

Critique of Individualism in Saroyan's *Hello Out There* and Williams's Lord Byron's *Love Letter*

The major thrust of this study is to examine how the notion of individualism and the knowledge of growth are called into question in Saroyan's Hello Out There and Williams' Lord Byron's Love Letter respectively. In Hello Out There, Photo Finish is already involved in a charge of mounting sexual assault on a woman who is supposedly a promiscuous lady. Believing in the charge leveled against him, police in Texas imprisons Finish. In prison, Finish implants in Emily's mind the impractical and pointless dream of escaping from prison and going to San Francisco. In Williams' Lord Byron's Love Letter, it tells customers in their salon that once Lord Byron had loved the grandmother when she had visited Greece in the prime of her youth. Actually, it was a wrong statement that the grandmother was loved by Byron. It is just a hoax or trick to make money by telling customers that the grandmother was once the beloved of Byron. The sort of individualism and progress they embody is a bogus one. Only when the matron and her husband run away without paying, the spinster and the grandmother are aware of how customers have seen through their fake and fabricated story. The researcher uses the theory of critic of individualism by using the theorist such as Alan S. Williams, Herbert Hoover, Lawrence Bobo, Mennell. Stephen and so on.

Key Words:

Individualism, American drama, self-deception, fragility and irrelevance, subversive, commercial endeavors

William Saroyan is a widely known American writer. Besides being a writer. Saroyan is a screenwriter, dramatist as well as film director. His plays have received a great deal of acclaim. In non-dramatic writings of Saroyan, the current cultural and political issues are handled. The

recurrent themes and subjects in Saroyan's works are limits of human experience, failure of dream and lack of social solidarity. William Saroyan was born in Fresno on the last day of August 1908. Saroyan was concerned with the basic goodness of all people. His novels, such as *Rock Wagram* (1951) and *The Laughing Matter* (1953), were inspired by his own experiences of marriage, fatherhood and divorce. Saroyan decided to become a writer after his mother showed him some of his father's writings. His first stories appeared in the 1930s. Saroyan's plays were drawn from deeply personal sources. Saroyan died of prostate cancer at the age of 73, in 1981.

Tennessee Williams was an American playwright. He is considered among the three notable playwrights of twentieth century American drama. He is a leading modern dramatist. Tennessee Williams tries to express internal realities in his play. Tennessee Williams was born on March 26, 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi. Williams had a complicated relationship with his father. Williams had started to write in his childhood and continued to produce short stories while working at the factory. We can see an element of the southern literary tradition in his work. He describes his society as a kind of hell of brutality and race hatred. In Tennessee Williams' drama, we can find the realization of tension and anxiety. Tennessee Williams revealed the pain and suffering in the heart of his characters. Tennessee Williams died in 1983 at the age of 72.

Hello Out There is a one act play by William Saroyan. The play was first performed in 1941 at Lobero Theatre in Santa Barbara. It was first performed on Broadway 1942. The play was adapted into a short film in 1950. The original language of the play is English and setting of the play is a small jail of Texas.

Lord Byron's love letter is a one- act play by Tennessee Williams. The publication date of this play is 1955. This play was presented over March 20-22, 2015, in a number of locations. The setting of the play is the parlor of a faded old residence in the French quarter of New Orleans in the

nineteenth century.

Hello Out There is a one act play by William Saroyan. In this play, Photo -Finish is preoccupied with material prosperity. He does not want to miss even a single stroke of time. He is bent upon converting even a short span of time into money. The plot of this play is simple and bleak. A young man is in the jail for an alleged rape of the Harlot. In the jail of Texas, there is a cook, named Emily, who is attracted to him. The young man enlists Emily to help him to escape so they can run away to San Francisco together before the husband and his friends came to the jail. The husband of Harlot comes with a gang of ruffians and kills Photo-Finish.

The killer does not care that his wife is a loose woman. On the contrary, the cruel husband shoots him. Photo-Finish and Emily long for freedom. They desire progress passionately. But their hope for freedom and progress is pinched in an unanticipated tragic course of action. The play closes with Emily taking the young man's position in the jail. Photo Finish's untimely and sudden murder and Emily's inability to reach Finish on time expose bitter fact that dream of freedom and progress is still foreign to a vagrant outcast. Even outcasts like Finish and Emily have the right to dream of freedom and progress. In Saroyan's *Hello Out There* American notion of individualism and idea of progress disintegrates in an embarrassing way. The main objective of this study is to show Americans notion of individualism and progress is contradictory and condescending. The so called progress appears as the dreadful situation.

This research project aims at exposing how the American concept of individualism critiqued by William Saroyan and Tennessee Williams in their plays *Hello Out There* and *Lord Byron's Love Letter* respectively. In *Hello Out There*, Photo-Finish is obsessively preoccupied with material prosperity. He does not want to miss even a single stroke of time. He is bent upon converting even a short span of time into money. He is averse to the abstract virtues like

altruism, empathy and mutual sense of cooperation. Despite the fact that he is a wandering here and there in the place he lives, he seldom feels depressed. On the contrary, he is bent upon making rapid progress on the condition that he comes out from the present imprisonment. While being on a pleasure spree, once he happened to involve sexually with a harlot. Morally, she is too loose to sleep with anyone who seems handsome to her. But a certain scenario happened in which he is blamed for raping her. As a result, he is put into jail in Texas. There he comes upon a cook in jail. She is a girl named Emily.

The husband of the harlot comes with a gang of ruffians and kills Photo-Finish on the spot, keeping at bay the charming prospect of freedom and progress which was going to accrue to Photo-Finish and Emily. The killer does not heed to the pleading of Finish that his wife is a loose woman. Contrary to the power of his pleading, the incredulous husband shoots him. Such a tragic scenario eclipses their dream of freedom and progress. The hope and dream which both Emily, Finish, the spinster and the old lady cherish lead them to nowhere. They are lost in the moment of immobility. They are stuck to the stasis of life.

In Saroyan's *Hello Out There*, Photo-Finish and Emily long for freedom. They desire progress passionately. But their hope for freedom and progress is nipped in the bud by an unanticipated tragic course of action. Photo-Finish had once casually slept with a morally loose woman. In Williams's *Lord Byron's Love Letter*,

The old woman goes behind the curtain and the spinster goes to the door. She invites the matron, who has come for festival with her husband. She notices a canary in a very small cage. The canary is not alive, but stuffed. Her husband is outside on the street. She wants to look at Byron's love letter. This letter was written to the spinster's grandmother, Irene by Byron. She met Byron on the steps of the Acropolis in Athens. He spent the final years of his wild life in

Greece. He was exiled from England because of shameful talk about his involvement with his half-sister. He was fighting for freedom. He fought against the unbelievers. He swam across the Turkish strait and he also burnt the dead body of Shelley.

The matron goes out to call her husband, Winston Tutwiler. The old woman then asks the spinster to watch them carefully. The matron returns with her husband who has been drinking and wears a paper cap sprinkled with confetti. She tells him that the ladies are going to show them Lord Byron's love letter. The matron introduces her husband and herself to them.

When the matron wants to know how her grandmother met Lord Byron, the old woman replies that she met him on the steps of the Acropolis. She asks the spinster, Ariadne, to read them a passage from her grandmother's diary. The spinster, then says that, like many other young American girls of that day, her grandmother went to Europe. The old woman explains that she was just sixteen and very beautiful and asks the spinster to show them her picture. Looking at the picture, the matron exclaims that she was a lovely girl and that she looks like her daughter. Then Ariadne reads the diary.

Near the end of her tour, her grandmother and her aunt went to Greece to study the classic remains of the oldest European civilization. It was an early morning in April of the year eighteen hundred-and-twenty-seven and they set out to inspect the ruins of the Acropolis. The morning was pure, new and fresh. The sky was clear. The sun was barely up. A breeze disturbed her scarf and the plumes of her hat reflected wonderfully. The papers that morning had spoken of possible war, but it seemed unreal to her. Nothing was real except the beauty and mystery of the ancient city.

The carriage stopped, at the foot of the hill and her aunt was not too good. She had a sore throat that morning. Therefore, she preferred to remain with the driver, but her grandmother started to

climb the steep flight of stone steps. Above her there was a man walking lamely. He turned now and then to observe behind him the lovely scenery. Actually, he was watching the girl behind him. Her grandmother was very much impressed by the greatness and grace of his body. He was Lord Byron, the handsomest man that ever walked the earth. When he had reached the very top of the Acropolis, he spread his arms like a young god. It seemed to her that he was Apollo who had come to earth in modern dress.

She walked slowly not to disturb his poetic imagination. But when she was close to him, he pretended not to see that she was coming. Then finally she faced him. Their eyes came together. He told her that she had dropped her glove and indeed she had. As he returned it to her, his fingers, lightly pressed her palm. Then she became quite faint and breathless. She did not know if she should keep on walking. She moved unsteadily and leaned against the side of a column. The sun was very bright and hurt her eyes. Close behind her, she heard that voice again. She could feel his breath.

After this, the old woman tells the spinster not to read the diary any more. She is asked to show them the letter. The spinster says that a short while later Byron was killed in action, defending the cause of freedom. When her grandmother received the news of his death, she went away from the world and remained in complete loneliness for the rest of her life. It was natural for her to do so because a life was completed. She wrote a sonnet to the memory of Lord Byron. The spinster recites the poem. The band grows louder rapidly and passes by carelessly. Mr. Tutwiler, roused from his unconscious state, goes suddenly to the door. He asks his wife to follow him. Then the spinster quickly asks for some money. The matron does not pay any attention to them. She says that she must go because her husband has disappeared in the crowd. They want a little money for the display of the letter. Actually, they earn their living by showing

the letter. The matron goes out. The spinster follows her to the door. There is unbearable light and sound. She closes the door and bolts it. The old woman says that they have gone without paying, and that they have cheated them. She is very angry. Then she tells her granddaughter, Ariadne that her grandfather's letter is lying on the floor.

There are four characters in this play Spinster, the old woman, the Matron and the husband. The Spinster and the old woman are in a dark living room. The Spinster is sewing and the old woman is doing nothing. The doorbell rings, perhaps someone has come to look at *Lord Byron's love letter*. In *Lord Byron's love letter*, the old woman and Spinster are involved in cheating people with a letter which they claimed was written by Byron to the old lady. Actually the letter was fake and was not written by the poet, but it was written by her husband. The old lady and the Spinster want to make money by cheating people with this story. They want to produce every impression that they are modern individuals who can offer nice stuff to customers at their parlor. But the reality is that they themselves are living under illusion. They think they are clever, successful and smart in running the parlor and earning money from customers. But the ground reality is that they are isolationist, escapist and irresponsible people. Similarly, in *Lord Byron's love letter*, the practice on the parlor of Spinster and an old lady is a pretension to cheat their customers. They are trapped in self-deception.

In *Lord Byron's Love Letter*, the old woman and a spinster are involved in cheating people with a letter which they claim was written by Byron to the old lady. Actually the letter was false. It was not written by the poet. On the contrary, it was written by her husband. The old lady and the spinster want to make money by cheating people with this story. They want to produce every impression that they are modern individuals who can offer nice stuff to customers on their parlor. But the reality is that they are living under illusion. They think they are clever, successful and

smart in running the parlor and extracting money from customers. But the ground reality is that they are isolationist, escapist and irresponsible people. Their idea of making fortune through deception and their trick of being appearing modern individuals are fatal not to the others but to themselves.

American notion of individualism and idea of progress disintegrates in an embarrassing way. Photo-Finish's untimely and sudden murder and Emily's inability to reach Finish on time expose bitter fact that dream of freedom and progress is still foreign to a vagrant outcast. It also outcasts like Finish and Emily have the right to dream of freedom and progress. Similarly, in *Lord Byron's Love Letter*, the practice on the parlor of a spinster and an old lady is a hoax to cheat credulous customers. They pretend to be individuals committee to make fortune. But they themselves are in illusion. They are trapped in self-deception. But even the authority of jail does not protect the life of Finish. As a result, he is shot dead by the husband of a harlot whom he had slept. American notions of individualism and progress are contradictory and condescending.

The so-called rhetoric of individualism has fostered insensitivity and indifference which can facilitate greater degree of violence in society. The danger of insensitivity and indifference are represented. The so-called progress appears as the dreadful situation of moral degradation. The failure and embarrassment result from absolute and unrestrained emphasis on the rhetoric of individualism and progress. The self-progress and individualism have rather weakened the moral vitality and inner spirit of American people. In *Hello Out There* and *Lord Byron's Love Letter*, the fragility and irrelevance of individualism will be treated as the specific areas of focus.

Hello, Out There reveals the adventure of Photo Finish, an itinerant gambler, who is

arrested and jailed in a small Texas town and charged with rape. The charge is a lie, but the only one who hears Photo's call for justice and understanding is Emily, a young girl who cooks for the prisoners. Photo gives all his money to Emily before a mob breaks into the jail and the lying woman's husband shoots him.

The self-progress and individualism have rather weakened the moral vitality and inner spirit of American people. The concept of individualism and notion of progress is critiqued by Tennessee Williams in his play. Tom Connolly, the leading critic of Mamet, is more interested in the dialogic side of Saroyan's drama. Connolly makes the following observation on the dialogic distinctness of Saroyan:

William Saroyan had a vogue that lasted into the Early 1940s, and wrote a few interesting plays. These plays question conventional modes of behavior. Most of his plays take place in a waterfront bar populated by collection of misfits in dreamers. The characters have their own moral code and reject the demands of social order to protect their own fragile world within the bar room. Saroyan's characters are life-affirming, is not a simple-minded optimistic. The harsher realities of lie and its frustrations are depicted by Saroyan. (4)

According to the above lines William wrote many plays. His plays are takes place in a waterfront. The characters are their own social order demands. And his play also shows optimistic towards the characters. Saroyan catches the fashionable trend in his plays. His style of writing dialogue is designed to produce effect. The dramatic effect is spectacular in comparison with the dialogic pattern created by other contemporary dramatists. Saroyan's dialogic form is innovative. Life-affirming and optimistic tone rings in Saroyan's plays. The dramaturgy which Saroyan uses is subversive as well.

Smith Mailer takes Saroyan as the most reliable critic of the materialistic trend of twentieth

century America. Mailer exposes the power of Saroyan's funny sense of satire. Mailer makes the following points of Saroyan's work:

In *Hello Out There*, Saroyan wrote with a natural easy going style that attracted a large audience among people who would ordinarily not read literature. Written during the years of the Great Depression, Saroyan's tales of middle and lower class of American life appealed to his readers, who identified with his characters in their problems. Drawing deeply from his own experiences, Saroyan did little to disguise his own voice in his writings. His work was too personal and his writing style had little structure. (7)

This extract says that *Hello Out There* talks about the middle and lower class people and their life style. It also shows the problems of American people through the characters. Saroyan's reliance on violence just for the sake of making a stranger to listen to his story is enough proof to show that American society is no less than a zoo. In the play it is futile to seek the grain of sympathy and communicative attention.

Tim Page is a critic of Williams who commented on the playwright's Lord Byron's love letter. He is of the view that this play is permeated with many strange qualities. Of all the works of Williams, it is unique and anomalous. Enumerating some unusual features of this play, Page makes the following observation:

Lord Byron's *Love Letter* is something of a difference among other works of Williams that it is better known for its librettist than its composer. If this work is discussed at all, it is usually as the Tennessee Williams unique work-the only extraordinary harmony the playwright produced in his long career. All of which is somewhat unfair to an auratic value that deserves equal credits for the work's obscurity. (1)

For the evocation of soft, appealing and mesmerizing power, this play of Williams is doubtless

and uncommon piece of Williams. Its mystic aura and magical style touch the core of every reader's heart.

Imageries and recurrent use of images as well as the interest in raising the voice of the marginalized are some of the recurrent trait of William's dramaturgy. Focusing on the aspects of William's dramaturgy as used in the majority of his plays, Glen Loney argues:

In the early years of William's success and celebrity, it was amusing to find some of the details and the imageries, as well as the character crochets of such memorable stage ladies as Amanda and Blanche. In other words, William's plays are shorter like fictions. Naked light bulbs were always best disguised with the artificial prettiness and romance of Japanese lanterns. And there were other repeated notes which evoked echoes. (79)

The insignificance of William's language reduces the readers to engage in sort of readings practices that lead to negotiation. The use of religious imageries, biblical analogies and the inclusion of the voice of victims give thematic support to his plays. Certain things that cannot be easily and comfortably accepted in the then society are expressed by means of the obscurity of expression.

Williams's dramaturgy plays of pivotal role in the modification and modulation of theme Focusing on the aspect of William's dramaturgy and its nexus to the thematic projection, Paul Jarvis makes the following view:

The certain images, certain kinds of characters, certain situations, certain surroundings, certain peculiarly southern patterns of diction were the things Williams knew and loved / hated best. Naked light bulbs were always best disguised with the artificial prettiness and romance of Japanese lanterns. And there were repeated notes which evoked echoes. (79)

The lack of clarity reduces the reader to engage in sort of reading practices that leads to

negotiation. The use of silenced and subdued the voice of victims gives thematic support to his play.

Although all these critics and reviewers discuss about *Hello Out There* and Lord Byron's *Love Letter* and arrived at different findings and conclusions, no one of them noticed the issue of how individualism and notion of progress are ridiculed and critiqued by Saroyan and Williams. The issue of the critic of individualism is distinct and it needs critical investigations. Situation does not favor Finish. Emily is handicapped to help her lover. Finish becomes the target of the husband's violence and merciless. At the same token, the old women and the spinster are involved in a self-deceptive fashion of making money by inviting customers on the strength of a bogus letter. They ironically think that they are smart individuals busy in the profitable venture of making fortune. But their ground reality is exposed. If an individual is encircled by countless numbers of challenges and risks, how can he hope to live freely and progressively? That is why the researcher conducts research on this issue.

Individualism is the main value that shapes and sustains American Culture. It focuses on the satisfaction of one's own desire and interest through self-reliance. Since the birth of individualism, it has been influencing American society. It has penetrated into every aspect of American life. Its core is to see personal value high above everything, putting personal desire above the interest of other people. So, individualism is the main means of their culture, society and life for American people. This notion serves as a tool for them to draw a boundary around themselves in order to separate them from others. The American Individualism is deep rooted in the American society throughout the history. For Americans, individualism encompasses the value system, the theory of human nature by which they enjoy their life. In the meantime, belief in certain political, economic, social and religious arrangements enables the American people to

pave the way for the enhancement of their thoughts and search for betterment in life. The core element individualism is the assumption that individuals are independent of one another. From this core, a number of plausible consequences or implications of individualism can be discerned. Hofstede defines individualism as a "Focus on rights above duties, a concern for oneself and immediate family, an emphasis on personal autonomy and self-fulfillment and the basing of one's identity on one's personal accomplishment". Similarly, Waterman defined normative individualism as "A focus on personal responsibility and freedom of choice, living up to one's potential, and respecting the integrity of others" (34). In addition, Schwartz defines individualistic society as "Fundamentally contractual, consisting of narrow primary groups and negotiated social relations, with specific applications and expectations focusing on achieving status" (140). These all definitions conceptualized individualism as a world view that centralized the personal goals, personal uniqueness and personal control- and sidelines the social. Individualism implies that creating and maintaining a positive sense of self is a basic human endeavor.

This research project aims at how the American concept of individualism and notion of progress are critiqued by William Saroyan and Tennessee Williams in their plays *Hello Out There* and Lord Byron's *Love Letter* respectively. The objective of this study is to show American notions of individualism and progress is contradictory. The so called rhetoric of individualism has encouraged insensitivity and indifference which can facilitate greater degree of violence in society. In *Hello Out There* and *Lord Byron's Love Letter*, the danger of insensitivity and indifference are represented. The so-called progress appears as the dreadful situation of moral degradation. This study is limited in the tracing of the failure and embarrassment resulting from absolute and unrestrained emphasis on the rhetoric of individualism and progress. The self-progress and

individualism have rather weakened the moral energy and inner spirit of American people. In *Hello Out There* and *Lord Byron's Love Letter*, the fragility and irrelevance of individualism are treated as the specific areas of focus.

In Saroyan's *Hello Out There*, Photo Finish and Emily whom the dramatist employed as young man and the girl throughout the play, cherish the fantasy of escaping from Texas to San Francisco. They jointly make a plan to get settled there in San Francisco after marriage. Both of them insist on creating proper settlement out of the chaotic and insecure conditions in which Photo Finish is particularly trapped. The following extract reveals the quandary in which they are stuck and how naively they try to see beyond the border of present confusion:

Young Man: I mean after seeing the girl-Why? You. I got something now. You know for a while there I didn't care

Young Man: I don't know why, but one way or another. Tired. (Pause) you are, that's all Where were you Tired of trying for the best all the born? Time and never getting it. (Suddenly) Hello out there!

The Girl: Who you calling now?

Young Man: You.

The Girl" Why, I'm right here.

Young Man: I know. (Calling) Hello out there!

The Girl" Hello. (3)

Finish runs away from his hometown to sidestep the probable harms that can accrue from her husband. Secretly Finish comes to Texas. But someone informs a police at Texas that Finish was involved in the case of rape; the police put him in prison. A serious case awaits Finish. In police custody, he is living hopelessly. Photo- Finish is now inside a prison in Texas. He had to run

away from his hometown because of the allegation leveled against him by a woman who runs prostitution house. Photo- Finish slept with her and sought to escape without paying her. Then the woman cries loudly and blames Finish that he committed rape with her. Moreover, there is a danger that any type of harm can come from the side of the lady who charged him with rape case. From every side, Finish is beset with insecurity, threat and despair. Yet he tries to get rid of all these setbacks because he is the sort of man who no longer likes to live confined and deprived life.

Herbert Hoover decides to distill from his experiences a coherent understanding of the American experiment valued. In his popular work, *American Individualism*, Hoover expounded and vigorously defended what has come to be called American exceptionalism: "The set of beliefs and values that still makes America unique" (1). He argues that America can make steady, sure progress if "we preserve our individualism, preserve and stimulate the initiative of our people, insist on and maintain the safeguards to equality of opportunity, and honor service as a part of our national character" (2). American Individualism asserts that equal opportunity for individuals to develop their abilities is the sole source of progress. The fundamental impulse behind American civilization has to be exploited with full attention. American Individualism is not simply a product of a dim and receding past. Hoover makes the following remarks with regard to the changing paradigm of individualism:

No doubt, individualism run riot, with no tempering principle, would provide a long category of inequalities, of tyrannies, dominations, and injustices. America, however, has tempered the whole conception of individualism by the injection of a definite principle, and from this principle it follows that attempts at domination, whether in government or in the processes of industry and commerce, are under an insistent curb.

(2)

If people would have the values of individualism, they must be tempered with that firm and fixed ideal of American individualism. American individualism is associated with an equality of opportunity. If critical mass would have their values, they must soften its hardness and stimulate progress through that sense of service that lies in our people. The ambiguity regarding the meaning of the term individualism arises from the confrontation of two random dictionaries and the apparent evolution in the definitions provided by these dictionaries. This makes it clear that further elaboration is needed.

The cell in prison house in which Finish is incarcerated is a reminder of a fact that the big, free and open world is alien to him. Due to his impulsive and thoughtless action he is enmeshed deeply in unfolding crisis. Yet he goes on cherishing the fantasy of being a free, settled and decent citizen. In prison house, he happens to befriend a girl named Emily. Emily is addressed as 'the girl' by the playwright throughout the play. Emily is a cook at a kitchen in prison. At first Emily is informally familiar with Finish. But as Finish's affections drift towards her, she could not help giving soft corner to him. In the wake of terrifying reality, they take shelter to illusion. To inculcate a dream on practical ground is one thing but to cherish groundless fantasy is a stupid thing,

Both Finish and Emily are under the illusion. They are not awake to the harsh reality. The following extract is illustrative of how detached they are from ground reality and how much lost they are in the cocoon of illusion:

Young Man: Ah, you're sweet. (Pause) I'm going to marry you. I'm going away with you. I'm going to what town you were in? Take you to San Francisco or someplace like that. I am, now. I'm going to towns are alike to win myself some real money, too. You don't go

up and ask somebody I'm going to study them real careful what town you are in. It doesn't make and pick myself some winners, and difference. How far away is we're going to have a lot of money? Wheeling?

The Girl: Yeah?

Young Man: Yeah. Tell me your name and all that stuff. (3)

Finish is steeped in the habit of turning back on some of the harsh and harrowing dimension of life. He transfers this dirty habit into Emily who also yields to the life-denying influence of Finish, Finish reiterates the rhetoric of romantic love. He convinces her that soon they would escape to San Francisco, marry there and would earn truckloads of money. Emily's job is limited in the kitchen of a prison in Texas. She is confined in the daily chores at kitchen. More than Finish, it is she who has stopped looking at life at face value. She is face to face with the despair and disappointment that life creates. But this power of Emily is corrupted due to her nearness with Finish. They are less concerned with how to score over illusion and embrace reality. They do their best in turning their backs to harsh reality and wholly drift to the direction of fake and fabricated illusion.

The fact that one of the definitions talks of social theory already suggests that we are dealing with a concept that has been discussed thoroughly by different people in different of periods of time. Moreover, all cultures are individualistic in different ways. American society is very distinctly associated with individualism. The importance of individualism in American society is immense. It grew historically. In this connection, Hoover says "Therefore, it is not the individualism of other countries for which I would speak, but the individualism of America our individualism differs from all others music which embraces these great ideals" (3). The majority of people build their society upon the attainment of the individual. They safeguard to

every individual an equality of opportunity to take that position in the community to which their "intelligence, character, ability, and ambition entitle him; that we keep the social solution free from frozen strata of classes; that we shall stimulate effort of each individual to achievement; that through an enlarging sense of responsibility and understanding" (3). Not only does the degree of individualism vary from one culture to another, it is also true that the nature of the term is subject to evolutionary changes.

If individuals take a look at the notion of personal freedom in general, that has been able to make their own choices in various degrees throughout history. This evolutionary change in the individual's freedom of choice has been identified by Talcott Parsons as a pattern in which there is "a process of 'liberation' from the control of previously constraining forces" (431). This is a process which is virtually always accompanied by severe conflicts. Naturally, these conflicts may be long-lasting, the outcome may be uncertain and success is not always guaranteed. Even today, violent public uprisings take place in which personal freedom (often freedom of speech) is a crucial issue. The modern revolution has been successful in overthrowing the establishment considered to be responsible for the limitation of personal rights. The role of instinct in the activation of longing for pure individualism is further elaborated by Hoover in the following extract:

The inherited instincts of self-preservation, acquisitiveness, fear, kindness, hate, curiosity, desire for self-expression, for power, for adulation, that we carry over from a thousand of generations must, for good or evil, *be* comprehended in a workable system embracing our accumulation of experiences and equipment. They may modify themselves with time-but in terms of generations. They differ in their urge upon different individuals. The dominant ones are selfish. But no civilization could be built or can endure solely upon

the groundwork of unrestrained and unintelligent self- interest. (40)

Hoover argued that one of the problems emerging from World War I was how European governments encroached on human freedom as well as individual and commercial endeavors. Hoover made the argument that this was not reflective of what it means to be American: 'We were challenged with a peace-time choice between the American system of rugged individualism and a European philosophy of diametrically opposed doctrines - doctrines of paternalism and state socialism. The acceptance of these ideas would have meant the destruction of self-government through centralization of government. For Hoover, rugged individualism communicated the greatness of individual freedom. Hoover believed that freedom from government intervention was the path for individual and social happiness. The problem of the world is to restrain the destructive instincts. These powers aim at strengthening and enlarging those of altruistic character. They pave the way for the modulation of constructive impulse for thus we build for the future.

Emily wants to ground Finish in reality. She reminds him that he is right now inside prison. There is not chance to escape from it. But Finish insists on escaping from the lot of incarceration. In comparison to him, it *is* she who is more pragmatic and prudential. He is far removed from reality whereas she is in proximity to reality. Going away from reality and dwelling on illusion, no stable individuality and consistent notion of progression arise.

But Finish is reluctant to follow this doctrine. The following extract is expressive of the relation of Finish and Emily with regard to illusion and reality:

The Girl: You just say that because you're in jail.

Young Man: No, I mean it. You just pack up and wait for me. we'll high roll the hell out of here to Frisco.

The Girl: You're just lonesome.

Young Man: I been lonesome all my life-there's no cure for that-but you and me-we can have a lot of fun hanging around together. You'll bring me luck. I know it.

The Girl: What are you looking for luck for all the time? (4)

Emily is out of place in the real world because of her shyness and sensitivity. She indulges in illusions about Finish also. For a short while, she comes in contact with reality in the last scene where she comes out of the shell of her illusions. Finish is a completely illusion-ridden character that comes in contact with reality for a short while and again he surrenders to the illusions. Finish tries to instill confidence in Emily by telling her to think of herself as superior in some way.

The illusion to which Emily and Finish are prone is simply a screen used by them to hide from the ugly realities of their daily existence. Such kind of illusion provides a temporary escape from the bitter and the harsher realities of actual life. People who are unable to face the facts of life result of such delusions. Finish and Emily are no exception to this rule. Despite providing a temporary relief from the tensions and problems of life, the return to reality is inevitable and shockingly enervating. The following extract serves as a case in point:

Photo Finish: I know I'm wrong, but I just don't want anything the hard way, working like a dog, or the easy way, working like a dog -working's the hard way and the easy way both. All I got to do is beat the price, always-and then I don't feel lousy and don't hate anybody. If you go along with me, I'll be the finest guy anybody ever saw. I won't be wrong any more. You know when you get enough of that money, you can't be wrong any more-you're right because the money says so. I'll have a lot of money and

you'll be just about the prettiest, most wonderful kid in the whole world. (5)

The present is reality and the past of gentlemen callers is an illusion. No matter how hard she works to keep herself in the idealized past, the intensity of the problems of real life draws her back to the present. When the world of illusion topples down, Emily remains a broken woman. Talking about the prospect of marrying Finish and making money make her forget the sorrows and problems of her present. She is very shy and has not been able to accomplish anything.

The reason for American's tendency to be individualistic is not hard to identify. The essence of Americanism was a reliance on the Constitution and the political system. It defined with a commitment to equal individual opportunity, self-reliance, and maximum individual freedom. Individualism has come to play such an important role in the life of the American people. With respect to the underpinning of individualism, Stephen Mennell tries to clarify the point in the following extract:

It is tempting to think that Americans say 'individualism' when they mean what the rest of us call 'selfishness': I find that it is all of a piece with using the word 'patriotism'¹ for what the rest of us call 'nationalism', indeed with a whole string of other modern American euphemisms such as 'contractor'; for mercenary, 'collateral damage' for killing innocent people, and 'enhanced interrogation techniques' for torture. (32)

In Mennell's view, moral judgments are beside the point. It is less relevant to debate whether the pride in individualism that forms a part of official American ideology embodies a moral misjudgment that to consider whether it involves a factual, sociological, misapprehension about the working of human society. A number of historical events have given the country an exceptional sense of self, the most important of which was the War of from which the United States emerged as the first independent colony.

Individualism is a nature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows. It draws Finish or Emily apart from his or her family and his friends. After he has thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself. Individualism as a kind of value system has passed the stage of historical development and has different explanations. Individualism is the main value that shapes and sustains American culture. It focuses on the satisfaction of one's own desire and interests through self-reliance. Since the birth of individualism, it has been influencing American society. It has penetrated into every aspect of American life. Its core is to see personal value high above everything, putting personal desire above the interest of other people. So, individualism is the main means for lives of American people. This notion serves as tool for them to draw a boundary around themselves in order to separate them from others. The following extract shed light on Finish and struggle to be individual who is tainted with criminality and amorality:

Young Man: Hello-out there! Hello-out there! (Pause) Hello-out there! Hello-out there!
(Pause) Putting me in Jail. (With contempt) Rape! Rape? They rape everything good that was ever born. His side hurts. They laugh at her. Fifty cents a day. Little punk people.
Hurting the only good thing that ever came their way. (Suddenly) Hello-out there!
The Girl: (returning). There isn't a thing out there. They've locked everything up for the night. (7)

It is difficult to finalize if the rape attempt is realistic or a false charge. Finish demonstrates no guilty conscience in regard to the charge of rape. On the contrary, he repeats the same words and phrase in San Francisco on the condition that he escapes jail. In the same line of his insincere rhetoric of mobility in individual life, he affirms the fact that integrity, obedience to social norms and other factors are of the least importance. Finish and Emily are supposed to accept social norms

and factors without complaint. They also have to fulfill some roles imposed on them. Both men and women were raised by the society which taught them that women were created for one thing and men for the other and that there should be no exceptions to that rule.

Finish is boastful of the fact that he still has the limitless scope of self-cultivation. He is confident that he has the capacity to flourish abundantly as a committed individual. But he feels so insecure and coward to reveal his true identity to Emily. His claim is belied by the ground reality associated with him. The following extract serves as an index to his inherent insecurity, fear and timidity:

Young Man: Photo-Finish is what they call me. My races are always photo finish races. You don't know what that means, but it means they're very close. So close the only way they can tell which horse wins is to look at a photograph after the race is over. Well, every race I bet turns out to be a photo-finish race, and my horse never wins. It's my bad luck, all the time. That's why they call me Photo-Finish. Say it before you go.

Young Man: Photo-Finish. (8)

The loss of Emily's family and kitchen work transformed her into a vulnerable, insecure woman. The new life she has to face made her even more miserable. She is increasingly charmed by Finish's rhetoric of individual and idea of progress which are hollow and weak rhetoric. The bubble she lived in her whole life finally popped when he meets his tragic end. Thereupon she realizes that the people created new belief systems, which she knew nothing about. Emily still believed in the whole system but continuously failed it as she was forced to obey the rules of the new world which the imagination of Finish creates.

These notions of equal opportunity for everyone, regardless of personal background or family lineage, were revolutionary, and as a result, there was a strong belief in self-reliance

and personal responsibility. Hinting at the associative impact of the ethos of enlightenment as the fertile site for the expansion of the idea of progress, Mennell says, “While the philosophers of the American Enlightenment shared much of their thinking with their European counterpart, the American current of individualism subsequently became more emphatic and more clearly linked to a rising nationalism” (4). Americans tend to think of the ultimate goals of a good life as matters of personal choice. The means to achieve individual choice, they tend to think, depend on economic progress. In addition to economic success, freedom is perhaps the most resonant, deeply held American value.

Before the final blow and buffet of tragedy knocks him down, Finish goes on nurturing the bogus dream of self-empowering and existential mobility, soon the untimely blow of death is going to put an end to life, but he insists on making life blossom in a flicker of second. He derives the greatest degree of pleasure from puzzling and disorienting Emily. Outwardly he harps on the tune of progress and freedom but the reality is that he has lost the potentiality for self-transformation as he is already charged with a sexual assault. The following extract works as a living example of how much gap widens between Finish's longing for fake sense of perfection and a haunting grinding mill that is put round his neck:

The Girl: Nobody anywhere loves anybody as much as I love you.

Young Man: (shouting, as if to the world). You see? Hearing you say that, a man could die and still be ahead of the game. Now, hurry. And don't forget, if I'm not here when you come back; get the hell to San Francisco where you'll have a chance. Do you hear me?

(The girl stands a moment looking at him, then backs away, turns and runs. The young man stares after her, troubled and smiling. Then he turns away from the image of her and walks about like a lion in a cage. (10)

Something was wrong with the world they were living in and that some changes had to be made. Even though it may seem like she escaped the life that was imposed on her since the early childhood. Finish and Emily have *some* standards which they had to obtain. Yet, they do not seem to have a problem with that. They do not have problems with the society because they conformed to it and lived by the rules willingly. When the life she created on her own is observed better, it can be concluded that she actually never escaped anything. She only ended up having almost exactly the same life as the one that was imposed on her.

Another Man: O.K. Open the cell, Harry. (The third man goes to the cell door, unlocks it, and swings it open.) (A woman comes running in)

The Woman: Where is he? I want to see him. Is he dead? (Looking down at him, as the MEN pick him up) There he is, (Pause) Yeah, that's him. (Her husband looks at her with contempt, then at the dead man.)

The Man: (trying to laugh). All right - let's get it over with (12)

The matron and her husband appear to be innocent believers in the stunt performed by the spinster and her grandmother. At the end of the play, they are awake to the terrifying reality. In *Lord Byron's Love Letter*, the spinster is a woman of forty named Ariadne who is under the veil of illusion. She is driven by the false sense of progress which she wants to score over through certain antics. The old woman who is her grandmother is also equally clever to cheat people. To make money they can go to any extent of mythologizing her trivial romantic past. The spinster and her grandmother are driven by the fake idea of progress and they claim to teach romantically deluded youths the fruitless lesson.

In the initial part of the play, the spinster and the old woman live in a dark living room. The spinster is sewing. The old woman is doing nothing. The doorbell rings. Perhaps someone

has come to look at Lord Byron's love letter. The old woman goes behind the curtain. The spinster goes to the door. She invites the matron. The matron has come for festival with her husband. She notices a canary in a very small cage. The canary is not alive. It is stuffed. Her husband is outside on the street. The stuffed canary is suggestive of the fact that the world which the spinster and the grandmother demonstrate is fake, static, unrealistic and groundless. It betokens the dead, retrogressive notion of progress, mobility and the condition of being a free individual. The following extract is illustrative of how far the spinster and her grandmother are deluded and delusional:

Spinster: She wants to look at Byron's love letter. This letter was written to the spinster's grandmother. She met Byron on the steps of the Acropolis in Athens. He spent the final years of his wild life in Greece.

Matron: He was exiled from England because of shameful talk about his involvement with his half-sister. He was fighting for freedom. He fought against the unbelievers. He swam across the Turkish strait and he also burnt the dead body of Shelley. (7)

The matron goes out to call her husband, Winston Tutwiler. The old woman then asks the spinster to watch them carefully. The matron returns with her husband who has been drinking. He wears a paper cap sprinkled with confetti. She tells him that the ladies are going to show them *Lord Byron's love letter*.

It turns out that for many Americans freedom primarily means being left alone by others. Other people's values, ideas, or styles of life are forced upon one. It appears to be free of arbitrary authority in work, family and political life. Yet, Americans feel that to be free is much more than being left alone. Most importantly, it refers to the fact that "you are free to define yourself, to be your own person free from the demands of conformity to family, friends, or

community' (Hoover 34). In short, to be free is to be able to pursue happiness in whatever way you want. Of course, this can also be applied to the economic sphere in that freedom is strongly linked to the notion of free enterprise. Americans feel they should be free to do whatever they want to improve their material circumstances. Americans live by the belief that striving for success is the normal condition of life, and those individuals are obliged to attempt to improve themselves and their circumstances. Naturally, this also means that an individual is free from people who have economic power over him or her.

The American consensus on individualism may be less dominant than it appears. There was no across class consensus on individualism. Instead, social stability rested on the internally conflicted views of the working class that sometimes, but neither consistently nor in a highly politicized way, supported inequality- challenging ideas. Popular beliefs about inequality, especially the likely priority an individual attaches to democratic or to individualistic beliefs, should be influenced by position in the social structure. In this connection it is worthwhile to cite Mennell briefly to throw light on the problematic aspect of the idea of individualism. He makes the following claim:

The spirit of this arbitrary act entered into the idea of individualism as it was developed, especially in relation to economic activities and vested rights. When it reached full formulation the idea embraced several very concrete affirmations, such as the following: Society is merely an aggregation of individuals struggling for existence competitively. The qualities or talents of the individual which prepare him for that struggle are to be attributed solely to personal merits and efforts; the individual is self-made. (33)

Most individuals probably hold both beliefs to some degree but differ, on the basis of their position in the social structure, as to which is more central to their thinking. Both underlying

values and policy preferences in the mass public would be more divided and complex than suggested by the consensus on individualism hypothesis of belief. Three findings reported below support a revised view of the importance of what we interpret as one form of equality namely, a sense of social responsibility.

The matron introduces her husband and herself to them. When the matron wants to know how her grandmother met Lord Byron, the old woman replies that "she met him on the steps of the Acropolis. She asks the spinster, Ariadne, to read them a passage from her grandmother's diary" (7). The spinster then says that, like many other young American girls of that day, her grandmother went to Europe. The old woman explains that she was just sixteen. She was very beautiful. She asks the spinster to show them her picture. Looking at the picture, the matron exclaims that she was a lovely girl. She exclaims that she looks like her daughter.

The Spinster goes on narrating the fabricated and fake story of romance. Near the end of her hour, her grandmother and her aunt went to Greece to study the classic remains of the oldest European civilization. Taking the persuasive tone, she narrates:

It was an early morning in Aril of the year eighteen hundred-and-twenty-seven and they set out to inspect the ruins of the Acropolis. The morning was pure, new and fresh. The sky was clear. The sun was barely up. A breeze disturbed her scarf and the plumes of her hat reflected wonderfully. The papers that morning had spoken of possible war, but it seemed unreal to her. Nothing was real except the beauty and mystery of the ancient city.

(8)

The old woman goes behind the curtain and the spinster goes to the door. She invites the matron, who has come for festival with her husband. She notices a canary in a very small cage. The canary is not alive, but stuffed. Her husband is outside on the street. She wants to look at Byron's

love letter. This letter was written to the spinster's grandmother, Irene by Byron. She met Byron on the steps of the Acropolis in Athens. He spent the final years of his wild life in Greece. He was exiled from England because of shameful talk about his involvement with his half-sister. He was fighting for freedom. He fought against the unbelievers. He swam across the Turkish strait and he also burnt the dead body of Shelley.

The carriage stopped. At the foot of the hill, her aunt was not too good. She had a sore throat that morning. Therefore, she preferred to remain with the driver. But her grandmother started to climb the steep flight of stone steps. Above her there was a man walking lamely. He turned now and then to observe behind him the lovely scenery. Actually, he was watching the girl behind him. Her grandmother was very much impressed by the greatness and grace of his body.

Individualistic beliefs in American political ideologies cohere around the ideas that opportunities in life are "widely available and are largely unconstrained by the background attributes of individuals. Thus, any resulting inequality is seen as fair because individual effort and ability meet with appropriate rewards' (Bobo 73). People holding these beliefs stress self-reliance and the fairness of the existing distribution of rewards. Highlighting this side of reasoning in the context of promoting the notion of individualism and progress, Bobo argues:

The consensus on individualism hypothesis maintains that individualistic beliefs are widely accepted, deeply rooted, and therefore very influential on policy attitudes.

Although never entirely discounting a role for egalitarianism, researchers in this tradition argued that individual freedom and responsibility are the most fundamental of American values and that individualism reigns as a stable "dominant ideology" in the United States, with egalitarianism functioning as a weaker "challenging" belief. (73)

Individualism does appear implicated in policy attitudes. Studies of racial attitudes suggest that individualistic beliefs promote resistance to equal opportunity policies. People whose attitudes blend anti-black affect and belief that blacks violate such values as hard work and self-reliance are more likely to oppose black candidates for political office. Whites whose explanation of black-white inequality faults the individual dispositions. Media treatment of the affirmative action issue also reflects values of self-reliance and individualism.

Social responsibility is a distinct dimension independent of individualism. People committed to social responsibility support expanded racial and welfare policies despite the concurrent influence of individualist beliefs. One reason social responsibility beliefs fail to carry their full weight in political dialogue is that those people who are most committed to such ideas are also disproportionately located among politically weak and less active segments of the population.

The man who displayed greatness and grace is none other than Lord Byron. He is the most handsome man she has found so far in her life. When he had reached the very top of the Acropolis, he spread his arms like a young god. It seemed to her that he was Apollo who had come to earth in modern dress. She walked slowly not to disturb his poetic imagination. But when she was close to him, he pretended not to see that she was coming. The pretentious romantic gimmick is revealed in the following extract:

The grandmother: Then finally she faced him. Their eye came together. He told her that she had dropped her glove and indeed she had. As he returned it to her, his fingers lightly pressed her palm. Then she became quite faint and breathless. She did not know if she should keep on walking. She moved unsteadily and leaned against the side of a column. The sun was very bright and hurt her eyes. Close behind her, she heard that voice again.

She could feel his breath. (9)

The old woman tells the spinster not to read the diary any more. She is asked to show them the letter. The spinster says that a short while later Byron was killed in action. She is bent on defending the cause of freedom. When her grandmother received the news of his death, she went away from the world. She remained in complete loneliness for the rest of her life. It was natural for her to do so because a life was completed.

To console herself, she indulged in writing sonnets in memory of Lord Byron. Actually, it is a false and fake narration made to woo and deceive innocent customers. The spinster recites the poem. The band grows louder rapidly and passes by carelessly. The very gesture of disapproval on the part of Mr. Turwiler is enough to expose the limit of trickery practiced by the spinster and her grandmother. The following extract gives an inkling of the gradual exposition of hoax:

Mr. Tutwiler roused from his unconscious state, goes suddenly to the door. He asks his wife to follow him. Then the spinster quickly asks for some money. The matron does not pay any attention to them. She says that she must go because her husband has disappeared in the crowd. They want a little money for the display of the letter. Actually, they earn their living by showing the letter.

The matron: She goes out. The spinster follows her to the door. There is unbearable light and sound. She closes the door and bolts it. The old woman says that they have gone without paying, and that they have cheated them. She is very angry. Then she tells her granddaughter, Ariadne that her grandfather's letter is laying on the floor. (11)

A matron and her husband Mr. Tutwiller came from Milwaukee for Mardi Gras. On seeing the sign in the door, the matron is curious to see Lord Byron's love letter. She entered their house and

asked the letter, the spinster explained her that Lord Byron had written the letter to her grandmother Irene Marguerite De Poitevent. When she was sixteen Byron met her on the steps of the Acropolis in Athens Byron went into voluntary exile from England because of his heretical remarks in the Regents court. In Greece, he fought for the promotion of the independence of Greece from the authoritarian rule of Turkey. Irene met him there while she had gone to study about the ancient Europe civilization. Byron met her and conveyed his love. Unfortunately, he was killed in a battle. So the grandmother wanted spends the rest of his life in complete isolation. In the meantime Martons husband came there in a fully drunken state. He disturbed them. In the end the spinster showed the *Love Letter* of Byron from a distance and asked for some money. Her real ethos is revealed.

Both the spinster and the grandmother have the tricky and shrewd method of making money. They rely on lie to make money. They have been making money by cheating customers with the fake and fabricated story of the romantic encounter between Byron and the grandmother when she was in the prime of her youth. But there is no way accepting that this is the wrong idea of making progress. Of course they are free to choose their profession in whichever way they like. But the wrongful and deceptive way has its own cost. They are under the veil of illusion. The idea of being a free individual involved in the profession as per their interest is by no means acceptable.

To cut the whole matter short, both the plays, *Hello Out There* and *Lord Byron's Love Letter*, put the issue of the fake notion of individuality and amoral notion of progress. The activities done by Finish in *Hello Out There* and a sort of cheating practiced by the spinster and the grandmother in *Lord Byron's Love Letter* are enough support the issue at hand. In non-dramatic writings of Saroyan, the current cultural and political issues are handled. The recurrent

themes and subjects in Saroyan's works are limits of human experience, failure of dream and lack of social solidarity. American notion of individualism and idea of progress disintegrates in an embarrassing, way. Photo-Finish's untimely and sudden murder and Emily's inability to reach Finish on time expose bitter fact that dream of freedom and progress is still foreign to a vagrant outcast. It also outcasts like Finish and Emily have the right to dream of freedom and progress.

In Lord Byron's *Love Letter*, the practice on the parlor of a spinster and an old lady is a hoax to cheat credulous customers. They pretend to be individuals committee to make fortune. But they themselves are in illusion. They are trapped in self-deception. But even the authority of jail does not protect the life of Finish. As a result, he is shot dead by the husband of a harlot whom he had slept. American notions of individualism and progress are contradictory and condescending. The so-called rhetoric of individualism has fostered insensitivity and indifference which can facilitate greater degree of violence in society. The danger of insensitivity and indifference are represented. The so-called progress appears as the dreadful situation of moral degradation. The failure and embarrassment result from absolute and unrestrained emphasis on the rhetoric of individualism and progress. The self-progress and individualism have rather weakened the moral vitality and inner spirit of American people.

Williams' play *Lord Byron's Love Letter* has four characters: The Spinster, The Old Woman, The Matron, and The Husband. The Old Woman and the Spinster live in an old and faded house in New Orleans. They advertise that they have a love letter from Lord Byron, written to The Spinster's grandmother. They charge money to anyone who wants to see it and hear them tell the tale of how this meeting took place. A Matron visits them to see the letter. She is in town with her husband for Mardi Gras. Her husband Winston Tutwiler is drunken and uninterested in the letter. As the spinster reads from her grandmother's diary, it becomes clear

that the grandmother and the old women are one and the same. According to the two women, the grandmother met Lord Byron in Greece, shortly before his death. The Spinster reads aloud the meeting of Lord Byron and her grandmother from the journal. They only allow The Matron and her Husband to look at the letter from a distance. When Winston Tutwiler hears the band of Mardi Gras festival, he raises from his unconscious state and rushes out of the house. He is a man who wants to forget ugly reality and live in an illusory unconscious state. The Matron also follows him. Then the spinster quickly asks for some money. The Matron does not pay any attention to them and rushes out without paying. This upset them because they had created a fake letter in order to earn money and survive.

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