of myself, which is the act of being-looked-at, involves the alienation of the world which I organize" (Sartre, 1943:263). He argues that individuals are "condemned to be free" and must create meaning, but often adopt societal roles to avoid confronting their freedom, leading to "bad faith".

### 2.2.1.2 The Nature of Subject

In Sartre's existentialist philosophy, the nature of the subject is fundamentally rooted in consciousness and freedom. In Sartre's existentialism, the subject is a conscious being (being-for-itself) who defines themselves through freedom and choice, as existence precedes essence. Unlike objects (being-in-itself), humans are not fixed but must create their own identity. However, this selfhood is also shaped by others through being-for-others, where the subject becomes aware of themselves as seen and judged by others, often leading to feelings of alienation or objectification.

### 2.2.1.2.1 Being-For-Itself

Sartre's concept of being-for-itself (*être-pour-soi*) describes human consciousness as fundamentally free and self-aware, unlike objects, which exist as being-in-itself with

a fixed nature. In *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre explains that "consciousness is always directed toward something beyond itself" (1943:525), meaning that humans are constantly making choices and defining their own identity. Since there is no pre-existing meaning in the universe, individuals must create their own purpose. This absolute freedom comes with great responsibility, as people must navigate life without any set path. Sartre's idea that "existence precedes essence" highlights that humans first exist and then define themselves through their actions. However, this freedom can be overwhelming, as individuals are left to shape their own lives in an indifferent world. Sartre's idea of being-for-itself explains the effect of alienation and portrays the struggle of human existence, which is "finding meaning in a world that does not provide it" (Sartre, 1943:547).

Sartre also emphasizes that human beings are not fixed in one mode of existence, but constantly alternate between being-for-itself and being-for-others. This dynamic tension is central to the human condition, as individuals are always navigating their internal freedom while also being shaped by how they are perceived by others. While being-for-others introduces an external gaze that objectifies the self, being-for-itself allows a person to exercise self-awareness and construct their own identity instead. This back-and-forth movement is inevitable for a human being, where the self must continually renegotiate its identity amidst both internal consciousness and external views from the others.

**2.2.1.2.2 Being-For-Others**

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre introduces the concept of being-for-others (*être-pour-autrui*) in alienation to explain how people experience themselves in relation to others. According to Sartre, this happens when "an individual becomes aware that they are being observed" (1943:137), forcing them to see themselves from an outside perspective and conform to a role based on that perspective. When this occurs, a person no longer feels like just a subject in control of their own identity, but also an object in someone else's view. Sartre illustrates this idea with the example of feeling shame when caught in an embarrassing situation. In such moments, a person suddenly realizes how they appear to someone else, making them feel objectified and judged.

When an individual conform to being-for-others, they start to lose their own meaning as they are being influenced by how others perceive them. In this state, the individual loses part of their freedom because they start to adjust their behavior or identity to match what they think others expect or see. They are no longer simply "being", but they are performing or existing for someone else. This type of behaviour can be an effect of alienation. Sartre argues that this mutual objectification limits true freedom because people are always aware of being watched and judged. As a result, individuals may feel trapped between staying authentic and meeting societal expectations, making it difficult to fully express themselves (Sartre, 1943:238-241).

**2.2.1.1 The Causes of Alienation**

Sartre's philosophy introduces the concepts of bad faith, the objectifying gaze of others, and the burden of existential freedom as aspects that can lead an individual into alienation. This section explains those ideas, which disrupt an individual's ability to live authentically and define themselves freely.

**2.2.1.1.1 Bad Faith**

Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of bad faith refers to a situation where people deceive themselves to avoid facing their freedom and responsibility. Instead of accepting their ability to make choices, they "follow societal expectations to avoid the anxiety of being true to themselves" (Sartre, 1945:47-49). As a result, they become disconnected from their real identity because they ignore their role in shaping who they are, and instead take other roles that feel safer but not truly their own. They become alienated from their true selves, as they deny their own role in shaping their identity and adopt predefined roles that provide a false sense of security.

In Sartre's view, bad faith happens when someone does not have the belief to accept their own self and follows social norms instead, in order to escape the pressure of making their own choices. This self-deception comes from the fear of responsibility, causing people to hide their true selves behind roles created by society. Because of this, they feel distant from their real identity and lose the opportunity to fully embrace their

freedom. By living in bad faith, individuals let outside influences define them instead of taking control of their own sense of self.

### 2.2.1.1.2 The Gaze

Sartre's concept of the gaze (*le regard*) explains how individuals become objectified when seen by others, reducing them to mere objects rather than autonomous beings. This process alienates people from their true selves, as they begin to perceive themselves based on how others see them rather than through their own sense of identity. According to Sartre, "the gaze forces individuals to recognize that their existence is shaped by external perceptions, which can be both limiting and dehumanizing" (1943:131). By being observed, individuals lose a sense of their own freedom and authenticity, as they are pushed to conform to the roles and expectations imposed upon them by society.

In Sartre's philosophy, the gaze of the Other is a powerful force that shapes self-perception and contributes to alienation. This idea, explored in *Being and Nothingness*, highlights how consciousness is constantly aware of itself in relation to others. The gaze is not merely an act of observation; it objectifies the individual, turning them into something to be looked at rather than someone who actively defines their own identity (Storr, 2020:87). This process creates a profound sense of alienation, as individuals no longer see themselves as free human beings but rather as objects subjected to external judgment. As a result, they struggle with an increasing dependence on how they are perceived by others.

### 2.2.1.1.3 Existential Freedom

Sartre's idea of existential freedom means that people have complete freedom to shape their own identity and make choices. However, this freedom comes with great responsibility, as individuals must create meaning in a world that does not provide it for them. When individuals lack existential freedom because they are intimidated by the challenge or limited by the society, it can lead to feelings of isolation (Sartre, 1943:433-436). The struggle between staying true to oneself and following societal expectations creates an ongoing conflict, making it hard for individuals to fully embrace who they are.

According to Sartre, humans are "condemned to be free," meaning they cannot avoid the responsibility of choosing their own values and purpose (Sartre, 1943:176). While this freedom allows people to define their own lives, it also creates anxiety because they must face the weight of their decisions without clear guidance. To avoid this pressure, many seek comfort in set roles or social norms instead of fully embracing their freedom. However, this only increases their sense of alienation, as they give up their ability to shape their own existence, lose their own existential freedom, and instead let society decide for them.

### 2.3 Research Method

To conduct a systematic analysis of literary texts, this thesis utilizes a specific methodology that includes a research approach, data sources, and the analysis method

itself. By using these research methods, the writer can develop an insightful analysis of the topic.

**2.3.1 Research Approach**

Based on the background of the thesis that reveals the alienation phenomenon in Marisa Silver's *Little Nothing*, the writer uses a philosophical approach in literature. Philosophical approach in literature refers to "the exploration of fundamental questions about existence, identity, and meaning as presented within literary texts" (Lamarque, 2008:31). It involves analyzing the philosophical dimensions embedded in narratives, characters, and themes, particularly how literature reflects or critiques human conditions, values, and the nature of reality. In writing this thesis, the writer examines the philosophical aspect of alienation experienced by the main character in *Little Nothing* written by Marisa Silver using the theory of alienation by Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, focusing on how the character's transformation and social rejection reflect existential concerns and a crisis of identity.

**2.3.2 Method of Data Collection**

To collect the necessary data for this thesis, the writer uses a library research method. This approach involves identifying and utilizing credible sources that offer accurate information or expert perspectives relevant to the research topic. This process is essential, as it provides the theoretical foundation and empirical support needed throughout various stages of academic research (George, 2008:6). Related to library

research, there are primary and secondary sources. Within the discipline of literature, primary sources refer to the core literary texts under analysis, which serve as the main focus of literary investigation (Klarer, 2011:5). Accordingly, *Little Nothing* written by Marisa Silver is utilized as the primary source in this thesis. On the other hand, secondary sources include scholarly works such as journal articles, thesis, and critical studies that offer analysis, commentary, or contextual information related to the primary text or research topic (Klarer, 2011:5). These sources are selected to ensure the reliability and academic integrity of the study. As secondary sources, this thesis concerns a collection of credible books, e-books, journals, and articles related to Sartre's theories, as well as other literary works discussing themes of alienation and book reviews of *Little Nothing* written by Marisa Silver.