

Satire and Absurdity in Edward Albee's the American Dream

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan dan menganalisa satir dan absurditas dalam drama The American Dream yang ditulis oleh Edward Albee. Penelitian ini juga bertujuan menghubungkan satir dan absurditas itu dengan kenyataan kehidupan di Amerika pada akhir 1950an. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan metode kajian pustakan dengan cara menganalisa drama itu dan dihubungkan dengan referensi pendukung lainnya. Penelitian ini dilakukan dalam kerangka kajian sastra dengan menerapkan pendekatan mimetic. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa drama tersebut berisi satir dan absurditas. Satir diarahkan pada American Progress, nilai kepalsuan, keterasingan, dan dominasi wanita. Absurditas dalam drama tersebut ditemukan dalam konvensi teater murni, lelucon, kebodohan, dan adengan-gila, bahasa kosong, dan alegori. Satir dan absurditas dalam drama itu menggambarkan realitas kehidupan di Amerika pada masa periode Perang Dingin.

Kata kunci: Satir, Absurditas, drama

Abstract

This research is intended to elaborate and analyze satire and absurdity in Edward Albee's The American Dream. This research is also intended to relate the satires and absurdity to the reality of life in America in the late of 1950's. This research is conducted through a method of library research by analyzing the play and relating to other supporting references. This research is conducted in the frame of literary studies by applying the mimetic approach. The result of the research shows that the play contains satires and absurdity. The satires are directed to American progress, artificial value, alienation, and women's domination. The absurdity in the play is found in the conventions of pure theater, clowning, fooling, and mad-scene, verbal nonsense, and allegorical element. Both satire and absurdity in the play portray the reality of life in America during the Cold War period.

Keywords: Satire, Absurdity, play

1. Introduction

One of the important tasks in the research of literature is to explore the relationship between the actual literary work and the background of its social situation and intellectual patterns. Literary work reflects the social situation and dominant tendencies at that time. An author or artist who lives in certain social milieu responds to what happen in society through his work. Historically, America has a very close relationship with Europe since the first settlers of America with different purposes and dream. Spanish and French were first to establish settlement in America, but it was English that had great influences on shaping America, as a new and powerful nation. Many of the early colonists had a good education and it made them possible to write. The purposes of their writings at the time were to inform and inspire their readers. The characteristics of the early common writing were historical and religious because at

this era history and religion became chief problems in the life of the early settlers in America. The colonial literature was in the form of almanac, travel account, pamphlet, and sermons, the hard life in the frontier condition became the social background of the writings and the Puritan doctrine became their intellectual pattern.

The establishment of America as a new nation made social development more complex and American's thought was also developing. Consequently, the social situation and intellectual pattern influenced the development of American literature. One of the important social situations in America was at the era of post World War II. At this era Americans lived in the affluent society but many Americans criticized the condition and they also questioned the concept of American progress existing in American mind. The intellectual pattern developing at this age was the existentialism coming from France and it influenced the trend of writing literature.

In the field of theater, existentialism assisted to appear the Theater of the Absurd. As stated one of the characteristics of the Theater of the Absurd are the mechanical nature of many people's lives may lead them to question the value and purpose of their existence; this is an intimation of absurdity. Philosophical concept deals with the concept of existence of human being. In the Theater of the Absurd the playwright presents the absurd condition on the stage to criticize the messy social condition.

Albee as the pioneer of the Theater of the Absurd in America was greatly influenced by Samuel Beckett, the pioneer of the Theater of the Absurd in France. Theater of the Absurd during the Cold War era Albee as a playwright criticized the social condition in America through his plays. Most of his plays attacked the very foundation of the concept of American progress and he seemed to view that Americans became too complacent, too conformist, and too materialistic.

In one of his popular plays, *The American Dream* Albee also depicts the portrait of Americans. Through this play Albee criticizes American society during the late 1950s. Albee himself spoke clearly on the American Dream "The play is an examination of the American scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity."

The theater of the absurd refers to tendencies in dramatic literature that emerged in Paris during the late 1940s and early '50s in the plays of Arthur Adamov, Fernando Arrabal, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Tardieu. Its roots can be found in the allegorical morality plays of the Middle Ages and the autos sacramentales (allegorical religious dramas) of baroque Spain; the nonsense literature of writers like Lewis Carroll; the dream plays of Strindberg and the dream novels of James Joyce and Franz Kafka; the grotesque drama of Alfred Jarry; and the frantic farces of Georges Feydeau. The Theatre of the Absurd focuses on the absurdity and uncertainty of life and time [1]

The term 'Theatre of the Absurd' was coined by the critic Martin Esslin, who had made it the title of a 1962 book on the subject [2]. The Theatre of the Absurd is the kind of drama that presents the absurdity of human condition and that combines characteristics such as silences, repetitions, unconventional dialogue, no recognizable decor, no story, no progression and no resolution [3]. Khan, et al [4] said that absurdism "means something silly, foolish, nonsensical, purposeless, confusing."

Sharadegh [5] states the Theatre of the Absurd is a movement made up of many diverse plays, most of which were written between 1940 and 1960. Drama absurdism is a depiction of a nation filled with metaphysical sadness [6]. Human life is described as being useless, subversive, ironic, and even pessimistic in dealing with problems of life [7]. The effect that appears to its readers is a sense of pessimism and hopelessness experienced by the characters [8]. Turahmat [9] further said that the concept of existentialism which inspired the emergence of absurdism turned out to have an effect on the drama script.

The term theater of the absurd derives from the philosophical use of the word absurd by such existentialist thinkers as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. Camus, particularly, argued

that humanity had to resign itself to recognizing that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach; in that sense, the world must ultimately be seen as absurd.

The playwrights loosely grouped under the label of the absurd endeavor to convey their sense of bewilderment, anxiety, and wonder in the face of an inexplicable universe. The images of the theater of the absurd tend to assume the quality of fantasy, dream, and nightmare; they do not so much portray the outward appearance of reality as the playwright's emotional perception of an inner reality. Thus Beckett's *Happy Days* express a generalized human anxiety about the approach of death through the concrete image of a woman sunk waist-deep in the ground in the first act and neck-deep in the second.

Based on notions above, this research is designed to see how Edward Albee's satirized the reality of life in the American society in the late 1950s in which the play was written. Besides, the absurdity in this play is also explored because it is classified as the Theater of the Absurd. In this research, satire refers to criticism directed to the American scene and society and absurdity deals with unreasonable, foolish, or ridiculous condition.

2. Method of Research

Generally, this research uses the content analysis method. In this method the research efforts to find the content and the meaning of texts. The content and the meaning of *The American Dream* are investigated. Specifically, this research applies mimetic approach which describes the relationship of the literary work to the world or the universe in which the work was conceived or is being read. In this research the literary work is *The American Dream* and the world or the universe is the reality of life in American society during the late 1950's.

This study is a library research. Therefore, many books related to the topic of this study are used. The primary source is the drama itself. Other materials function to support the analysis such as theoretical or manual books, historical books and sociological books. In conducting this research, the intrinsic aspect of the drama will be analyzed first. Afterward, the content and significance of the drama will be related to the condition of American society during the late 1950's.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Satire in the Literature

Before analyzing the social satire in *The American Dream*, it is necessary to discuss about the meaning and history of satire in the field of literature. The word "satire" belongs to that fairly large class of words which have two meanings, one specific and technical, the other more general [1]. It means that satire as one of literary styles is used to criticize a person, society, and even institution like government and a satirist usually uses humor and wit to convey his idea. Satirists are conscious of the frailty of institutions of human devising and attempt to through laughter not so much to tear them down as to inspire a remodeling. If critics simply abuse, they are writing invective; if they are personal and spleenetic, they writing sarcasm; if they are sad and morose over state of society they writing irony.

There are two types of satire. They are direct satire and indirect satire. In direct satire the satiric voice usually speaks in the first person, either to the reader or to a character in the satire. While indirect satire means that the satire is expressed through a narrative and the characters or groups who are the subject but are ridiculed not by what is said about them but by what they themselves say and do. The drama has been suited to the satiric spirit, and from Aristophanes to Shaw and Noel Coward, it has commented with penetrating irony on human foibles. There was a notable concentration of its attention on Horatian satire in the comedy of manners of Restoration ages. But it has been in the fictional narrative, particularly novel, that satire has found its chief vehicle in the modern world.

Satire actually existed in the literature of Greece and Rome. Aristophanes, Juvenal, Horace, Martial, and Petronius are indicative of the rich satiric vein in the classical literature. Through the Middle Ages satire persisted in the fabliau and beast epic. In Spain the picaresque novel developed the strong element of satire; in France Moliere and Le Sage handled the

manner deftly, and somewhat later voltaire established himself as an arch-satirist. In England, from the time of Gascoigne (Steel Glass, 1576) and Lodge (1595), writers condemned the vices and follies of the age in the verse and prose. By the time of Charles I, however, interest in satire had declined, only to revive with the struggle between Cavaliers and Puritans. The eighteenth century in England became a period of satire; poetry, drama, essays, criticism, all took on the satirical manner at the hands such men as Dryden, Swift, Pope, Fielding. In the nineteenth century Byron and Thackeray were found satirists.

Early American satire naturally followed English in style. Before the American Revolution, American satire dealt chiefly with the political struggle. Of the Hartford wits Trumbull produced *M'Fingal*, a Hudibrastic satire on Tories. Hopkinson amusingly attacked the British in his *Battle of the Kegs* (1778). Freneau (the British Prison Ship) wrote the strongest Revolutionary satire. Shortly after the Revolution the *Anarchiad* (verse) by Trumbull, Barlow, Humphreys, and Hopkins, and *Modern Chivalry* (fiction) by Brackenridge, attacked domestic political difficulties and the crudities of frontier. In the twentieth century American satirists are Eugene O'Neill, Edith Wharton, Sinclair Lewis, Kaufman, Joseph Heller, and Hart Jhon P, Marquand. All have commented critically upon human beings and their institutions. One of the American best modern satirists in the field of drama is Edward Albee.

3.2 Satire to American Progress

From the title of this play "The American Dream" we can see that it is related to the aspect of American scene and it guides us to bring its issue into the context of American mind. The existence of American progress as one of the elements of American dream during the Cold War is being questioned in this play. This play seems to question the American progress through the presence of the structure of the characters, Grandma and Young Man. It is Grandma who firstly utters the phrase "American Dream" referring to Young Man when Grandma asks him to see a typical American face.

It is clear that Young Man refers to the American dream but the image of Young Man as American dream is contradictory with the concept of goodness in the American progress as one of the elements of American dream. Young Man is presented in good physical condition but he does not have goodness inside. But Grandma with her old age tends to have idealism.

Grandma's character seems to bear the meaning of American dream that Albee wants to communicate in this play. The meaning is most obviously associated with the existence of Young Man, since he is specifically identified as the American dream by the dialogue of the play. Although Grandma is very old, we can notice various kinds of attractive qualities in her character. She seems to be the most appealing, the most refreshing, and the wise figure in the play. She becomes "speaker" who tells us what to think and therefore becomes a kind of mouthpiece for the author. She is the main character of the play because she appears on the stage more of time and she has more speeches than any other character. She is also characterized as the incarnation of the spirit of American nineteenth-century liberal values that were still alive earlier in the twentieth century.

The existence of Grandma and Young Man seem to be an allegory to the development of the view of American Dream from the nineteenth-century to the twentieth-century (modern age). The allegory is to criticize the essence of American Dream in modern age and this is called allegorical satire. Grandma's character refers to American Dream in the old style, whereas Young Man's character refers to American Dream in the new style. In the old style of American Dream at the nineteenth-century American dream was full of idealism. People still believed in the American dream with spirit of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. In this case, young Grandma grows up at this age. Grandma's age is identified when she examines Young Man for the first time.

The function and meaning of Grandma as the American Dream emerge precisely in the juxtaposition of her with her main foil, Young Man. The characters of Grandma and the Young Man are very different. Although she is very old, Grandma is wise and idealistic. Young

Man is with the marvelous physique but the spirit of idealism is not seen in his character. From one of his speeches, it is known that he just thinks about looking for a work and earning money.

Here we can see that Young man is figure of young generation of American who believes in the materialistic value in modern society. It is contradictory with the Grandma's characters because she tends to think about humanistic value. So, it is assumed that the contrastive figure between Young Man and Grandma is reflection of the tension of idealism and materialism in American society at the time of Cold War.

The term of American Dream is explicitly expressed by Grandma to Young Man when they are talking about Young Man's identity. Grandma knows Young Man because his physical appearance picturing the typical American way as he acknowledges to grandma. In this case, young man's American physical appearance seems to state that in the side of physical or material aspect, American has good and strong image, but in the other side they seem to forget the spirit of American Dream that have been existed since many years ago in American mind. It seems that Edward Albee puts an allegorical satire to criticize the decreasing of spirit of American Dream in modern American society that tends to be materialistic rather than idealistic.

From Mommy's point of view as modern American generation, it is found that she does not like Grandma because she thinks that Grandma is the humanistic American Dream. But it is contrastive when Mommy see Young Man. Mommy is very happy to see young man: "you don't know how happy I am to see you" (p.866) because she thinks that Young Man is the American figure who has materialistic view. It seems that Edward Albee wants to show that modern American society live in materialistic views.

The presentation of the bad image of the American Dream in this play is a critical response to American society who during postwar era or tends to be too complacent, too conformist, and too materialistic. America after the World War, in one hand became a strong country in the world and industry developed greatly. on the other hand, the World War Two then emerged the cold War between America and Russia at the time. America at the time was in the so called age of prosperity and Americans is called the affluent society.

The American successful in field of economy is caused by the increasing of output and demand. After 1945 American economy grew greatly at an average rate of 3.5 percent per year. Relating to the condition of American society at the time and the impact of the world War Two for Americans, Tindal and Shi. Although at the time most American enjoyed the prosperity, many American criticized the condition. Some American were also anxious if the cold war really happened. They were afraid if Russian with its nuclear would attack America.

Some Americans at that time were anxious because historically they have had bad traumatic experience of wars, that is Civil War and Worlds War I and II. When the civil war happened they still had a hope that the war would ends expressed in song "tenting on the old camp ground, waiting for the war to cease, waiting for the dawn of peace". But when America was involved in the cold war, some Americans seems to be pessimistic to see that the war would end at the time.

3.3 Satire to Artificial Value

The issue of Artificial Value or illusion becomes chief theme in The American Dream. Almost everything presented in this play is in the level of illusion. All the characters stand on the illusion except Mrs. Barker. Daddy, Mommy, and Grandma, and Young Man do not have name and it means that they do not have identity. The adopting of Young Man to be child is also artificial value in this play. The relation between parents and child is natural process but in this play it is not natural process because Young Man becomes Mommy's child through process of adoption.

The vanishing of room and water in Daddy and Mommy's house show artificial condition. The symbolic meaning of the life also suggest the artificial value. We can see it through the boxes and their contents. Symbolically, the real life is wrapped tightly in the boxes and all the characters play the artificial life. In relation to sociological and historical context of

this play, the presentation of artificial value function to confront the real life during the cold war. Americans were anxious to face with the cold war and their anxiety make them afraid to face the reality in their life so that this play presents Americans live in artificial world. Although at this age America was in prosperity, according to this play it is not the real prosperity; it is just artificial prosperity.

3.4 Satire to Alienation

In the Cold War era alienation in modern life become important topic criticized by many writers. Many of the best novels and plays of the postwar period reinforced Riesman's image of modern American society as "a lonely crowd" of individuals, hollow at the core, groping for a sense of belonging and affection.

Death of a salesman and many other postwar plays written by Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, and Tennessee William portray a central theme of American literature and during the postwar era: the sense of alienation experienced by sensitive individuals in the midst of an oppressive mass culture"

In the American Dream the sense of alienation is portrayed through Grandma's characters. Grandma as very old woman is going to be taken away by Van Man to isolated place. It is Mommy who has an idea to send Grandma away. Mommy's wish to send Grandma away is a sign to create alienation in this play. Grandma as the old generation of American seems to live strangely in the modern time. She feels isolated because she faces with the new style of life. Mommy's wish to have a child is the reflection of her alienated feeling because she does not have a child. She thinks that the presence of Young Man will abolish her alienated feeling. The creating of sense of isolation in the play function to portray a bad impact of modern life of fluent society in America during the Cold War or it is the portrait of the dark side of the economic boom.

3.5 Satire to Women's Domination

In *The American Dream*, we can see women's domination and declining of man's role. The image of women's strength is seen in the structure of the characters. Grandma and Mommy play dominant role, whereas Daddy and Young Man are presented in weakness. Grandma's character in the play seems to represent masculine figure. Here, Albee seems to make bridge of gender gap that becomes that significant issue in modern American society. Grandma acknowledges that her masculine role in this play: "I look just much as like an old man as I do like an old man" (p.859). when she tells about her successfulness of joining bake-off contest to Young Man. She says that her name is uncle Henry: "The 'Henry' gives Grandma a masculine dimension. The 'uncle' even associates her with 'Uncle Sam' that ubiquitous image in popular culture. It seems that in this play daddy as masculine character is weak. Daddy's weakness can be seen through his loss of sexual desire to Mommy. Daddy has lost his sexual desire because he has an operation. But, in this play the operation is not explained clearly.

3.6 Absurdity in *The American Dream*

Martin Esslin in his book entitled *The Theater of the Absurd* categorized Albee's the American Dream as the theater of the absurd. Since *The American Dream* is considered as the theater of the absurd, it is necessary to analyze it by using the standard of the theater of the absurd that is taken from Martin Esslin. In his book. He explained some convention of this theater¹: 1.) pure theater 2.) clowning, fooling, and mad-scenes 3.) verbal nonsense 4.) the literature of dream and fantasy, which often has a strong allegorical component. The four elements of the theater of the absurd above will be used to analyze the absurdity in Albee's *The American Dream*.

a. Pure Theater

In the theater of the absurd the language uttered by the characters is often meaningless because language is not considered as the only media to convey message to audience or readers. The performance of the character can also convey the message. The element of pure theater in *The American Dream* is seen through five performance, that is Daddy's and Mommy's waiting for identified them, Mrs. Barker's coming. Daddy's and Mrs. Barker's mimic, appearing boxes, and dim full light.

It seems that from the beginning the audience is invited to come into early suspense of the play. The suspense appears not only by language used by Daddy and Mommy but also by the activity waiting for identified them. Here, the activity of waiting becomes more important than use of language because the function of the language during talking to each other is only to take up activity of waiting. Therefore, the focus of this play is waiting.

Mrs. Barker's coming when Daddy, Mommy, and Grandma's talk makes more suspense of the play. Mommy acknowledge that she and Daddy are waiting for Van Man and Van Man is going to take Grandma away from their home. But actually there is no Van Man. She uses the word "Van Man" because she want to frighten Grandma. So, when Mrs. Barker knock the door, they consider that she is Van Man whom they hope to come as mommy states "we're watching; we're watching" but grandma argues it by saying "I am not" because she is afraid that Van Man will take her away (p.844). Here the audience is brought into suspense because if Mrs. Barker were Van Man, Grandma would be taken away and it would create sad condition. In fact, Mrs. Barker is not Van Man. In this case, this play seems to show the gap between what will happen (from the character's word we know that Van Man will come) and reality (the coming person is not Van Man). The difference between what will happen and what happen shows that there is no certainty and a man always faces with many alternative in his life and these notions are always conveyed in the theater of the absurd to argue the conventional thoughts.

The use of body language or mimic play significantly in the theater of the absurd. In this play, we can see the comparison between the significance of verbal language and non-verbal language through Daddy's mimic. Daddy says that he pays his attention to Mommy when she tells about buying that hat and how she exchanges it because of its color. Daddy seems to act his mimic by rote or he pretend to pay attention. But strangely, it is enough for Mommy. Here, we can see that Daddy does not like Mommy's story and we know this not from the use of the verbal language but by Daddy's mimic. Mrs. Barker's mimic with a secret smile also has significant role. Mrs. Barker express her secret smile when Grandma opens door and welcomes Young Man's coming (*she motions to Mrs. Barker who, with a secret, tiptoes to the front door and opens it. The young man is farmed therein. Light up full again as he steps into the room.*) (p.864) Mrs. Barker's secret smile represent that she and Grandma will play a secret and false game where Young Man will be adopted as Mommy's child. The secret smile could mean "a mocking" to the funny game. Since the use of mimic is very important in the theater of the absurd, the careful observation of non verbal language is very important in this play.

Grandma's whispering to Mrs. Barker also shows the importance of the aspect of performance in this play. Grandma whispers something about the existence of Young Man in relation to Daddy and Mommy. What does Grandma whisper to Mrs. Barker or what kind of the game do they both want to play? And why does Grandma whisper? Why is there whispering action? There are critical questions that will be answered in this paper. Whispering is a sign among the structures of the play, so we have to find its significance. It seems that this play wants say something through this action but he does not convey it through verbal language because we can see the verbal of Grandma's whispering in the written text of the play and in the performance on the stage we cannot hear the verbal language spoken by the actors. Can readers or audience find the meaning of whispering? I think the answer is yes. Readers or audience can guess that grandma and Mrs. Barker will play a game to Daddy, Mommy, and Young Man. But we can know this after Young Man meets Mommy and Daddy. Grandma and Mrs. Barker ask Young Man to be an adopted child of Mammy and Daddy because Grandma knows that Young

Man will do anything for money. In this play, the function of whispering is to ask readers or audience to focus their attention on actor's action on the stage. It means that readers or audience can understand the passage of the play not only through the verbal language but also non-verbal language.

The existence of boxes on the stage play a significant role in the level of pure theater of performance. When Daddy and Mommy talk on the stage, Grandma enters the stage bringing boxes. After that the existence of the boxes become important topic discussed by the actors on the stage. All actors are involved in the problem of the boxes: Grandma bring the boxes twice on the stage, Daddy and Mommy talk about the boxes, and Young Man bring the boxes out the apartment twice. But we are not well informed about the contents of the boxes. When Mommy ask Grandma about boxes, Grandma only says "That is nobody's damned business"(83). According to Daddy and Mommy Grandma wrap the boxes very well but Grandma herself acknowledge that "I didn't really like wrapping them' it hurt my fingers, and it frighten me.

Mommy is astonished because she does not see Grandma and her boxes. She thinks that Grand has gone with Van Man. In this case, Van Man refer to symbolic meaning. Van Man is a symbol of the death that will take Grandma away from this world. From Mommy's utterance we know that there is no Van Man and when Mommy says about Van Man to Grandma, she just want to frighten Grandma. In fact, Mommy herself is depressed with Grandma's disappearance and after Grandma goes out with Young Man whom is supposed to be Van Man, she never appears again (exceptionally when she brings Young man into the stage and when she say her epilog at the end of the play). When Young Man brings five glasses of the water, he can see Grandma but Mommy does not see Grandma's existence because she ignores Grandma and Mommy's attention is just for Young Man. It seems that when Young Man brings Grandma out with her boxes, Grandma supposed to be death symbolically. Therefore, the function of dim light here so tragic atmosphere because Grandma's death is coming. The dim light will create the suspense and make the audience feel the tragic atmosphere. In other words, we can say that the dim light function to create dramatic condition on the stage.

b. Clowning, Fooling, and Mad Scene

Clowning, fooling, and mad scene are words used to show comedy in the Theater of the Absurd. Comedy itself had been in development of the theater the tradition of commedia dell arte had influenced the writers of the Theater of the Absurd to create the existence since the people knew the Shakespearean's theater. The development of the theater the tradition of commedia dell'arte had influenced the writers of the theater of the Absurd to create the absurd condition on the stage, In Albee's *The American Dream* there are four examples of comedy in the context of the Theater of the Absurd, that is Mommy's action to exchange hats, Mommy's words to ask to take a nap. Mrs. Barker's taking off dress, and Daddy's and he Mommy's forgetfulness.

Mommy's action to change the same hat is a fool action. She changes the beige hat that she has bought because Mrs. Barker tells her that its color is not beige but wheat-colored hat. When she comes with anger to change the hat to the store, the shopkeeper shows her the same hat and tells her it is wheat color. Strangely, Mommy believes that it is wheat color and she buys it. This fool scene will make readers or audience to think why Mommy does it strangely. Mommy acknowledges "I can tell beige from wheat any day in the week, but not in this artificial light of yours. They have artificial light Daddy" (838). The appearance of this fool scene seems to function to depict the loss of certainty or the consistency in the mind of man in the artificial world. Everything is changeable and one Cannot keep a single concept of truth because the truth itself could be only artificial. Consequently, this notion will guide us to come into the absurd

It is a fool instruction when a daughter says it to her own mother. These words are only suitable for a child. But, in this scene these words are addressed to Grandma. In this case, it can be an ironic when a child does not respect mother as she is. This irony could refer to the lost of

young man's respectfulness to parents in modern age. Here, we can see the fool action presents not only to create comedy but also to criticize the bad habit of young men in modern society.

c. Verbal Nonsense

The term verbal nonsense in the theater of the absurd refers to the decrease of the use of language on stage because language itself is arbitrary and it often fails to match with reality. Consequently, the meaning is created more by functions of the actors rather than by the use of language. Theater of the Absurd has created a new dimension of the stage because it concerns on the freedom of using language, contrast language to action reduction of meaning, and abandoning the discursive logic. These make the Theater of Absurd different from the conventional theater. Analyzing the use of language in *The American Dream*. In *The American Dream* we can see the use of the cliché language when Mommy buys the hat in the store, she speaks like a child.

Mommy Use child rigger words. Mommy's words tend to be drained of feeling and meaning. It seems that she is not proper to speak like that because she is a mother not a child. Cliché language means the use of language to convey idea or expression that has been too much used and is now out dated. Cliché also means the use of platitude words. The use cliché language in quotation above is seen from Mommy's words which tend to be platitude by using the words many times. The repetition of the cliché automatic language means that language is used just to show automatic response ignoring the meaning of the actual language.

The problem of color of hat refers to the relationship between language and reality. The use of language in *The American Dream* says "Words don't necessarily match reality". When Mommy is told by Mrs. Barker that the color of the hat is wheat, she agrees and goes to change it. Here, we can see two kinds of color: wheat and beige and Mommy recognizes that she can distinguish them but because there is an artificial light she doubts to identify them "I can tell beige from wheat any day in the week, but not in this artificial light of yours. They have artificial light, Daddy" (p 838). Here, we can see that the reference of the color becomes obscure because Mrs. Barker's concept about color is different from Mommy's and shop keeper's. The obscure of the reference of the words means that words or language do not match reality or their reference. By presenting the dispute of the color, the play seems to show that the problem of changing hat is not to ask the color because to ask the color is meaningless. It means that language in this play tends not to function as expression-communication but it is just platitudes.

d. The Allegorical Elements

In the Theater of the Absurd, the play shows the absurd condition. Therefore, since the theater of the absurd seems to have a story, images and allegory plays significantly to depict idea or passage of the play. The action in a play Theater of the absurd is not intended to tell story but to communicate a pattern of poetic images. Theater of the Absurd is the use of mystical, allegorical and dream like modes of thought-the projection into concrete terms of psychological. In relation between the literature of dream and allegory.

Van Man becomes very important in this play because he is spoken and waited by other characters although he does not exist like other characters. The existence of Van Man in this play is in the world of fantasy and it is also an allegory. The close relationship between dream like and allegory seems to be effective to depict the fear of death. Van Man becomes the dream character in this play because he is fabricated figures created by Mommy to frighten Grandma. It is Mommy herself who acknowledges that Van Man is not really in existence. As stated before Van Man refers to death that will come close to anyone as it comes to take Grandma away. That is why Grandma becomes worried when Mommy talks about the coming of Van Man. Here, we can see how a death is an anxious condition because it will end one's lifetime in the world. Even though the death in this play is in the level of the dream or fantasy, it shows anxiety and even Mommy who makes up the figure of the death is also very anxious when Mrs. Barker tells that Grandma is with Van Man. It seems that although one issue is presented in the

dream hike or fantasy in the theater of the absurd, it becomes one of influential elements that help audience to know the significance of the play.

4. Conclusion

After analyzing *The American Dream*, it can be concluded that his drama contents satire and absurdity. The play is a literary reaction toward the condition of America during the Cold War by presenting social satire. Besides, this drama is also classified as the theater of the absurd because *The American Dream* presents the absurd condition in it. Therefore, we can say that the significance of this drama lies in two meanings, social satire as well as theater of the absurd.

There are four satires found in *The American Dream*, that is satire to American progress, satire to artificial value, satire to alienation, satire to women's domination. The American progress is criticized through the presence of Grandma and Young Man. It is found that Grandma refers to idealistic view whereas Young Man tends to be materialistic. The artificial value is criticized through the characters without names, the vanishing of room and water. These criticize the artificial value in the modern life. The idea of alienation is presented through the character of Grandma. It criticizes the sense of alienation in the life of metropolis. The satire to women's domination is depicted through the dominant role of women characters in the play and the weakness of men characters. This satire refers to gender gap in society at the time.

The American Dream as the social satire seems to criticize the American scene when American society was at the postwar boom in the year 1945-1960s and these satires also function to criticize the sociological condition of America and to attack the concept of idealism in the American mind. Although at the time America was at the age of affluence, many Americans criticized the social condition.

The characteristics of the theater of the absurd in *The American Dream* are pure theatre: clowning, fooling, and mad scenes; verbal nonsense; allegorical component. The pure theater is seen through Daddy's and Mommy's waiting for identified them Mrs. Baker's coming, Daddy's and Mrs. Baker's mimic, appearing boxes, and dim- full tight. Clowning, fooling, and mad-scene are presented through Mommy's action to change hats, Mommy's words, Mrs. Baker's taking off dress, and the forgetfulness of Mommy and Daddy. Verbal nonsense is seen through Mommy's cliché language. The allegorical element is seen through the existence of Van Man. He is spoken by other character. However, he never appears on the stage.

The presentation of absurdity in this drama seems to reflect the absurd condition in America after the post World War II. The birth of the theater of the Absurd in America during the fifties also refers that the theater as the social phenomena can explain the social condition at this age.

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