

EXISTENTIAL CONFLICT AND ILLUSION IN EDWARD ALBEE'S ABSURD DRAMA

Babajonova Malohat Faxriddin qizi

Master's degree student

Department of Foreign Languages and History

Asia International University.

Khorezm, Uzbekistan.

bobojonovamalohat08@gmail.com

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Abstract. This paper investigates the role of existential conflict and illusion in the absurd drama of Edward Albee. While often associated with the Theatre of the Absurd, Albee's works demonstrate a distinctive blend of psychological realism and philosophical inquiry. By analyzing *The American Dream* and *A Delicate Balance*, this study reveals how Albee constructs dramatic tension through illusion, identity crises, and moral ambiguity. Using the IMRAD format, the article highlights how absurd aesthetics serve as a tool for exposing the instability of human values and relationships in modern society.

Keywords: absurd drama, Edward Albee, illusion, identity crisis, existential conflict.

Ключевые слова: абсурдная драма, Эдвард Олби, иллюзия, кризис идентичности, экзистенциальный конфликт.

Kalit so'zlar: absurd drama, Edvard Olbi, illyuziya, shaxs inqirozi, ekzistensial ziddiyat

Introduction

Edward Albee is widely recognized as a major figure in modern American drama, whose works challenge traditional theatrical conventions. His plays often reflect the influence of absurdism, yet they are deeply rooted in the realities of American life. Unlike purely abstract absurdist playwrights, Albee explores existential dilemmas through recognizable social settings.

This article aims to examine how existential conflict and illusion operate as central elements in Albee's dramatic structure, particularly in *The American Dream* and *A Delicate Balance*.

Methods

The research adopts a qualitative literary analysis approach, focusing on thematic and structural elements of selected plays. The following methods are applied:

- Textual Analysis: Close reading of dialogues, character interactions, and plot development
- Thematic Analysis: Identification of recurring motifs such as illusion, fear, and identity
- Comparative Approach: Examination of similarities and differences between the selected plays

Secondary sources, including critical essays and theoretical works on absurd drama and existentialism, are used to support the interpretation.

Results

The study identifies several important features in Albee's absurd drama:

1. Illusion as Psychological Defense

Characters create imaginary constructs or false beliefs to avoid confronting uncomfortable truths. In *A Delicate Balance*, fear itself becomes an undefined but powerful illusion.

2. Identity Crisis

In *The American Dream*, characters lack stable identities, often reduced to stereotypes or symbolic roles, reflecting the emptiness of societal ideals.

3. Moral Ambiguity

Albee avoids clear distinctions between right and wrong, presenting situations where ethical boundaries are blurred.

4. Fear of Emptiness

A recurring theme is the fear of meaninglessness, which drives characters into denial, repetition, or emotional detachment.

Discussion

Albee's dramatic technique demonstrates how absurd elements can coexist with realistic settings to produce a powerful critique of modern existence. His characters are not isolated in abstract worlds but are embedded in familiar environments such as family homes. This contrast intensifies the absurdity, making it more relatable and unsettling. Moreover, Albee's focus on illusion reflects a broader philosophical concern: the human tendency to construct meaning in a fundamentally uncertain world. By exposing these illusions, his plays challenge audiences to reconsider their own beliefs and values.

The use of existential conflict also distinguishes Albee from other absurdist playwrights.

Rather than presenting absurdity as an external condition, he internalizes it within the characters' psychological struggles.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Edward Albee's plays offer a unique interpretation of absurd drama through their emphasis on existential conflict and illusion. His works reveal the fragility of identity, the ambiguity of morality, and the pervasive fear of meaninglessness. By blending absurdist techniques with realistic contexts, Albee creates a dramatic form that is both intellectually engaging and emotionally resonant.

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