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THE EXISTENCE OF DUALISTIC ABSURDISM: PRESENTED BY
ALBERT CAMUS AND GENERATIVELY ABSENTED BY EDWARD ALBEE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: The Existence of Dualistic Absurdism: Presented by Albert Camus and
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In *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Martin Esslin introduces the term “absurdist theatre” and associates the theatre of Edward Albee with this category. Esslin contends that the definitive source for understanding the existence of the absurdist (and, thus, for understanding what absurdist theatre should entail) is Albert Camus’s “The Myth of Sisyphus.” Yet, Camus’s philosophy of the absurd is not wholly encapsulated in this essay, but is to be understood as an evolution that begins with “The Myth of Sisyphus” and finds its major turning points in the philosopher’s *The Rebel* and *The Fall*.

This study argues for a triangulation of the category/concept of the absurd and of the classification “absurdist theatre” into the philosophies/dramatic categories of “resigned absurdism,” “rebellious absurdism,” and “dualistic absurdism,” and asserts that the theatre of Albee dramatizes the most evolved absurdist existence that Camus advocated over the course of his philosophical journey, that of dualistic absurdism.

This study’s discussions of Camus’s absurdists are interwoven with examples of how the attributes and desires of these existences are dramatized through the subjectivities and interactions of Albee’s characters in *The Zoo Story*, *The Death of Bessie Smith*, *The American Dream*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The Lady from Dubuque*, and *Me, Myself, and I*. Yet, there is no single character in Albee’s dramatic corpus who presents an exemplary, practical, and sustainable dualistic existence. Rather, in Albee’s

plays, dualistic absurdism is suggestively promoted through the “generative absences” created and occasioned by the playwright’s characters.

In this study’s final chapter, we learn that Albee’s creative process is dualistic in that it entails Albee simultaneously acting as the author of his plays and opening himself up to the excavation of unconscious ideas. Albee’s direct, individualized, and universal (albeit unarticulated) plea for the adoption of a dualistic existence is substantiated by the psychoanalytic theories of Jean Laplanche and Jacques Lacan, which, in turn, inform the implementable recipes for dualistic existence that are presented by Queer theorists, Leo Bersani and Lee Edelman. Ultimately, this study asserts that the theatre of Edward Albee provides the most potent, profound, and generative evocation of dualistic absurdism.