

THE ABSURD LIFE OF ELLIE CHU IN THE HALF OF IT MOVIE: ALBERT CAMUS'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the reflection of Albert Camus' concept of absurdity in *The Half of It*, a movie directed by Alice Wu. Through qualitative and descriptive analysis, the research explores the intersection of existential philosophy with contemporary narratives, focusing on the protagonist, Ellie Chu. This study employs thematic and narrative analysis to identify and interpret elements in the movie that reflect absurdism, providing a fresh perspective on the application of Camus' ideas to modern storytelling. Camus' theory of absurdity, characterized by alienation, the tension between the search for meaning and the indifference of the world, and the act of rebellion, is illustrated in Ellie's journey. Her experiences include navigating cultural alienation as the only Chinese student in a small town, grappling with her identity and unreciprocated love, and reconciling personal desires with societal expectations. The findings contribute to literary and cultural studies by highlighting how Camus' absurdity resonates in contemporary narratives, particularly those exploring identity, alienation, the immigrant and LGBTQ+ experience. By analyzing the interplay between philosophical concepts and cinematic representation, the study sheds light on the relevance of absurdism in understanding human struggles within the complexities of modern life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is an artistic expression that uses language as the primary medium to convey messages, emotions, and ideas to its readers or audience (Kasiru & Bagtayan, 2024). Literature comes in various forms, such as poetry, prose, drama, and folklore (Haq et al., 2024). One of the modern developments of literature is movie, which blends visual and narrative elements to create an immersive experience.

Movie is considered a literary form because it is able to convey complex stories with the use of dialogue, visuals, and symbolism. Movie as a literary medium offers a new way to explore themes, characters, and conflicts (Simatupang, 2023). Elements in the movie such as narration, visuals, and acting support the delivery of a meaningful story. In the world of cinema, many stories are adapted from classic literary works or designed with a strong literary approach. This makes movie a unique medium to understand and explore the human dimension and its emotions.



Like written literary works, movies have narrative elements such as text, plot, and setting. The text in the movie includes dialogue and narration that reinforce the understanding of the story (Nisa & Kholis, 2024). The storyline depicts the character's narrative, emotional, and mental journey from beginning to end (Utami et al., 2024), while the setting provides the context of the space and time in which the story takes place (Salam & Rahmad, 2023). These elements, if worked on well, provide emotional and intellectual appeal to the audience.

Alice Wu is one of the movie personalities known for her contributions to directing and writing movie scripts with profound themes, especially those related to identity, interpersonal relationships, and cultural exploration. Her debut movie, *Saving Face* (2004), received critical acclaim for its complex portrayal of the relationship between an Asian-American woman and her conservative family. This movie not only highlights cultural issues but also the courage to accept one's identity.

Alice Wu's second work, *The Half of It* (2020), further cements her reputation as a filmmaker who is able to capture the essence of human emotional struggles in a fresh and relevant way. The movie won the 2020 Tribeca Film Festival starring Leah Lewis as Elli Chu, Daniel Diemer as Paul Munskey, and Alexxis Lemire as Aster Flores. Produced by Netflix, the movie gained widespread recognition for its unique way of depicting the search for identity, relationships, and meaning in life in the context of adolescent life.

The concept of absurdity has become one of the interesting themes in literary works and movies. From ancient times to the present, absurdity remains relevant as a reflection of human uncertainty and conflict in understanding the meaning of life. Many movies raise the theme of absurdity, such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) or *The Truman Show* (1998). This shows the universal appeal to this theme, which depicts the struggle of man in the face of life's contradictions.

Camus' theory of absurdity emphasizes that human beings must accept the absurdity of the world without giving up on the search for meaning (Polii, 2023). This principle can be seen in Ellie's life dynamics which includes her complex social interactions, especially in her friendship and love relationships. The movie not only depicts Ellie's journey in helping her friend Paul Munskey write a love letter for the girl they like, but it also shows Ellie's inner conflict as she realizes her own feelings of love.

The author was intrigued by *The Half of It* movie because of its absurd depiction of Elli Chu's life. Elli is a character who faces identity conflicts, alienation, and fundamental questions about love and friendship. Elli's life illustrates how absurdity is not only a philosophical concept, but also a real human experience. The author wants to explore this aspect by using Albert Camus' absurdity theory to understand more deeply the meaning of Elli Chu's life.

Based on his interest in the absurdity of the *The Half of It* movie, the author chose the title "The Absurd Life of Elli Chu in *The Half of It* Movie Albert Camus Perspective." This title reflects the focus of research to explore how the concept of absurdity is applied in Elli Chu's character and how this fits Albert Camus' perspective on absurd life.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Absurdity Theory

The absurdity of Albert Camus's existential philosophy describes the human condition of searching for meaning in a world that does not provide clear answers. According to Camus, absurdity arises from the conflict between the human desire to find a purpose in life and the reality of a random and meaningless world (Adroit et al., 2024; Arinze & Onwuatiegwu, 2020).

Camus' theory of absurdity emphasizes that human beings must accept the absurdity of the world without giving up on the search for meaning (Polii, 2023). In his famous literary work, *The Stranger and The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), Camus wrote literary works in which he argued that human life is useless and meaningless because in the end man dies and is gone. The world that is expected to be full of happiness and clarity is also colored by suffering, pain, routine drama, conflict, war, pandemic disease, and death as a great mystery that humans cannot understand at all. These absurd things can only be experienced, felt, and lived without being explained (Widyawan & Putra, 2022).

2.2 Methaphysical Absurdity

Metaphysical absurdity refers to philosophical concepts that challenge the coherence of reality and existence, often revealing inherent contradictions in our understanding of the universe. Metaphysical absurdity arises when fundamental aspects of existence appear to contradict rational thought or established logic. It is rooted in existential philosophy, where thinkers like Albert Camus and Søren Kierkegaard explore the absurdity of life and the human condition (Kirkpatrick, 2015). Blocker argues that the literary problem of absurdity is basically a metaphysical problem of being, focusing on the metaphysical distinction of being as essence and being as existence (Blocker, 2012).

Metaphysical absurdity, as articulated by Albert Camus, refers to the conflict between human beings' desire for meaning and the indifferent universe that offers none. This concept underscores the fundamental disconnect between human aspirations and the silence of the cosmos, leading to a sense of absurdity. Key components of Camus' Absurdism are (Kirkpatrick, 2015): (1) Human Desire for Meaning. Humans inherently seek purpose and understanding in their existence. This longing drives them to explore existential questions about life, death, and the universe. (2) Indifference of the Universe. Camus argues that the universe is silent and indifferent to human concerns. This vast disparity creates a fundamental disconnect that leads to feelings of absurdity. (3) Revolt Against Absurdity. Despite recognizing the absurdity of existence, Camus suggests that individuals can find their own meaning through revolt—by accepting the absurd condition of life but choosing to live passionately and fully. (4) Freedom. This acceptance grants a form of freedom. If there is no predetermined meaning to life, individuals are free to create their own values and purpose. (5) Embrace of Life (Acceptance). Camus famously used the mythological figure of Sisyphus, condemned to roll a boulder up a hill only for it to roll back down, as a metaphor for human resilience. He concludes that "one must imagine Sisyphus happy," meaning individuals should embrace their struggles and find joy in the act of living, despite its inherent absurdities.



3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach with an analytical descriptive design, focusing on exploring Ellie Chu's absurd experiences in *The Half of It* through Albert Camus's theory of absurdity. The primary data consists of dialogues, prologues, character actions, and visual symbolism from the movie, while secondary data includes scholarly works on absurdism, film critiques, and philosophical analyses. Data collection involved multiple viewings of the film to identify scenes and dialogues reflecting themes of alienation, the search for meaning, and rebellion, alongside a literature review to provide a theoretical foundation.

The data analysis framework integrates textual analysis (examining dialogues and visual elements to identify absurdist themes), thematic analysis (categorizing key themes such as alienation and rebellion), and narrative analysis (exploring the storyline and character development to understand how Ellie's journey aligns with Camus's ideas). Scenes, dialogues, and visual elements were selected based on their relevance to Camus's concept of absurdity, with priority given to moments illustrating Ellie's alienation, identity struggles, and confrontations with societal norms. To ensure reliability, theoretical triangulation was applied by combining Camus's philosophy with insights from film criticism and literary studies. This approach enriched the analysis and ensured a comprehensive interpretation of Ellie Chu's life in the film, providing a robust framework to connect the movie's elements to Camus's theory of absurdity.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Albert Camus' Absurdity Reflected in *The Half of It* Movie

In the *The Half of It* movie, the concept of absurdity put forward by Albert Camus can be seen in the search for the meaning of life by the main character, Ellie Chu. One example of a prologue quote in a movie that illustrates absurdity is when the narrator states:

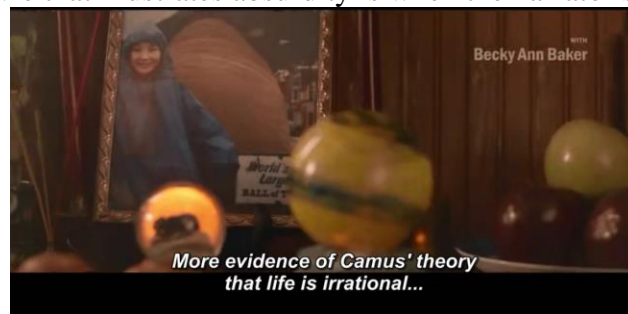


Figure 1. Transcript of *The Half of It* Movie Featuring Camus Theory (Scene 00:02:25,625 --> 00:02:28,916)

"More evidence of Camus' theory that life is irrational... and meaningless." (*The Half of It*, 00:02:25,625 --> 00:02:28,916)

An example of absurdity in the movie can also be found in the part where the characters talk about life choices and the decisions they make without really understanding the impact:





Figure 2. Ellie Chu Pondering Talking About Life Choices (Scene 00:23:25,791 --> 00:23:31,833)

"If you do ruin your painting... you gotta know you have everything in you to get to that pretty good painting again." (The Half of It, 00:23:25,791 --> 00:23:31,833)

This reflects Camus's view of the struggle to find meaning in life that can sometimes feel futile, but there is still hope to try again. In the *The Half of It* movie, Albert Camus's absurdity is reflected through the search for meaning and identity by the main characters who face uncertainty and limitations in their relationship. For example, in the following quote:

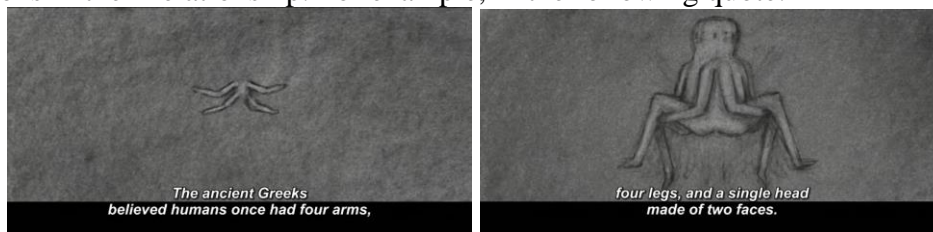


Figure 3. Prologue to Ancient Greek Philosophy on Duality and Fragmentation of Human Identity (Scene 00:00:23,916 --> 00:00:49,916)

"The ancient Greeks believed humans once had four arms, four legs, and a single head made of two faces. We were happy. Complete. So complete that the gods, fearing our wholeness would quell our need for worship, cleaved us in two... leaving our split selves to wander the Earth in misery. Forever longing." (The Half of It, 00:00:23,916 --> 00:00:49,916)

This quote describes the duality and division of human identity, which reflects Camus's concept of absurdity that humans seek meaning and perfection in life that ultimately does not provide satisfactory answers.

In *The Half of It* movie, Albert Camus's absurdity is also reflected through the main character's struggle to find connection and meaning in the midst of uncertainty and emotional isolation. For example, the following quote:



Figure 4. Ellie Chu Talks about the Meaning of Gravity (Scene 01:13:00,916 --> 01:13:03,666)

"Gravity is matter's response to loneliness." (The Half of It, 01:13:00,916 --> 01:13:03,666)

This quote illustrates how natural forces such as gravity can be interpreted as a response to loneliness, reflecting Camus's concept that humans fundamentally face alienation and seek meaning in interpersonal relationships.

4.1.2 Ellie Chu's Absurd Life Reflected in *The Half of It* Movie

4.1.2.1 Ellie Chu helps write love letters

Ellie Chu's absurd life is also reflected through Ellie's journey helping Paul write a love letter to Aster, but is hindered by his inability to truly understand love or build relationships. One of the dialogue quotes that reinforces this idea is when Paul says to Ellie that:



Figure 5. Paul Talks to Ellie about His Love Expression (Scene 00:12:31,583 --> 00:12:39,500)

"I know I think about her when I wake up. And when I'm doing my sprints. And when I'm eating my mom's bratwurst and when I'm saying my prayers..." (The Half of It, 00:12:31,583 --> 00:12:39,500)

This quote shows that Paul always remembered Aster in every activity but struggled to express his feelings of love for Aster. Therefore, Ellie Chu tries to help Paul write a love letter to Aster.

4.1.2.2 Elli Chu felt different from everyone else

Another quote that shows Elli Chu's absurd life in the movie is when Ellie gets ridicule from her neighbors:



Figure 6. Elli Chue being mocked by his neighbors (Scene 00:03:18,833 --> 00:03:36,958 & 00:27:46,470)

"Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the immoral persons. And everyone who loves and practices lying.... Ellie Chu! Chugga Chuguga, Chu Chu! (The Half of It, 00:03:18,833 --> 00:03:36,958)

"Who are you calling 'Chu Chu'? Shit, let's get out of here!" (The Half of It, 00:03:18,833 --> 00:27:46,470)

This quote shows how Ellie feels alienated and different from others around her. This is because Ellie is the only ethnic Chinese child in a small Squahamish town. Every time she goes to school, Ellie often gets ridicule. Paul is the only friend who defends Ellie Chu when he is teased by his friend.

4.1.2.3 Ellie Chu likes same-sex

In *The Half of It*, Ellie Chu turns out to have a crush on Aster too, and Aster knows that. This is reflected in the following scene.



Figure 7. Ellie Chu Kissing the Aster (Scene 01:36:00 --> 01:39:24)

"I'll see you in a couple years." (The Half of It, 01:36:00 --> 01:39:24)

The scene shows Ellie daring to kiss Aster. Aster responded to the kiss, then smiled afterwards.

4.1.2.4 Ellie Chu is stuck in a love triangle

In the *The Half of It* movie, Ellie Chu's life reflects the absurdity of Albert Camus through his search for identity and meaning in life full of contradictions and alienation. For example, in the following scene:



Figure 8. Scene of Paul kissing Ellie Chu
(Scene 01:19:38,125 --> 01:20:31,708)

Ellie: "What are you doing?"

Paul: "You don't want me to kiss you?"

Ellie: "No!"



Paul: "Why? Is there someone else? You like Aster? It's a sin. You're going to hell."
(*The Half of It*, 01:19:38,125 --> 01:20:31,708)

The scene above depicts Paul trying to kiss Ellie because he has a hunch that Ellie likes him, but Ellie refuses, the incident is also seen by Aster who is finally angry and disappointed. Paul knew Ellie liked Aster, but as an educated person in the church and conservative community, he couldn't accept it because he considered it a sin.

4.1.3 The Reason for Ellie Chu Live in Absurd Life

In *The Half of It* movie, Ellie Chu's life can be considered an absurd life according to Albert Camus's view because she is trapped in a complicated search for meaning and feelings of love. Ellie feels alienated, lonely, and has no clear place or purpose in her life. Here is an example of a transcript from the movie that shows the reasons why Ellie's life is considered absurd:

4.1.3.1 Search for Meaning

Some of the dialogues clearly illustrate the search for meaning in accordance with Albert Camus's theory of absurdity. Here are these quotes and their explanations:



Figure 9. Prologue of the Search for Meaning (*Scene* 00:02:11,416 --> 00:02:14,541)

"People spend far too much time looking for someone to complete them." (*The Half of It*, 00:02:11,416 --> 00:02:14,541)

This quote reflects the human desire to find someone or something that can provide meaning and completeness in their lives.

The next quote regarding the search for meaning is seen in the following transcript excerpt:

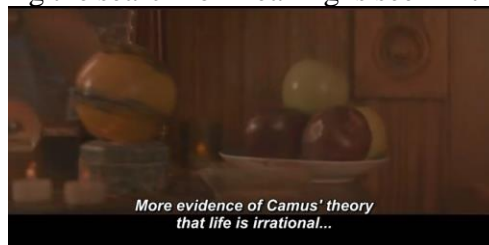


Figure 11. Camus Theory Prologue (*Scene* 00:02:25,625 --> 00:02:30,791)

"More evidence of Camus' theory that life is irrational... and meaningless." (*The Half of It*, 00:02:25,625 --> 00:02:30,791)

The scene above explicitly conveys Camus' theory that considers life irrational and meaningless.



4.1.3.2 Uncertainty in Love

The movie also depicts the uncertainty of love between Ellie, Paul and Aster who are trapped in a complicated love triangle situation. This is revealed in the scene where Ellie talks about love in the Church which turns out to be part of Paul's love letter to Aster written by Ellie.



Figure 12. Elli Talks About Love (Scene 01:29:11,250 --> 01:30:22,208)

"Love isn't patient and kind and humble.... Love is messy. And horrible and selfish and... Bold. It's not finding your perfect half. It's... the trying... and... Reaching and... failing. Love is... being willing to ruin your good painting... for the chance at a great one. Is this really the boldest stroke you can make? (The Half of It, 01:29:11,250 --> 01:30:22,208)

From the scene above, Aster feels disappointed and slaps Paul when he finds out that what Ellie said is a sentence from Paul's love letter to Aster.

4.1.3.3 Killing Time

Ellie Chu often accepts jobs by working on her friends' essays to pass the time. From this job, Ellie Chu earns money for the living expenses of her and her father, who does not have a job.

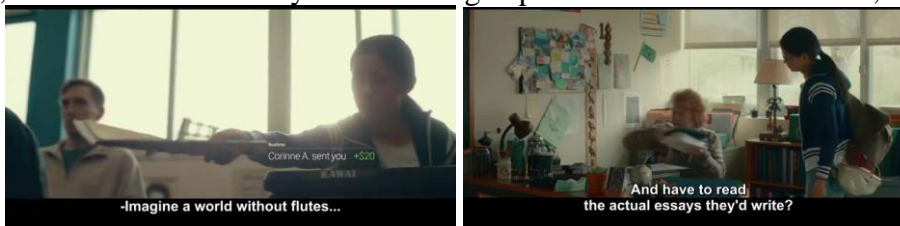


Figure 13. Ellie Chu Gets Paid for Her Assignment by Her Friend and Her Teacher Finds Out (Scene 00:04:19 & 00:07:01)

"And have to read the actual essays they'd write?." (The Half of It, 00:07:01)

The scene and quote above show Ellie Chu handing over the results of her essay to her friends. From the scene, it can also be seen that Ellie Chu received a money transfer for the results of her work. In another scene, her teacher found out about it, so her teacher scolded Ellie Chu.

4.1.3.4 Confrontation with Reality

The following quotes illustrate the concept of confrontation with reality in Albert Camus's theory of absurdity, which is reflected in Ellie Chu's life in the *The Half of It* movie:





Figure 14. Ellie Chu Talks About Chaotic Love (Scene 01:29:24,750 --> 01:29:36,208)

"Love is messy. And horrible and selfish and... bold." (The Half of It, 01:29:24,750 --> 01:29:36,208)

This quote describes love as something complex and full of contradictions, not just ideal or perfect. Ellie realizes that love is not always beautiful and seamless, but it can also give rise to great conflict, selfishness, and courage. This confrontation reflects the reality that emotional relationships are often fraught with challenges and uncertainties, in keeping with Camus's view that humans must face the realities of life that do not always match their hopes or dreams. Ellie must accept that love brings complicated and unpredictable consequences, which forces her to deal with difficult aspects of interpersonal relationships.



Figure 15. Ellie Chu Talks about Man's Unconsciousness of His Life (Scene 00:20:05,708 --> 00:20:09,541)

"What's surprising is people don't see what they're not looking for." (The Half of It, 00:20:05,708 --> 00:20:09,541)

This quote highlights the tendency of humans to be unaware of or neglect the important things in their lives because they are not actively seeking them. In the context of the movie, this can reflect how Ellie may not be aware of certain aspects of herself or her relationships with others until she consciously seeks them. The confrontation with reality occurs when Ellie begins to see and understand the truth that was previously hidden or ignored, both about herself and about the relationship she is in. This is in line with Camus' theory, where individuals must confront a reality that is often hidden or undesirable, and accept that reality even though it may be uncomfortable or painful.



4.1.3.5 Acceptance and Freedom

In Camus's theory, acceptance of the absurd can bring freedom. Ellie, in the end, must learn to accept her situation and find a way to move forward, even though her life is not perfect. This reflects Ellie's character's journey in the movie.

The following quotes illustrate the concept of acceptance and freedom in Albert Camus's theory of absurdity, which is reflected in Ellie Chu's life in the *The Half of It* movie:



Figure 16. Ellie's Optimism Faces Challenges (Scene 00:20:30,916 --> 00:20:32,916)

"I'll be reopen for business soon enough." (*The Half of It*, 00:20:30,916 --> 00:20:32,916)

This quote shows Ellie's resilience and optimism in facing challenges. By saying *"I'll be reopen for business..."* Ellie showed acceptance of the difficult situation she was facing and confidence that she could bounce back.

The next quote is related to Ellie's freedom to dare to face the failure of love.

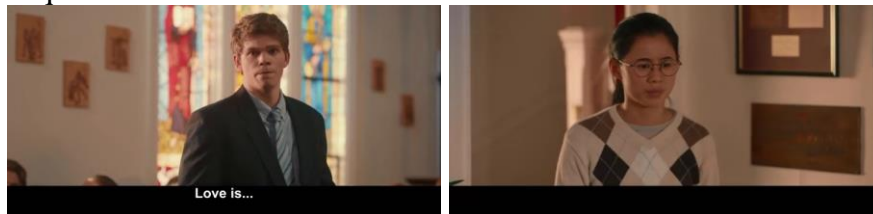


Figure 17. Elli Chu's Willingness to Face Love Failure (Scene 01:29:56,291 --> 01:30:05,208)

"Love is... being willing to ruin your good painting..." (*The Half of It*, 01:29:56,291 --> 01:30:05,208)

This quote describes love as something bold and full of risks, where one must be prepared for possible failure or damage. Ellie realized that in order to love sincerely, she had to be willing to leave her comfort zone and face uncertainty and potential emotional loss.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Albert Camus' Absurdity Reflected in *The Half of It* Movie

The study reveals how absurdism continues to resonate in modern storytelling by examining Ellie Chu's life through the lens of Albert Camus's theory. As societies grapple with issues of identity, alienation, and cultural belonging, Ellie's struggles in *The Half of It* movie serve as a microcosm of these broader human experiences. Her journey reflects the tension between personal desires and societal norms, shedding light on how individuals navigate the contradictions and challenges of modern life. This analysis demonstrates that absurdism is not confined to historical or philosophical contexts but is a dynamic lens for understanding contemporary issues.



Reflections on the absurdity of Albert Camus in *The Half of It* movie it can be seen through the characters and themes of the search for the meaning of life, especially in the relationships between characters that are unclear and full of contradictions. Concept the absurdity according to Camus states that human life has no clear meaning in nature, and the attempt to find it often leads to uncertainty and frustration. This is like the absurdity component of Camus conveyed by Kirkpatrick (2015) that *human desire for meaning. Humans inherently seek purpose and understanding in their existence. This longing drives them to explore existential questions about life, death, and the universe.* The characters in the movie, especially Ellie, seek meaning through their relationships with others, but often find themselves trapped in unsatisfying situations.

The main character, Ellie, experiences inner conflict and division within herself while trying to balance her own feelings with those of others, such as Paul and Aster. Ellie's attempts to understand and overcome these complex feelings show how life's search for meaning often leads to uncertainty and frustration, in line with Camus' view that life has no clear meaning and that humans must confront such absurdities (Kuncoro et al., 2020).

Ellie's character feels torn between her desire to connect with others and her deep feelings of loneliness, reflecting Camus's conflict of absurdity where the search for meaning often leads to uncertainty and frustration. Ellie's attempts to understand herself and her relationship with Paul and Aster show how humans try to fight the absurd by seeking relationships and purpose, despite often feeling dissatisfied or trapped in ambiguous existential conditions. Thus, this movie depicts how the characters face the absurdities of life through the dynamics of relationships and the search for self-identity.

Albert Camus's concept of absurdity, as outlined in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), revolves around the human struggle to find meaning in an indifferent and chaotic world. Camus argues that absurdity arises from the conflict between the human desire for clarity, purpose, and order, and the universe's inability to provide these answers. The key components of absurdity include alienation, where individuals feel disconnected from others or their environment; the tension between the search for meaning and the recognition of life's lack of inherent purpose; and rebellion, where individuals confront absurdity by accepting it and living passionately despite its challenges.

In *The Half of It* movie, Ellie Chu's journey mirrors these elements of absurdity. Her alienation is evident in her cultural isolation as a Chinese-American teenager in a small, predominantly white town. The tension between her desire for love and connection and the indifference of societal expectations reflects the conflict Camus describes. Finally, Ellie's decision to confront her feelings for Aster, even knowing the challenges and societal rejection it entails, embodies Camus's notion of rebellion, living authentically in the face of life's absurdities. By connecting these themes to the movie, the study bridges Camus's existential philosophy with modern narratives, providing a nuanced understanding of absurdity in contemporary contexts.

4.2.2 Ellie Chu's Absurd Life Reflected in *The Half of It* Movie

Ellie Chu's absurd life in the *The Half of It* movie, it can be analyzed through Albert Camus's absurdity theory which states that humans struggle to find meaning in a world that does not provide certainty. One aspect of this absurdity can be seen in Ellie's journey helping Paul write a love letter to Aster. Although Ellie is able to string together beautiful words to help Paul, she herself does not understand the true meaning of love. Paul's dialogue, such as "*I know I think about her when I wake up...*", shows Paul's difficulty in expressing love, which underscores the



imbalance of Ellie feeling disconnected from similar human feelings. According to Camus's theory, Ellie's actions reflect a futile attempt to find the meaning of love through others, which ultimately confronts her to the absurdity of life (Barbhuiya, 2023).

Ellie's alienation also arises from the ridicule she receives as an ethnic Chinese child in the small town of Squahamish. Quotes like "*Ellie Chu! Chugga chugga Chu Chu!*" shows how Ellie feels alienated (alienated) from the society around her. However, Elli Chu also often gets paid by his friends in return for helping to complete school assignments. This illustrates Camus's idea of humans facing a world that does not conform to expectations or identities they. Ellie Chu's feeling of alienation and difference from others is in line with a key component of Camus's absurdism, as explained Kirkpatrick (2015) that is Indifference of the Universe. According to Camus, the universe is silent and indifferent to human concerns, thus creating a deep disconnect between man's desire for meaning and the universe's inability to provide it. This disconnect is at the heart of the feeling of absurdity. Although Paul defends her, Ellie's existence in society remains a symbol of humanity's struggle against a hostile reality. In absurdity, according to Camus, the individual will not find justice or understanding from the world; They can only accept and make peace with the situation. This is in line with the view Müller (2021) that life is an endless search for meaning, which ultimately leads the individual to an awareness of absurdity and an inability to find true satisfaction.

Ellie's experience as a Chinese-American immigrant in a predominantly white small town also aligns with broader discussions about the immigrant experience in literature and film. Her alienation and struggle to find belonging reflect the universal challenges faced by individuals in diasporic communities. This study underscores how absurdism can provide a framework for understanding the emotional and philosophical struggles of immigrants, particularly in relation to identity, cultural dislocation, and the search for purpose in unfamiliar environments.

Ellie's emotional conflict also reflects the absurdity when she realizes that she likes Aster. The scene where Ellie kisses Aster shows Ellie's courage to face her feelings, even though she is aware that the relationship will not be easy to accept. In Camus's view, action Ini depicting a "rebellion" against absurdity, Ellie does not seek to escape from reality but instead accepts and expresses her feelings (Arinze & Onwuatiegwu, 2020). This is strengthened by the results of previous research from Arisa et al. (2020) which states This rebellion teaches that happiness is not about solving or escaping problems, but accepting and interpreting them as part of everyday life.

The love triangle involving Ellie, Paul, and Aster further strengthens the absurdity of Ellie's life. The scene of Paul trying to kiss Ellie and her reaction to seeing Ellie's relationship with Aster as a sin reflects the tension between conservative societal values and Ellie's personal identity. In Camus's theory, absurdity arises from the conflict between the individual's desire for meaning and an unanswered world order (Adroit et al., 2024; Arinze & Onwuatiegwu, 2020). Ellie is not only caught up in external but also internal conflicts, where she has to come to terms with her feelings and identity. In the end, Ellie's journey depicts the human struggle against the absurdity of life in a way that does not always provide a resolution but instead shows the courage to continue living in middle uncertainty.

Ellie Chu's internal conflict in *The Half of It* movie exemplifies metaphysical absurdity through her struggle to find meaning in a world that offers none, revealing the contradictions at the core of existence. As someone who yearns for connection, love, and acceptance, Ellie is



confronted by the indifference of the universe and the societal expectations that isolate her. Her cultural alienation as a Chinese-American teenager in a predominantly white town, coupled with her unrequited love for Aster, underscores the tension between her inherent desire for meaning and the indifferent or hostile reality she faces. Ellie's actions, such as helping Paul write love letters to Aster while suppressing her own feelings, highlight the futility of seeking purpose and connection in circumstances that deny fulfillment, perfectly embodying the disconnect Camus describes between human aspirations and the silence of the universe.

Ellie's eventual acceptance of her reality parallels Camus' notion of revolt, as she chooses to confront the absurdity of her existence rather than deny or escape it. Camus defines revolt as a courageous and defiant acknowledgment of life's inherent lack of meaning, coupled with a determination to live authentically and fully (Kirkpatrick, 2015). Ellie demonstrates this revolt when she openly confesses her feelings for Aster, knowing that her love may not be reciprocated or accepted by societal norms. Instead of resigning to despair, Ellie accepts the absurd condition of her life and chooses to move forward with resilience and self-awareness. Her decision to embrace her struggles, including her cultural and emotional alienation, reflects Camus' idea that individuals can create their own meaning by embracing life passionately despite its inherent contradictions. Like *Sisyphus* finding joy in his eternal struggle, Ellie finds a form of freedom and purpose in her decision to live authentically within the absurdity of her circumstances.

This study contributes to the growing body of research exploring the intersection of existential philosophy and LGBTQ+ narratives. Ellie's romantic feelings for Aster and her eventual rebellion against societal norms highlight the universality of Camus's ideas, even in narratives centered on queer identities. The film's exploration of love, alienation, and self-discovery provides a unique opportunity to examine how LGBTQ+ individuals face existential questions in the context of cultural and societal pressures. By applying absurdist philosophy to this narrative, the research broadens the scope of how existential ideas can be applied to diverse lived experiences.

By examining *The Half of It* movie through Camus's absurdity, this research bridges the gap between literary philosophy and cultural analysis, providing insights into the complexities of identity, alienation, and resilience. It not only reaffirms the enduring relevance of absurdism but also positions it as a critical tool for analyzing the human condition in diverse contemporary narratives.

4.2.3 The Reason for Ellie Chu Live in Absurd Life

Ellie Chu's reason for life in *The Half of It* movie can be considered an absurd life according to Albert Camus's view because he is trapped in the search for meaning in the midst of the uncertainty of self-identity and complicated feelings of love, which cannot be explained or fulfilled by the world around him. Ellie feels alienated, lonely, and has no clear place or purpose in her life. This is in accordance with the absurdity component of Camus conveyed by Kirkpatrick (2015) which includes Human Desire for Meaning, Indifference of the Universe, Revolt Against Absurdity, Freedom, Embrace of Life (Acceptance). However, the components of Camus' absurdity found in this study include the search for meaning, uncertainty in love, alienation, confrontation with reality, and confrontation with reality.



4.2.3.1 Search for Meaning

Ellie struggles to find meaning in her life, especially in the context of relationships and love. Camus argues that humans often seek meaning in a world that seems to have no purpose (Mayer, 2021). Ellie, who feels isolated and misunderstood, reflects this search in her quest to understand her feelings and relationships with others.

In this movie, there is also a prologue about Camus' theory which states "*More evidence of Camus' theory that life is irrational... and meaningless*". This statement is immediately referring to Camus' theory of absurdity, namely that life is irrational and has no inherent meaning (Camus, 1955). This confirms the view that human efforts to find meaning often lead to an awareness of the emptiness and meaninglessness of life. As conveyed by Arisa, Tang, & Hajrah (2020) in his research, the essence of absurdity is about the world and human existence that has no irrational purpose and meaning.

4.2.3.2 Uncertainty in Love

Camus emphasizes that love is often incomprehensible and can lead to disappointment, which is evident in Ellie's experience. In the movie, Ellie is trapped in a complicated love triangle situation, where she has to deal with unrequited feelings and unrealistic expectations.

The possibility of perfect love, reflects doubts about the success of the search for true love. This suggests the uncertainty that the love you crave may never be found, or very rare. This question highlights high expectations of love, which often do not correspond to the realities of life, in line with Camus's view that the search for meaning often leads to disappointment because the world does not provide satisfactory answers (Masi, 2023).

Love is a journey full of uncertainty and uncertainty, where the search for something perfect is often in vain. This reflects the absurdity in Camus' theory, where human attempts to find meaning and happiness in love often contradict the fact that life does not always yield the desired results. Ellie Chu in *The Half of It* confronts this uncertainty in her love relationship, which depicts an existential struggle to find meaning and satisfaction in complex and often unpredictable relationships.

4.2.3.3 Killing Time

The reason for Elli Chu's attempt to kill time is because of the existence of Ellie Chu's alienation. This alienation is seen in the ridicule he received as the only ethnic Chinese child in the small town of Squahamish. Mockery such as "*Ellie Chu! Chugga chugga Chu Chu!*" shows how he feels detached from his surroundings. To deal with this isolation, Ellie kills time by doing her friends' chores to earn money to support her and her father's lives. The scene of Ellie handing over an essay and receiving payment depicts Ellie's efforts to fill the void in her life with an unsatisfactory routine. In Camus's view, Ellie's actions reflect the way humans fight the absurd through futile activities. On the one hand, Ellie Chu gets money so that she can finance her life, but on the other hand, Ellie's actions violate the rules. However, Ellie still does it as a form of adaptation to a reality that is not ideal and to survive in the midst of her isolation. According to Camus's theory of absurdity, this action reflects an aberration in human life: trying to find meaning or purpose in a world that is indifferent to its existence. Ellie, although aware that her actions violated the norm, chose the path because there was no other alternative that was more satisfying in her life situation. This confirms man's rebellion against absurdity (Kirkpatrick, 2015), where



Ellie tries to stay afloat even though she is aware that what she does will not completely eliminate the sense of alienation she feels.

4.2.3.4 Confrontation with Reality

Camus argues that individuals must face the absurd and meaningless reality of life (Temiloluwa & Chuka, 2022). This is in keeping with Ellie's character having to face the fact that her life doesn't always live up to her expectations, and she has to learn to accept the uncertainty and absurdity in her life.

Ellie faces a complex reality and does not always live up to her expectations. She must accept that love is not always easy and must be aware of important aspects of her life that were previously unseen. This reflects the confrontation with reality in Camus theory, where individuals must face and accept the absurd and not always meaningful reality of life, as well as learn to navigate the uncertainties and challenges that arise from it.

4.2.3.5 Acceptance and Freedom

In Camus's theory, acceptance of the absurd can bring freedom. Ellie, in the end, must learn to accept her situation and find a way to move forward, even though her life is not perfect. This reflects Ellie's character's journey in the movie. Ellie's resilience and optimism in facing challenges. By saying that it will "*I'll be reopen for business...*" Ellie showed acceptance of the difficult situation she was facing and confidence that she could bounce back. This acceptance allows Ellie to let go of attachment to current failures or obstacles, giving her the freedom to move on with her life with new hope. In Camus's theory, acceptance of the absurdity of life, i.e. the fact that life is full of challenges without a definite meaning, gives individuals the freedom to create their own meaning and continue to move forward even without the guarantee of a satisfactory outcome (Shahnaj, 2023).

Ellie realized that in order to love sincerely, she had to be willing to leave her comfort zone and face uncertainty and potential emotional loss. This acceptance of the "messy" and "horrible" nature of love shows Ellie's freedom to open herself up to intense emotional experiences, even if it means having to face unintended consequences. According to Camus as conveyed by Mammadova (2024) that acceptance of absurdity allows individuals to live authentically and freely, as they let go of illusions of stability and certainty, as well as accept complex and unpredictable realities.

Ellie faces and accepts the reality of life full of uncertainty and risk. By accepting these conditions, Ellie gains the freedom to pursue authentic goals and relationships, even without a guarantee of success. This reflects Camus' philosophy that through the acceptance of absurdity, individuals can find personal freedom and create meaning in their own lives (Papadimos, 2014), even though the world around them does not provide a definite or satisfactory answer.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the continued relevance of absurdism in modern storytelling, using Ellie Chu's journey in *The Half of It* movie as a lens to explore issues of identity, alienation, and cultural belonging. By applying Albert Camus's theory, the research highlights how Ellie's struggles reflect broader human experiences, such as navigating societal norms and personal desires. This analysis shows that absurdism remains a powerful framework for understanding contemporary challenges, bridging philosophical concepts with the lived realities of modern life.



In particular, Ellie's alienation as an ethnic minority and her struggles as an LGBTQ+ individual underscore the intersectionality of modern challenges. Her journey sheds light on the universality of absurdist themes, particularly for those grappling with societal rejection, cultural dislocation, and the search for belonging. The study demonstrates how Camus's ideas provide a timeless philosophical framework for interpreting modern narratives, offering audiences a way to contextualize their own struggles in an ever-changing world.

By emphasizing the relevance of absurdity in understanding contemporary cultural and social issues, this research bridges the gap between existential philosophy and modern storytelling. It highlights how Camus's concepts of alienation, rebellion, and the quest for meaning are not just theoretical but deeply embedded in the lived experiences of individuals in diverse contexts. Ellie Chu's story, therefore, serves as a microcosm of the broader human struggle for authenticity and connection, reaffirming the enduring significance of absurdism in literature, film, and cultural studies.

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