

Chapter I: General Introduction

Edward Albee is one of the most prominent American dramatists. He undoubtedly holds a place beside Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. He was born in Washington on March 12, 1928. Two weeks after his birth, he was adopted by a wealthy owner of the famous Albee theatre named Reed Albee, who introduced Edward to the theater at an early age. He had a deep seated resentment against his natural parents for abandoning him.

Albee's interest in illiteracy career dates back to his childhood at the age of six with a handful of poems. He struggled with it for the next twenty years without any hallmark achievement. Having tried for the writing of poetry and short story, he turned to play writing. He wrote a three-act farce entitled *Aliqueen* when he was only twelve. At his teens, he wrote a play entitled *Schism*, which was published in the Choate literary magazine in 1940. It was a romantic melodrama of love, showing two young persons discarding their social and familial responsibility in search of happiness. With *The Zoo Story*, Albee established himself as a voice in contemporary American literature in 1960s. *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) is considered to be one of the masterpieces which represents a concentrated satirical attack on the American myth of perfection of its ideals, its families, its progress. *The American Dream* (1961) is considered to be one of the masterpieces, which presents a satirical attack on American society.

Albee's *The American Dream* attacks many values that traditionally comprise the dream: marriage, professional success, wealth, emptiness and so on. It was produced in New York in 1961 and was immediately a great success. In spite of it, it provoked much controversy among critics and audiences. The play was a great success. In spite of it, it provoked much controversy among critics and audiences. The

play has brilliance and a sustained dramatic quality. . The main aspect of the play is a combination of reality and imagination. The play symbolizes the world, where love and life, and passions and the creative act are machine made.

The title of the proposed thesis is "Disintegration of moral value in Albee's *The American Dream*." The present research aims to study the play mainly as an example of absurd theatre, with a proposition to search the disintegration of moral values in this absurd universe. By rejecting the conventional notion of sequential and logical plot, dialogue, action and thought, and realistic characters and setting, an absurd play comprises a series of free-floating images and disjointed events in a non-linear plot. It lacks a centre which conventionally operates the system in the fictional world. In this play, moral values are the traditional socio-cultural standards, which encourage and expect human beings to behave responsibly for the smooth and sustained functioning of the society. These are the codes of conduct which aim at establishing social order and achieving the ideal of society. These values are instrumental in getting people socially eligible, faithful to proven institutions in all spheres of life: cultural political, economic, social, professional and the similar.

In addition to standing for official set standards of society at large, moral value also encompass individual conscience independent of social prosperity. Personal conscience itself distinguishes well from bad and prevents a man from being a prey to evils. It inspires a man to face up to the challenges and catastrophes of life without ever going way to wrongdoings. Thus, moral values represent established social norms as well as independent individual capacity for truth, goodness and virtue.

The society at times appears to be chaotic, as when there is hysterical rush toward an impending crisis, but soon order is restored and society gets going. Moral values are cultural standards that indicate the general goods dimmest desirable for an

organized social life. Moral values disintegrate when people feel disenchanting with social codes and start violating them. They are also endangered when people go astray in the face of danger and disaster. The disintegration of moral values finally results in cultural fiasco giving rise to anarchy and upheavals.

Albee's characters seem to dream about affluence and success in society at the cost of moral values. He revolts against the corrupt society in which he grew up. He refuses to be integrated with it. He focuses on twisted human relationships within social norms based on materialism and parasitism and deceptive ambition. Albee's characters refuse to compromise with conventions. They are involved in the process of rejection and destruction. They lose their ultimate goal and fall to sterility and self-repetition. It is a world in which brutality governs instead of rationality. One crucial similarity among them is moral carelessness. There is no stable scale of values of ethical system no implicit belief in the goodness and perfectibility of man.

Marriage, as a socially established moral value, is not universally accepted in practice. The American still pays lip service to an ideal of marriage stability and communion. The recent flurry of concern about "togetherness" both reflects a sense of loss of values and also pays a tribute to the ideal. In the play, marriage is a matter of expediency. It is the occasion for a vivid antagonism, a highway to success and an opportunity for sexual, fun and games. Albee claims each of these values to be empty, resulting in loveless and sterile marriage. With these values so decayed, Albee implicitly says the country is a barren wasteland, where people must imagine another reality in order to compensate for what is missing. Albee has used his pen to criticize the moral and spiritual damage inflicted upon people by an excess of material wealth and a misguided pursuit of the American Dream.

The play is a portrait of Americans' quest for new values in a world in which

old standards have been blown away by the newly established assumptions. *The American Dream* depicts the feeling of loss, the awareness of the past, which makes present living difficult and the future impossible. *The American Dream* is an allegory of the "American scene" gone away, a scene typified here by a sadistic Mommy, emasculated Daddy, embittered Grandma, and a blond, Midwestern beauty the Young Man are the evidences to prove their light mindedness on their familial responsibility. Each of the characters has involved in the world of fantasy: sex, constant verbal assaults, bumble of joy, also the surface "truth" of the characters masks their real selves. The characters are not what they appear.

While studying Albee, the concept of crisis and degenerating is always profound and fore grounded. The post war American society was leading toward disintegration due to the crisis in traditionally established moral and social values. The war and its aftermath brought to full boil simmering cultural restlessness of the post war years. The matters of love, kiss, and sex were freely discussed not only among the friends and peers, but among the parents and guardians.

Albee's works have got bizarrely different critical responses with focus on different themes and aspects of the text. Albee mocks at the hollowness of the American society. He writes reformist plays of social protest which unflinchingly reveal the patulous sores of a society plagued with social ills. Michael E. Rotenberg, in his book *The Problem of American Realism*, writes, "In *The American Dream*, his sociological vantage point changes, he attacks the hypocrisy and corruption in some circles of the intelligentsia of our society, stripping all comfortable illusion from the protagonists in an effort to make them face the truth of their barren lives" (60-61).

The American Dream has received wide responses from critics, scholars, academics and audience since its publication in 1960. The tough secret of its

recognition were strength of the exploration and human psychic depth. It discloses the disintegration of family love and understanding caused by poverty and mishandling of the mechanism of surviving authority. The Mummy's family is revealed to be a failing elementary unit of society as each member is fragmented, disjointed, and alienated from the rest. They all drown in an illusion that takes them towards a journey of mental exploration which in a sense is beyond the reach of humanity. Moreover, each character is taking refuge in illusion to meet a real and truthful life. The play looked from the perspective of absurdity of the Mummy's family as an oppressor and victim is slightly and superficially angled by many critics some of their views are relevant to be cited.

The playwrights the theatre of the absurd show man as a deformed figure at the hand of contemporary life, and their writings are a kind of protest against the resentful life. Any protest writing has a seed of suggestions for a better situation. Albee, as a complement to the revolting movements of the absurdist, keeps on depicting the existence of the potential power of man needed to tolerate the difficulties which may, of course, result in a change of the dominant situation.

Whatever social or psychological reasons differentiating Albee from the absurdist, he takes up the process of picturing the contemporary life. These views can be gathered from his article "Which Theatre is the Absurd One?" (1962) written a year after the publication of Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* including Albee as a new American member to the cycle. Though the article is a criticism on the plays on Broadway, Albee says: "An absorption-in- art of certain existentialist and post-existentialists philosophical concepts having to do in the main, with man's attempts to make sense which makes no sense because the moral, religious, political and social structures man has erected to "illusion" himself have collapsed" (47).

According to this definition, his plays can be grouped with the Absurdist drama, but this link is on a philosophical ground since his plays unleash themselves practically from the Theatre through their developing plots. In other words, while the absurdist wrote in a protesting manner plays with no apparent action leading to a decisive result with whatever philosophy behind them Albee succeeds in fulfilling their prolonged wish for a rescue from the suffocating of their state and decides to change it. Thus, Albee's theater came to be aptly labeled the drama of confrontation in his work confrontation and commitment. The concept of confronting the real world and its merits seems to have always been ringing in Albee's head. It is proved by his selection of lines from Esslin he quotes in the mentioned article, which encourages man's tolerance.

Driver judges Albee rather severely and considers his plays as senseless and magnifying violence. Taking a realistic approach, he sees the theme of "*The American Dream*". Hinchliffe takes Albee as "only a part-time absurdist, eclectic in his use of techniques and consistent only in the pessimism behind all his plays" (87).

Some critics, however, have done more comprehensive criticism on American dream and on Albee specifically. Baxandall, for example, criticizes Albee's theater on the ground of family relationship, and classifies three types of character in accordance to different cultural and historical periods. Three generations comprise Albee's archetypal family: Then, the epoch of a still-dynamic national ethnic and vision; Now a phase which breaks down into several tangents of decay, and nowhere, a darkly prophesied future generation.

Albee's plays can be taken as modern morality play since they are linked to this tradition both through their subject and through their form. As to the subject, they are concerned with predicament of the modern man who is entangled between the

social pressure and his own weakness. The former is embodied in the fact of reversal of values and lack of communication in the contemporary age, and the latter in materialized by man's inability to face bitter realities of life and also by his escape into illusion. This is the fall of Albee's characters. However, he designs man's redemption in terms of his ultimate power to confront his problems. Thereby, salvation of characters lies in their understanding the truth. As to form, Albee's plays resemble the morality play in their applying allegorical or typical characters and a universal setting. His plays however, end with a suggested optimistic redemption for the characters, consisting to the probable revival of old values, reconciliation of the couple, and the final learning of the truth about faith.

Richard Amacher approaches Albee's works from a structural aspect, while he has not ignored historical and social facts at all. Allan Lewis in his book on American dream devotes one chapter exclusively to Albee. He notes, "In *The American Dream*, Albee has captured in modern terms of the dramatic power of man, destroyed by his own acts, still clinging to life, still grouping for meaning" (49). This characteristic especially applies to the morality play.

In all his plays, Albee tries to show man's perseverance against his difficulties, overcoming them and getting salvation, and his characters act as prophets to preach his gospel. Since his first play he has used Christian images making critics pass religious judgments on his plays. In this light, Jerry in *the Zoo story* can be taken as a messianic figure who sacrifices himself to make communication possible in the modern world. Zimbardo believes:

Albee, in recreating this theme, has used a pattern of symbolism that is and immensely expanded allusion to the story of modern man and his own story. He has chosen traditional Christian symbols, think, not

because they are tricky attention getters, but because the sacrifice of Christ is perhaps the most effective way that the story has been told in the past. (53)

In this way, Albee begins to create meanings for himself in the heat of the turmoil of meaninglessness, as the Absurdist cried out. Needless to say, a study of the role of fun and games, and also the importance of perseverance is the focal point of this study. Both theaters--Albee's and the morality play-- are to an extent didactic, and both are closely linked to the notion of the dream. The two historical periods concerned are presented in the plays as times when ideals and value system are not consistent with contemporary realities. Besides, they both express the isolation of the characters. The morality play concentrates on an individual whose inherent weaknesses are attacked and used by diabolic forces but at last, he chooses redemption through enlisting the aid of some ecclesiastical figures. Potter argues:

The human drama if a morality play is an analogous, but crucially different, presentation of the life cycle. Beginning in innocence man falls by exercise of free will and appetite into dilemma of his own making. From this depth, however, he is inexorably delivered by divine grace to achieve salvation and eternal life, the end of human life is not inure oblivion' but regeneration never death, always a rebirth. (25)

This process happens in Albee's works as well. However, while the fall in the morality play is due to man's engagement in worldly affairs and his ignorance of divinity because of his escape from reality into an illusion private world. So, illusion becomes the base of man's fall. Lawyer confirms that "an act of faith is what we believe, therefore what we know. Is that not right? Faith is knowledge?"

The American critic and producer Harold Clurman, in his books, *The Divine pastime*, says that Albee's talent lies closer to realism than perhaps he knows. Hew further mentions:

Abstraction becomes decoration when it loses touch with its roots in concrete individual experience, and the word "decoration" is just as appropriate where the abstraction is satirically fierce as where it is beguiling ...It is as easy to make a stereotype from a critical and rebellious abstraction as from a conformist one. (6)

Reading Albee's early plays now, it is all too clear that Clurman was right, not just in his instinct for where the young dramatists talent really lay, but also in his anxiety about the dangers that a taste for abstraction and stereotype might present to that talent. Albee's recruitment into the theater of the absurd encouraged precisely the kinds of abstract decoration that Clurman had warned against, and the prestige of obscurity in the mid 1960s meant that this tendency was indulged even on Broadway where, in what now seems an incomprehensible folly.

Martin Esslin, in his book, *the theater of the absurd*, says: "Albee's *The American Dream* (1960) marks the beginning of American absurdist drama. Though the work was generally well received, a number of critics attacked the play for its immorality, nihilism and defeatism" (35).

Theatre of the Absurd exposes individual alienation, anguish, anxieties, and absurdity. The individual world is shown to have drawn in spiritual crisis and deadness of modern absurd world. Man both in group and in alone can not feel secure, happy, and satisfied. Man is experiencing lack of faith, humanity, brotherhood and companionship. The existence of people has fallen into crisis. Man came to be a

meaningless speaks in the vast universe. Each individual became insignificant in the hand of absurd universe.

My research paper is concerned with a drama, a genre of literature. The text book itself is an important revelatory source so far as it is concerned with the research on a genre of literature. Therefore, first of all I propose to undertake scrupulous study of the text, *The American Dream*, which would give me a concrete perception about what the dramatist actually intends to philosophies about or what are the structural devices or formal techniques implied in the text. I will, then, consult various critical interpretations, analyses, discussions and other reference books on the play and its author. These studies help me to collect the ideas for my research work, and would assist to shape my own perception in accordance with the acquisitions of the raised problematic.

Many critics and their interpretation and proposition have solely guided my study. In this study, my approach is basically remained the interpretative than the critical in course of analyzing the play. I have sufficiently and broadly discussed about the formal devices and structural techniques as well as that of the semantic aspect of the text in this research paper. I have tried to reveal the facts of *The American Dream* by showing inherent contradictions and oppositions of the ingredients or elements that exist in the text.

In my research paper, I am bound to study Albee's play *The American Dream* mainly as an absurd drama, and try to elaborate some inherent elements in the text which are to be analyzed in connection with the so-called movement 'beyond absurdity' of the post-modern English Theatre. These can be various other possible points of view or angles other interpret or analyze the play, but they are not my concern with respect to the size and lack of place in this dissertation because I am

working on Albee's masterpiece in the realm of the theatrical art, we can not even estimate his whole artistic career as the playwright only by evaluating a single play. Therefore, the research will be confined to *The American Dream* only. If Albee's other plays are analyzed, it will only be in connection to the play under consideration so far as they are relevant.

Thus, from the above mentioned reviews and criticisms, it is clear that some have focused on his style whereas some have viewed it from character's perspectives. But they have not applied absurdist perspective to interpret his drama. Because of the absurdity and confusion in Albee's play, this present researcher proposes to study it mainly as an absurd drama. He is going to apply absurdist idea in Albee's drama *The American Dream*. Through my research I want to prove Albee's *the American Dream* is an attack on the false values which have destroyed the real values in American society. The research will, at first, be analyzed through the lens of existentialism and then take Albee's absurdism as a major point as well as a departure from existential optimism in the succeeding chapter.

Chapter II: Theater of the Absurd and Albee

The situation of the modern man, a stranger in an inhuman world, is philosophically described as 'absurd' situation. Such situation of human destination is presented on the stage in the 'Theatre of the Absurd.' However, there is not a certain school of the playwrights that formalized a common doctrine of principles and artistic accords which formally belongs to the movement. Some dramatists like Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter and Genet, however, have not accepted or created the world without guiding symmetry where god does not exist nor does any world order or system. Consequently human existence is reduced to a meaningless morass of confusion. Solely theatre of the absurd stresses man's role as a psychological out cast within the absurd universe. Martin Esslin, in his theatre of the Absurd, defines the plays of the absurd, as those that shared a presentation of man's metaphysical absurdity in aberrant dramatic style that mirrored the situation.

Existentialist philosophers like Sartre and Camus have applied the some doctrine for different purpose and reason than that of the absurd dramatists. They view man as a 'tragic heroic' figures, struggling nobly against an unknowable universe who seeks the meaning of his life over the situation which is hostile and out of harmony. Though existentialists' point of view may be philosophically revolutionary the fundamentals of dramatic construction: setting, plot, characterization and dialogue in their works belong to the conventional theatre. Having applied the same philosophical outlook the absurd dramatists follow the philosophers to some extent but they are considered more revolutionary in terms of the structural techniques and formal devices that they have introduced in their works rejecting the conventional set of rules and devices. Another difference between the philosophers and dramatists is that the dramatists do not view the man as a 'tragic

heroic' figure but as a 'comic pathetic' victim in their plays. Victor Chan suggests that a man in an absurd universe, is seen as little more than a clown, bumbling and fumbling his way through the incomprehensible maze that is existence to both the amusement and pity of the artist observer and the audience... inherent in the absurdist consciousness is the chaos of life, the lack of order, symmetry, and purpose which is properly expressed through a dramatic structure also devoid of order, symmetry and purpose. The 'form' is the 'content' and "content from" or medium itself is expressed in the absurd universe, because to dramatize the order less and purposeless consciousness or content in the play, the dramatists implies the order less and purposeless structure as medium in it. The text is considered as a metaphorical expression of the life in the absurd theatre. Life doesn't have a certain frame to the end from the beginning; likewise an absurd play is devoid of any systematic structure and liner plot. It denies the application of the sequential plot, dialogue, action and thought, and the realistic characters and setting of the conventional theatre in it. An absurd playwright, thus, rejects the fourth wall convention of the traditional theatre and denies any possibility of the order and purpose in the absurd universe.

The dramatist expresses his thoughts and feelings through a series of free floating images in an absurd text. Though they seem unconnected, they offer absurdity in concrete form by concentrating on a few objects, whose incomprehensibility and intractability prove overwhelming to the characters. Another aspect of the absurd theatre is its peculiar use of language. The dramatist distrusts language. The characters in the play can not fully express what they actually want to convey or communicate, and they do not seem to understand properly what others have said. Victor Chan considers that this pattern of the language use is a formal device to enhance the effect, as he views " ... when speech is useless and communications impossible, the loneliness of the individual is increased. The world is

cluttered with words, yet each man is imprisoned within his own thought (40). Thus language separates each man from other in the absurd world, because it is a 'centralistic' force rather than the cohesive force, which isolates each man in a vacuum of words.

The characters appear in an absurd play, as Jill Levenson suggests these strange, anonymous characters without history or social milieu are stunningly sympathetic, vulnerable with their naked humanity. Mankind is seen, as helpless clowns who have undergone the uncertain destiny, enduring physical infirmity, hunger, assault, loneliness, impotence and the bitter sense of void in his universe. The drama solely stresses on man's role as a psychological outcast from human society. The characters are aware of their pain and doom, but are not capable to eradicate or even improve their pathetic situation. The humanity is presented at its lower level, but what's horrendous is the absurd universe around them without any regularity and gravity, in the complete form of chaos. The absurd characters challenge in this absurdity with their full energy but in vain, they fail again and again until they are exhausted.

The main issue (theme) in almost all the absurd dramas is what Jill Levenson points out, "how can a man live reasonably in a world that makes no sense?" (40). To show the arbitrariness, unpredictability and confusion of human life, the dramatist correlates these themes to the plot of text which is also 'non-linear' and disjointed in its structure, at the same time the experimental handling of the theatrical situation rejects the conventional thought and pattern in an absurd play. Another characteristic that generally marks an absurd play is that of the non-specific time and place' of its action. Hugh Kenner terms it as "nowhere no when" spatial temporal location of the text. Duckworth suggests that such a non-specific setting enable to isolate his characters

from any social reality that might deflect attention from generalized human situation he is portraying. (qtd. in Malick).

The plays of Edward Albee, it can be said, are exceptional in contemporary American Drama in that all of them leave the audiences unsure if they have understood them. In fact, there is an unclear portrait of characters, an undeveloped design of plot, together with a close and restricted setting in Albee's drama which makes it difficult to understand. Consequently, critics have passed different judgments on Albee's plays from the very beginning. Definitely, the oblique and unfamiliar plays of Albee in contrast to his contemporaries such as Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller who produced tangible subjects caused people to associate him with the theatre of the absurd which was dominant in Europe at the time when Albee appeared. This association was incited by the fact that Albee's first play, *The Zoo Story* (1958), shared the bill at the Provincetown playhouse with Beckett's *Kraspp's Last Tape*. Moreover, this impression was further reinforced by the idea Albee cherished lack of communication in the world, which should have been a result of his "exposure to Beckett and the late O'Neil", he admits, when he started as a playwright.

The disillusionment of modern man about the meaninglessness of his own existence, Martin Esslin in his book *"The Theatre of Absurd"* writes: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose . . . cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost, all his actions become senseless, absurd and useless". It was Albert Camus, who in his *myth of Sisyphus* (1942), for the first time used the word absurd. The playwrights of the 1950s borrowed the term later and different school of dramatic thought resulted. The stage of this school, the Theatre of the Absurd, is not only thematically but also structurally pictured man's crisis of existence. They broke all the conventional patterns of presentation and experimented

with the theme of Absurdity in a radically absurd form from Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1948). One of the representative plays of the absurdist theatre has neither actions nor plot nor any logical dialogue. The play is a powerful presentation of the timeless, circular and barren human world. The whole play has no development. It opens with Estragon saying "Nothing to be done" and ends with similar expressions. The action remains ignored till the last, quite contrary to dramatic conventions.

ESTRAGON: well, shall we go?

VLADIMIR: yes, let's go?

(They don't move, curtain) (44)

Yet the crisis undercurrent in the psychology of post war period people was enacted and expressed through these stages. Albee's later works, however, introduced new subject matters which led to his deviation, in a way, from the Theatre of the Absurd in Europe and directed him more towards subjects concerning American civilization. In fact, it is doubted if Albee exclusively belongs to the theatre of the Absurd, since it signifies a group of plays which flourished in the early twentieth-century Europe and presented, through a new technique, the idea that there is no security and meaning in life. This idea, as Martin Esslin claims in his introduction to *Absurd Drama*, is a kind of reaction to, and an aftermath of the two great wars, Nazi's mass murder, and similar social anarchies which caused man to feel desperate and insecure in his life (13). Thus, the Theatre of the Absurd is realistic since it depicts illogical and incoherent realities in society.

Presently, following the Theatre of the Absurd, there appeared several playwrights in the states among whom Albee is the focus of this study. Clearly, communication in the modern world, and Esslin is the first critic who included him in

the cycle of the Absurdist and in his *The Theatre of the Absurd*, he compared the zoo story with pinter's works because of its realistic dialogue and its subjects of isolation (302).

Albee overlaps with the Theatre of the Absurd in areas covering the questions of man in the modern world, or the lack of communication and love between individual, However, while the Absurdist are engaged in depicting the terrible world facing them and the helplessness of conventional religious, social or whatever myths of order and dignity. Albee proceeds to picture the final possibility of man's salvation by means of breaking through pervading miserable situation. Regarding this idea, social critics of 1970s like Daniel Bell and Christopher Lasch write, "the bureaucratic order of work and leisure had not only destroyed all organic forms of community, but corrupted even the ideal of freedom by harnessing people's most primitive appetites to a various consumer culture "(10).

The theatre of the Absurd playwrights showed man as a deformed figure in the hand of contemporary life, and their writings were a kind of protest against the resentful life. Any protest writing has a seed of suggestions for a better situation. Albee, as a complement to the revolting movements of the Absurdist, goes on to show the existence of the potential power of man needed to tolerate the difficulties which may, of course, result in a change of the dominant situation.

Whatever social or psychological reasons differentiating Albee from the Absurdist, he takes up the stated process of picturing the contemporary life. These views can be gathered from his article. Which Theatre is the Absurd one?" (1962) written a year after the publication of Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* including him as a new American member to the cycle. Though the article is a criticism on the plays on Broadway, Albee comes to define Absurd drama as:

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According to this definition, his plays can be grouped with the Absurdist drama, but this link is on a philosophical ground since his plays unleash themselves practically from the Theatre through their developing plots. In other words, while the Absurdist wrote in a protesting manner plays with no apparent action leading to a decisive result with whatever philosophy behind them Albee succeeds in fulfilling their prolonged wish for a rescue from the suffocating of their state and decides to change it. Thus, Albee's theater came to be aptly labeled the Drama of confrontation by Bigsby in his work confrontation and commitment. The concept of confronting the real world and its merits seems to have always been ringing in Albee's head; it is proved by his selection of lines from Esslin he quotes in the motioned article, which encourages man's tolerance.

Driver judges Albee rather severely and considers his plays as senseless and magnifying violence. Taking a realistic approach, he sees the theme of "the American Drama". Brain why regards Albee as a failure in Absurd drama since " a certain point is reached" in his plays which goes not with the absurd drama (189). Hinchliffe takes Albee as "only a part-time absurdist, Electic in his use of techniques and consistent only in the pessimism behind all his plays" (87).

Some critics, however, have done more comprehensive criticism on American dream and on Albee specifically. Baxandall, for example, criticizes Albee's theater on the ground of family relationship, and classifies three types of character in accordance

to different cultural and historical periods. Three generations comprise Albee's archetypal family: Then, the epoch of a still-dynamic national ethnic and vision; now a phase which breaks down into several tangents of decay, and no where, a darkly prophesied future generation.

Here, I am going to write about moral values and absurdism. Moral values are qualities that are in accord with standards of right or good conduct. They comprise the traditional socio-cultural standards, which encourage and expect human beings to behave responsibly for the smooth and sustained functioning of society. These are the codes of conduct which aim at establishing social order and achieving the ideal society.

Moral values create a system of principles and judgments based on culture, religious and philosophical concepts and beliefs, by which human beings determine whether given actions, are right or wrong. These concepts and beliefs are often generalized and codified by a culture or its member's conformity to such codification may also be called moral values and the group may depend on widespread conformity to such codes for its continued existence.

The systematic study of moral values is a branch of philosophy called ethics. Ethics seeks to address questions such as how one ought to behave in a specific situation, how one can justify moral position and rationalization of ethic concerning the justification of ethics or morality it. For example, in applied ethics, the question of abortion being morally permissible is a current issue in American society and politics. A common question in normative ethics is how one would go about justifying a lie, given that they think they are normally justified in protecting someone from harm. Do the terms "good", "evil", "right", "wrong" make sense? Meta ethics asks how we justify the existence of "good" or is it all relative and morality simply a statement of

one's preferences.

Of course, in any society there is divergence between the notions of how we ought to behave and the reality of how we behave. So there is a difference between hypothetical punditry and real morality. He whom we call "Moral" is moral only after he behaves in accordance with either (if we take the pluralist stance) our perception of "Morality" or (if we accept its existence) in the universal human interest. Diana Trilling in *Esquire* says 'Modern life is a pattern of meaningless violence alternated with emptiness and that the modern individual has been stripped of everything which once described his humanity, left with only his raw nerves and naked skin' (83).

Plato, a student of Socrates and founder of the Academy in Athens, is the first major figure in the history of western philosophy. Plato says the term "Morality" can be used either descriptively to refer to a code of conduct put forward by a society or, some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for his own behavior or normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons. When "moral values" refer to the codes of conduct of different societies, the features that are essential are that morality is a code of conduct that is put forward by a society and that is used as guide to behavior by members of that society. Plato, in his book, *On Socrates Glaucon* says:

Persons of the dialogue from Book say that normative sense of morality is a code of conduct that all rational persons would put forward for governing the behavior of all moral agents. It doesn't say that every society has a code of conduct that has those features that they claim morality must have. (31-32)

Like, Plato, Aristotle believes that the good of the many out-weigh the good of

the few. Moral values are devastated by the pursuit of happiness. He thinks that wealth is not happiness, because wealth is just a monetary value, but can be used to gain some happiness. Pleasure is not happiness, because "the life of gratification" is "completely slavish since the life people decide is the life for grazing animals". The most important thing is character, Plato believes." Character is that which reveals moral purpose showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids" (*Poetics* 33).

In a society where people adhere to religious values, they conduct themselves responsibly toward each other since they go in before of God. They never design to be dishonest or insincere, and certainly never push things to such extremes as to make life difficult for others. Moral values become the basis of all acts and conducts. The Quran makes it clear that people who adhere to the moral values of the age of the ignorant suffer for doing so. Indeed, god will not deal unjustly with man in any way. It is man who wrongs his own soul.

In all his statements regarding moral values St. Augustine undoubtedly starts with a desire for happiness, he indeed describes ideal happiness, the development of all man's faculties to their highest perfection, as the most complete *bonum proprium*, the best that man in, his essence and subjectivity can receive. But above his gratification of the "ego" is the *Summa ET incommutably bonitas* God, in His fullness of life and truth. To St. Augustine, this alone is the centre of morals, this alone is the objective good to which we aim, and from which the powers of our mind receive their intensification, fullness and satisfactions. God is so absolutely the foundation, source and substance of the happiness of heaven that all selfish considerations are eliminated from the will and nothing is left but pure love of what is good. St. Augustine in on Christian Doctrine says, "Man can attain happiness only by the means whereby he becomes good", and he becomes good by loving the highest good and by valuing God

above everything" "for His Own Sake" and "with no thought of reward" (108-113).

People talk a great deal now a days of the eternal value of morality, but nowhere is this made as clear as in the catholic theory of merit as conducting to salvation, whenever W. Kohler regrets that St. Thomas who has no rival in singing the canticle of grace, allowed his theology "to end in merit", we see that the prejudices of the Reformers are still strong and active. Does not the church's dogma contain the same pure idea of "retribution" and "reward" that pervades the philosophy and religion of all nations that virtue meant "worthiness to be happy", and did he not ultimately postulate the existence of God, precisely in order that, by his omnipotence, happiness might be assigned "exactly in proportion to morality?"

Kant's interest in moral matters was not exclusively theoretical. Kant, in his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), says:

The practical application of the categorical imperative in some detail derives a fairly comprehensive catalog of specific rules for the governance of social and personal morality. What each of us must actually will as universal is a very rigid system of narrowly prescribed conduct. (17)

Following the political and social turmoil of the English Civil war, the Restoration Age even in England was characterized by a sense of loss and cultural disillusion coupled with efforts to restore social stability and cohesion. These conditions were associated with a diminution in the influence of traditional institutions such as religion and the aristocracy and the rise in need of institutions to replace them. Restoration comedy had a vogue of approximately fifty years, from 1668 to the 1710s. Built around a central group of young men and women, "its essential ingredients are wit,

urbanity and sophistication. The scene is almost invariably London-its streets, parks and coffee house. The themes are, almost exclusively love and sexual intrigue and cuckoldry". Also referred to as the comedy of manners because the chief characters are usually members of high society, the Restoration comedy tends to feature recurring types "the graceful young rake, the faithless wife, the deceived husband, and perhaps, a charming young heroine who is to be bestowed in the end on the rake"

Morality is the rightness or wrongness of something as judged by accepted moral standards with the exercise of moral standards, the existence of human beings becomes meaningful. The life of modern man has become meaningless and spiritually sterile due to the want of belief in belief itself. T.S. Eliot in *The waste land* finds the objective correlative for the meaninglessness of modern life that has eluded him in "Gerontion". He finds as well, however, with the intrusion of time into the poem, the meaninglessness of modern death, the meaninglessness of his own future death, for through the point by his creative act may stand outside the chaos. He describes (the ascription of meaninglessness is, after all, as ascription of a sort of meaning), he can't stand outside death:

There is shadow under his red rock, (come in under the shadow of this red rock), and I will show you something different from either. Your shadow at morning striding behind you or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (347)

It is no secret, Himm Elforb writes, that a lack of moral authority pervades contemporary American life. The Americans consistently tell pollsters that "moral decay" or "moral decline" is one of the nation's severest problems, and it is a belief that has grown more pronounced over time. Himm Elforb, in *The American Morality*, writes:

It is not only conservatives... who now deplore the breakdown of the family, liberals do as well. No Liberal or conservative "Seriously disputes the prevalence of violence, vulgarity and promiscuity in videos and rap music, or denies their degrading effects... Nor do many people today seriously doubt the of education at all levels, or the fragility of communal ties, or the coarsening and debasement of the culture, or the "defining down of morality, public and private. It is no mean achievement to have reached at least this point of consensus (46).

Moral crisis is a philosophical thought that the modern man is living amidst the disillusionment and meaningless existence.

The sincere reflection of reality is considered only one of the modes of representation of reality in modern art and literature. Modern dramas and their study generally don't present any plain mirror-image of the world. The realization of crisis in the identity of human beings has largely been emphasized and intensified by the great existential thinkers Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre says, "Man is condemned to be free... condemned because he has not created himself and is nevertheless free. Because having once been hurled into the world, he is responsible for everything he does" (73).

The modern dramas after 1950s and 1960s have emphasized much on the essential absurd condition of modern man. And since these plays present the world in which we find, as we experience, human beings struggling with the irrationality of experience, they themselves "lack a formal logic and conventional structure so that both form and content support the representation of what may be called the absurd predicament" (968).

What is American Dream? Is it a cryptogram for reality or truth about an imagined hope? It is an aspiration and imaging of deserts with nothing unrewarded? Or is it a telic formula, a private assurance to heart's longing? These questions are related to one another. In general sense, a dream is termed as a result of unfulfilled wishes and fear. But American Dream is not an outcome of unfulfilled wishes. It is shaped by the endemic promises of American land, as the scriptures present, before and after the exploration of America. What puritans and the European immigrants thought American as a land of infinite wealth, unrestrained freedom and unchallenged fresh beginning of life in the New Found Land is called American Dream. In this sense, American dream does retain something of the joy and music that belongs to its past. Martin Luther king, Jr. was not the first person to dream for better American. The puritans too had the euphoric vision of wish fulfillment, soon after landing in New found land.

The immigrants struggled a lot in trying to liberate them from British dominance, they had to undergo various struggles and hardship to achieve democracy and declare America as an independent state and country. They, then, once again aspired for a new fortune as it had been inspired by puritans at their first arrival to this land.

First of all American Dream was seen as a logo for puritans, then for whites and finally for all Americans regardless of the color creed or ethnic group. Both the new comers (in new land) and Native Americans thought that they would begin a new and prosperous life as well as emancipate themselves from the usual tensions, when America was declared independent from the British colony. No doubt, their expectations became stronger along with the advancement of American in various sectors of life. American experiment has produced positive as well as negative results

affecting Americans lives in various ways.

Three or four decades ago, in Washington D.C. Martin Luther King, Jr. says: “I have a dream it is a dream deeply rooted In American Dream. I have a dream that One day in red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and the sons of farmer slaves owners will sit down together at the table of brotherhood”.

King had dreamt for equality between race and colored people, which was dominant at his time. Many shaves who took the Underground Railroad way to escape from slavery had also aspired for a society based on no racial prejudice. King only tried to remind others that America still privileged the white colored people to black colored people. Like in this statement by king a dreamer's dream consists of a projection of future and a range of future possibilities of completion of American Dream.

At the earlier phase of American literature people, novelist and politicians began to think that America was the land of opportunity. Because of that concept many people from Europe, Asia and Africa migrated to America in pursuit of this Dream. Even the revolutionary groups that never aspired to migrate to America and, which neglected to the traditional values of life began to believe in American dream. They also believed in the concept that America was the land of blessings.

David Madden in the introduction to *American dream, American Nightmares* argues, “The endemic promises of American land helped shape aspects of the American romantic vision and idealistic elements in that situation, as it experienced the land, helped produce *The American Dream*” (XVII). American Dream, in this sense is more romantic in its nature because of the ideal vision. The difficulties all seem to disappear easily in such a vision. But the inexperienced puritans could not

imagine what would be the result in new land. That is why they followed the endemic concept of American land.

American dream is unique in comparison to other nation's dreams. The settlers fleeing the nightmare of European experience made a new beginning in the Garden of Eden. "Thus Americans became the heirs of all civilizations" because their dream was and is unique (Maden XVII). The existence of an area of free land and the continuous progression of technology explain the development of American dream and its fulfillment. The unrivalled production of computer software by Bill Gates itself shows that some Americans have got success. But still a large population denies the fulfillment of the former hopes. According to the advocates of American Dream, America's gradual development and power imposed upon other lesser developed countries shows the fulfillment of American dream. Adherers of this American dreams like Hart crane. T.S. Eliot, Walt Whitman and Fietzerald argue that dream cancels dream in the new realm of fact. They argue that the advocates make another sequence of dream, which cancels the former dream because the former problem of Americans is overlapped by another new one.

It cannot be denied that America has achieved a lot of things through technological progress, economic strategy and media networks. But the question is whether this prosperity has been able to reduce the conflict among races, ethnic groups and white oriented society. From the very beginning of puritans, new settlement there began the partial completion and partial failure of their hopes. At the beginning American Dream was based on facts. The factual results of exploration of the frontier experience, of the invention of the steam engine after the introduction of cotton weaving machines, of the building of railways and bridges, the perfection of rockets and of the invention of the motion picture camera and projector, and of radio,

television and many other high technological implements like surgical instruments, computer and robots. Because of these modern equipment and advancement in informational technology the world has turned into a narrow global village. America's power and control the world at some point. The advocates bring these facts to prove their logic that American dream has been fulfilled. While observing at a deeper level of American society the observers of *The American Dream* have found other facts which challenge the concept of fulfillment.

Madden has quoted James Truslow Adams' statement that says, " American has been the great adventure for millions of immigrants, not all of them understanding the meaning of American Dreams" (XXXIX). That is why America is still in want of fulfilling the dream. In modern time, the serious fiction has been an indictment of American society its failure to translate the dream into reality, popular culture, which is not much serious and deep in meaning, has been the multifaceted medium of American sunlit day dreams.

What has been watering American Dream for more than four centuries? One of the sources is the journalistic non fiction, which presents America as essentially a land of opportunity. Other sources are the travel books, American's ideological concept of their superiority against people from African and Asia. Exploration journals, advertising agencies and some of the novelists present America's vision with exaggeration. The scripture is the root of American Dream because Christians who were thinking for a sacred place believed that God had preserved a land for them. Like the Christians who were thinking for a sacred place believed that God had preserved a land for them. Like the Christians, who are supposed to be pardoned by God even if they commit sins hoped for their salvation in New found land? Technological innovation in America furthered the prolonged hope. Gradually, in

modern time the haste in American government's policy, to be the first in every sector and to dominate other nations. Either by cultural hegemony or by economic influence has stimulated Americans to think that they are the best people of the best country. But not all Americans share the same sense of pride because they are not white, nor are they economically and culturally powerful.

The dramatist Edward Albee who is a American, present his Drama's characters within the conceptual framework of *The American Dream* in his dramas.

What is psychological basis for the development of dreams and nightmares? How does a dream fail and turn out to be an actual nightmare? Is it only that nightmare eclipses the dreams, or can the dream also eclipse dream? To understand these problems one should observe American history, which is thoroughly dynamic. One of the most powerful psychological sources of energy generating pursuit of both dream and night may is guilt pursuing their own dreams white men exterminated the Vietnamese in the wilderness, enlivened the black Americans to cultivate Eden and mistreated the Jews who had been driven to refuge in American metropolises by European nightmares. Private guilt can be . . . the mainspring for and individual's pursuit of one's particular American Dream.

Guilt feeling is also one way of generating dream. From these lines by Madden it is seen that white men thought America as Eden but they enslaved blacks and excluded other groups from opportunities. In order to get salvation from private guilt, the white men watered dreams so that they could be forgiven if not by God, at least in their own imagination. They watered it through the process of individual Enterprise and cut throat competition in which conditions, guilt feeling never comes to one's mind.

American dream doesn't affect only the blacks and ethnic groups but is also affects white men themselves because their hearts are not free from ill desires. In this sense American Utopias have turned into stimulating utopias in both technological and cultural levels.

Edward Albee mostly in his dramas recognizes the difference between the desires and the outcomes. He creates characters that can show the gap so as to convey the message to the public. American dream as accepted by all is something agreeable, that something positive may and can happen in it. What has emerged out however is something disagreeable? This can be due to the positive result of struggle to bring democracy in America. From the outset the faith in democracy and freedom rests on the fact that all Americans are created equal and each citizen has the right to live practicing equal opportunities provided by the state. Does that freedom guarantee the right to a black American? America was declared independent, and many slaves thought that they would also get freedom. But they were not given the opportunity to begin a new life from slavery. They were also dreamers. Then they were raising questions about the essence of independence around Georgia Mountain where extreme slavery existed. Thomas Jefferson, the third president to United States must have heard the questions raised by the Afro Americans. Religious constrains became loose after the achievement of democracy, political and economic issues became vague but the racism become more obvious.

Despite the high spirit of democratic values, times were shifting into new political and economic bands. Along with the economic development, known as industrial Revolution in history, a new search was made. This search was not in favor of black and ethno racial group. Along with the rapid growth of industry, cotton spinning and weaving machines the textile industrial boomed. It became necessary

that human resources be supplied to keep up the industrial pace. Whites and rich New Englanders occupied the prestigious posts. The mill owners demanded for the supply of cheap labor. Only the slaves and their descendents were available to supply it. Some other African slaves were brought because slave trading was thought to be a profitable business. Not only did this process awaken the old doubts about how to reconcile slavery with the declaration the 'all men are created equal" but it also produced the gap living standard between whites and blacks (Jefferson: Declaration of Independence). Who would speak against the reinvestment of the owner slave relation in the form of master worker relation? Luella B. cook and others have raised questions. Did the party created by Jefferson and his supporters belong to the common people or to the cotton kings who owned the big plantations?

Did the former slaves, then workers belong to the nation as respected citizens of America? Cook doubts the motive of Jefferson's party because declaration of independence could not liberate the slaves, but on the contrary the cotton kings were profiting. Was it the successful out -come of puritan legacy? Where has American promise for equality gone many authors find have depicted. Edward Albee talks about American promise but their characters are victims of the very promise. There is no fulfillment of promises. Thus the failure to encompass all people within the framework of American dream has led it into being a nightmare.

The American Dream is a more complex concept which is because it is felt in diverse ranges of areas such as family, politics, economics, social science, history, education, etc. It is the dream of an equal and just society where all members are treated equally and the society itself functions as a big family of the Americans.

Family as a unit always plays significant role in maintaining social order and harmony. The appreciation of family is another component of the social American

dream since a family nurtures an idea all the family members should live together. Family is absolutely central to the experience of social American dream because the role of home and hearth is shaping the experience. The family experience reverberates even in the political dialogues that find resonance with folks across the political spectrum to the point where, in most recent presidential election "family values consistently ranked high among the priorities of voters of all stripes" (105).

Politically speaking, the declaration clearly states that the political American dream is a dream of a polity where all the citizens share the equal political rights which echo through king's speech until the present times. *The American Dream* is the foundation that give rise to present republic as Rather opines, "The American dream was the idea that guided us through the early days of the republic. And it was the ideal that was compromised in the drafting of a constitution that, for all its strength and stirring appeals to universal law" (xv).

The political dream is a just, free and equal polity that has a great impact on how the Americans live and grow up because it has made the American and America a nation of idealists, teaching them to struggle toward social justice.

The economic American dream also promises equal distribution of economic gains and opportunity provided to all strata of society, which provides equal economic opportunities to rise from rags to riches through hard work. The society that the dream conceives of should provide equal financial right to all members of the society to live a better and prosperous life than the former generation. The dream also aims at providing economic justice to all classes of society by promising them equal economic opportunities.

Similarly, education is an essential constituent element of *The American*

Dream. Education is rightly considered to be a foundation for the dream because its pursuit helps the pursuers to realize their dreams. Since it helps the new generations go further than the former generation enlightened had ever been able to. The founding fathers and the enlightened men all knew that the desires of a better American society rested on education. Education connects the Americans with the spirit of *The American Dream* because it improves their lives and the public and moreover the collective life of the country. It serves as a tool and many more to bring *the American dream* closer to reality. In this regard, rather says, "Of course, education does not only give us the tools to run our democracy, it also equips us to better our lot in life. In this role, too, education is central to *The American Dream*. And it must be available to all if equality of opportunity is to be more than well intentioned phase" (167).

The full fledged development of the American society and realization of the true essence of *The American Dream* rests on education. The nation can only closer to the promises and principles of *The American Dream* if the people are educated. Therefore, education is a touchstone and as explicit part of *The American Dream*.

The myth of *The American Dream* confronted with the harsh reality, promises with disappointments. The land was not free from danger, death disease, cruelty and starvation as envisioned by the founders and their descendents. The mounting social justice, economic equality and democracy caused the dream so wrong. This caused the disintegration of moral values.

The other factor that caused *The American Dream* goes wrong was the post war American economic boom. America experienced an enormous industrial and agricultural expansion after world war I. wage policies changed and even the factory workers fought for storing goods. With the change in economic order, American society saw a change in the pattern of diet, dress, and entertainment and even thought.

The drama "*The American Dream*" carries out such subject matter which has led the American society toward the devastation of their morality and ethics.

Materialistic and economic factors rather than idealistic motives were emphasized during this era and the life of the people in general. "The chicken- in- every- pot nation of material prosperity' widely regarded in the society caused the crumbling of utopian concept of Americans' dream" (Gregory 2). The Americans' life devoid of 'bankruptcy' resulted in sexual orgies and drunker bouts and "pursuit of happiness" characterized by material desire and business ethics caused *The American Dream* go wrong. This was not the picture of America, which the founding fathers had ever dreamt when they first settled in America.

The American Dream is an allegory of the "American scene" gone away; a scene typified here by a sadistic Mommy, emasculated Daddy, and embittered Grandma. The play imagines what is left of *The American Dream* in their shared household. Albee satirizes a social institution without revealing their real feelings. In *The American Dream*, Albee begins one layer down by making explicit the conflicts that standards of politeness conceal. This is the contrast between the accepted norm and the real situation is implicit while, at the same time, Albee points to a blight in the relationships among the characters that is more than social.

Chapter III: Disintegration of Moral Values in The American Dream

As noted by Albee, *The American Dream* is a critique of the American scene, a scene allegorized here by a childless household. Its players are Mommy, Daddy and Grandma, defined as their names suggest by their place within that household's structure and personifying the members of the American family. Their intercourse continually ironizes what Albee conceives of the bourgeois American life style and its attendant values. Thus Mommy's pointless story about her hat disconcertingly delivered in earnest their laments that one just can not get "satisfaction" these days, that these days people are poised to take advantage of others and so on. In this respect, Albee's debt to Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* is clear. *The American Dream* is especially interesting in its exploration of the relations between violence and language on the American scene.

One of the play's primary examples of how language is put to violent uses is Mommy's emasculation of Daddy. As in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, the American scene is dominated by a sadistic and terrorizing mother, as remarked later, only a village idiot on this stage could subscribe to woman Love. Note here the violence in Mommy and, the ways in which she uses speech to rule him. Throughout the play, Mommy's domination of Daddy appears prominently in the echo. Here in the story of the hat, Mommy reduces Daddy to the toneless repetition of her words to make sure he listens. Daddy voids himself as a listener, serving as an acoustic mirror, a sort of negative entity to her tale. Later, she repeats his apologies to Grandma, as if its communication remains contingent on her mediation. This echoing of course recalls the relations of parent to its child, Mommy infantilizing everyone in the household. As a result, Daddy has no liberty at all:

Mommy: Of course; it never fails. People think they can get away

with anything these days . . . and, of course they can. I went to but a new hat yesterday (pause) I said, I went to buy a new hat yesterday.

Daddy: Oh! Yes . . . yes.

Mommy: Pay attention

Daddy: I am paying attention, Mommy.

Mommy: Well, be sure you do.

Daddy: Oh, I am. (58)

In the famous drama "*The American Dream*" two other silent motifs also appear in Mommy and Daddy's dialogue. The first conjures the club chairwoman's "absolutely adorable husband who sits in a wheel chair all the time." This image along with others of crippling and mutilation will crucially recur later. The second involves a synecdoche a metonymical figure in which part stands in for whole. When Mommy asks if Daddy is listening, he replies "I'm all ears". Mommy giggles at the thought. Her giggle Daddy's expression collapses the synecdoche relations, Daddy is all ears. In doing so, it also refers the figure to Daddy's body: Daddy is not a good listener but physically, "all ears". This turn to the body will importantly recur with reference to Mommy and Daddy's mutilated child. Mommy dominates Daddy and chairwoman:

Mommy: All right, Daddy, now listen.

Daddy: I'm listening, Mommy.

Mommy: You're sure!

Daddy: Yes... Yes, I'm sure, I'm all ears"

Mommy: All right now. I went to buy a new hat... what did I just say?

Daddy: You didn't like any of them, not one bit.

Mommy: That's right; you just keep paying attention... And so, I bought it.

Daddy: (To show he is paying attention) and so you bought it. (58)

Mommy and Daddy make Grandma very much sad. Also marginalized within the American scene, Grandma the play's epigrammatic ironist will comment explicitly on language's capacities for violence. Unlike Daddy, her marginalization lies in her age. For Grandma, what defines age is the way in which people talk to you, later she will remark that one can say little to old people that does not sound terrible. The address of others is terrorizing; it drives its listener under the bed and shakes the household. Ultimately, its violence is fatal, old people die as a result of how others address them. Indeed, the old even become deaf to protect themselves.

In her capacity as an ironic commentator one who in a sense observes the household events from the outside Grandma readily stands in for the absurdist dramaturge. Indeed, her epigrammatic commentary prefigures her eventual transformation into a director. From the following conversation the above lines become clear.

Mommy: Daddy! What a terrible thing to say to Grandma!

Grandma: Yeach! For shame, talking to me that way.

Daddy: I'm sorry, Grandma.

Mommy: Daddy's sorry, Grandma.

Grandma: well, all right . . . freeze to death. When you got so old, all that happens is that people talk to you that way. (64)

Grandma also doubles the absurdist in that her defenses against the violence of others

are absurd in the truest sense. Her deafness and stupidity would remove her from the household's fatal intercourse. Tellingly, Mommy notes here Grandma never knows what she means. Though she may know what she says at the moment, she will not for long. Her 'absurdity' thus uncouples knowledge or intention and the meaning of her speech and, eventually, intention and her utterance. As we will see throughout the play, these separations - interrupting the speech's communicative function are some of Grandma's crucial defense against violence.

Grandma also introduces the finely wrapped boxes, boxes that appear on stage for most of the play. Here the boxes evoke the memory of a perverse circuit of exchange between an impoverished and widowed Grandma and young Mommy note here Mommy's disconcerting regression to childish speech. This circuit involves relations of deprivation, debt, and deceit. Grandma denies herself dinner to provide her daughter with tomorrow's lunch. Mommy can not bring herself to open Grandma's beautifully wrapped "gift" so to speak, unspoken here is Mommy's debt to Grandma: her lunch means Grandma Deprivation. Thus, she returns it to provide Grandma with a day old meal:

Grandma: Because I'm old . . . That's why Old people die;
 eventually . . . I've got to go and got the rest of the
 boxes.

Daddy: Poor Grandma, I didn't mean to hurt you.

Mommy: Don't you worry about it, Grandma doesn't know what
 she means.

Daddy: She knows that she says, though.

Mommy: I love Grandma.

Daddy: ... how nicely she wrapped these boxes.

Mommy: Grandma has... I went to school. Grandma used to wrap a box for me...

Daddy: Because it was empty.

Mommy: Oh no... They were very generous.

Daddy: You were a very deceitful little girl. (65-66)

Much like *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*?, this sequence continues to demonstrate the violence of the American scene by airing what should remain unspoken in social intercourse the "obscene." In particular, Mommy and Grandma make the mercenary underpinnings of Mommy's marriage known. Mommy claims her right to live off of Daddy because she used to provide with sex. Grandma mimics Mommy as a gold digging little girl, on her own part, her demand for "allowance" from Mommy and Daddy becomes a demand for an allowance.

With these mercenary underpinnings in mind, note again the debts and rivalries between Mommy and Grandma. Grandma feels Mommy has cheated her of a career she could have had Daddy fund; Mommy only brought her into the house to free Daddy's advances. Now Daddy does not want her, she taunts, in deed, he would rather sleep with her. Intergenerational loyalties are quickly forgotten here. Grandma forgets Mommy is her daughter later, Grandma will be unable to recall whether she put her own mother away, Mommy will quickly forget Grandma's departure. Amidst Mommy and Grandma's wronging, Daddy has been sick not wanting to sleep in the apartment. "I just want to get everything over with "he remarks. A double entendre, this reference to "their" imminent visit is certainly a confession of suicidal yearnings as well:

Grandma: I know you are . . . she was a tramp and a trollop
and a troll . . . now.

Mommy: Grandma!

Grandma: (To Daddy) when she was . . . I warned you . . . I
did.

Mommy: You stop that! You're my mother, not his!

Grandma: ... You don't make allowances . . . I want an
allowances.

Mommy: Daddy doesn't want to sleep with anyone . . .

Daddy: I've been sick . . . apartment. (69-70)

As in the sequence previous, the household continues to wait for "them" a party that remains unidentified despite Grandma's comic hooting. "Who? Who?" These others for whom the household waits assume menacing proportions. Perhaps they are the van people, come to take Grandma away. 'They' listen at the apartment door. Ultimately, when 'they' arrive, however, Grandma insists that she can not see them. Indeed, it would seem "they" are no one but Mrs. Barker. At times, it seems Mrs. Barker is their representative. At others, the inappropriate use of plural (they, them) despite Mrs. Barker's singularity proposes and makes their absence painfully obvious. Grandma does not recognize their quest perhaps Mrs. Barker was younger when they had an occasion to meet. As we will see, the apartment uncertainly surrounding Mrs. Barker's and their identity lies in their relation to the house hold's most intimate trauma.

Grandma: Who? Who?

Mommy: Oh, just some people.

Grandma: The van people? . . . Come and take me away?

Mommy: (still to Grandma) just you wait; I'll fir your wagon.
(Now to Daddy) . . . them in Daddy what are you
waiting for? (72-73)

Grandma's hooting (who? who?) is also another elaboration of her "absurdism", Grandma appearing at once 'senile', infantile; and owl like nevertheless in her wisdom. Again prefiguring her ultimate more outside the action's frame, she establishes herself as a spectator, childishly insisting that Mommy and Daddy let her stay up and watch. Her insistence on watching not with standing, she will soon again appear in resistance to the violent spectacle before her. Thus she will refuse to watch Daddy's attempt, under Mommy's pointedly exaggerated encouragement, to open the door and demonstrate his masculinity, an attempt that only emasculates him further.

Grandma: (An owl) who? Who? . . . Who? Who?

Mommy: you know, Grandma

Grandma: No, I don't

Daddy: Is that true?

Mommy: There's no need . . . masculine and decisive.

Daddy: we might consider the pros and the . . .

Mommy: I won't argue . . . open the door.(73)

Grandma's ethical resistance to the spectacle's violence also includes her interruption to other's speech. The speech, as discussed earlier, torments her as an old person. Note here, for example, how Mommy and Daddy patronizingly compliment Grandma's

boxes or how Mommy continually attempts to silence her. Thus old people find themselves reduced to noises, half of which are in voluntary even bestial whimpers, cries, belches, and hollow rumblings, and screams, sounds that are largely "obscene". Indeed, Grandma insists that one can not expect old people to speak precisely because they are obscene. Pitting her against what the Young Man will describe as the "syntax" of the American scene, Grandma's obscenity also prefigures her break out of the action's frame:

Mommy: what a masculine Daddy! Daddy!

Grandma: Don't . . . old people are obscene.

Mommy: some of your opinions aren't so bad. You know that?

(74)

Albee dedicates much of "*The American Dream*" to explicit reflections on language. Note, for example, here how Grandma again remarks that what she intends to say, might not accord with what she means. This sequence in particular provides an opportunity to consider the work of the "per formative" in Albee's dialogue, work crucial to how Albee conceives of language's capacity for violence. What is of course most astonishing about this sequence is the character seems ignorance of Mrs. Barker's work and the purpose of her visit. As noted above, Grandma does not recognize her, neither Mommy nor Daddy know what she does, late in the conversation, Daddy finds himself unable to remember Mrs. Barker's home. At other times, it appears just as likely here that Mommy and Daddy feign ignorance, staging these elaborate conversational games to torture their guess, a guest whom they hosted many years ago. Later it will become clear that a trauma in the household's history underpins these defensive and hostile feints, circumlocutions, and memory lapses

around Mrs. Barker's visit.

Daddy: Watch now, its opening. (He opens the door. Mrs. Barker steps into the room.)

Mommy: Here they are!

Grandma: Where?

Daddy: Come in you are late... to be late... can't gat satisfactions... come in.

Mrs. Barker: Thank you I don't mind if I do. (75-76)

At a linguistic level, these incoherencies serve to emphasize the speech act that underpins the visit. A speech act is speech that performs some thing, such as the phrase "I know pronounce you man and wife" that produces a married couple. In the case of the Mrs. Barker, the per formative speech here is the request that she come, the demand for satisfaction. Despite all their possible uncertainties, Mommy and Daddy know that they have asked Mrs. Barker to their home a request has been filled. The 'contents' of this request are mystery: what remains is the request itself. It establishes a contract that brings the party together. In this sense, Mommy explanation of her visit that she has come because they asked is not some "absurd" tautology but a reflection on how a linguistic act determines the action proper.

The performative capacity of speech appears more clearly when Mrs. Barker declares herself the chair of Mommy's women's club. Initially Mommy fails to recognize her. She then exclaims: "why so you are." Again, it seems that some repression has poked a hole in Mommy's memory, causing a momentary lapse. At another level, this exchange involves a speech act. Mrs. Barker becomes the chair of

the woman's club upon Mommy's performative statement. Mommy confers recognition upon her within. The speech act assumes paramount importance when Albee's figurative language involves a turn to the body. At these moments, languages' performative capacity for violence becomes most obvious. Thus, for example, Daddy, like some hypochondriac, complains that he has misgivings and definite qualms at the site of his operation. Grandma laments that people think old people only complain because old people are "gnarled and sagged" and twisted into the shape of a complaint" that is, the bodies mime their speech. Language manifests itself violently on the body.

Mommy: Don't be ridiculous . . . member Don't you

Mrs. Barker: Well...Chairman of your woman's club. Remember?

Daddy: No... No ...

Grandma: Old people... gnarled and sagged...Complaint. (78)

Thus this sequence as well as other in the play lay bare how performatives structure social intercourse. At the same times, this sequence functions to undermine the social intercourse upon which speech acts are often at the same time dependent. As a number of tourists have noted, the speech act is often radically contingent on its context for example, the contract depends on the social and cultural context within which it is intelligible. Here the rules of sociability that would determine Mrs. Barker's visit fly off their hinges. Mommy invites Mrs. Barker to remove her dress as she might her coat, she does so, and Daddy childishly ejaculates on himself. Mommy offers her the opportunity to cross her legs as if it was an aperitif, Mrs. Barker listens to Daddy to an "old house" and he takes it as a compliment under Mommy's behest. In a particularly disconcerting fashion, the characters carry on as if following some

invisible logic of sociability, the rules of some social theater note how, despite their transgressions of etiquette, Mommy still maniacally insists that Mrs. Barker not smoke.

Mrs. Barkers: (Pulling the hem of her slip above he loners)
you... for a husband.

Mommy: Oh, don't I know it.

Daddy: I just blushed . . . sticky wet.

Mommy: Isn't Daddy a caution? Mrs. Barker.

Mrs. Barker: May be if I smoked . . . ?

Mommy: Oh, that isn't necessary. (79-80)

"Yes, definitely, we're hostile" Daddy echoes when Mommy responds to Mrs. Barker's query about air raids, and here Mrs. Barker appears as the object of their joint hostility. In this sequence it seems most clear that Mommy is toying with Mrs. Barker. She forbids Grandma from revealing the visit's purpose, for whatever reason, she and Daddy sneer at Mrs. Barker's volunteer activities, activities that make her the caricature of the socially responsible American housewife. Note also the many double entendres. For example, when Mommy invites Mrs. Barker to fetch her own water, she notes that she should be able to put two and two together if clear enough.

In this light, Mommy's slip- in which she methodically lists husbands worst than her own appears premeditated. Her panic upon realizing her 'mistake' peppered with her characteristics emphases, shrill exclamations, and violent imagery similarly seems aggressive in intent. At the same tome, her will full forgetting of this faux pas also points out the other logic behind this bizarre visit that of defense. Mommy will

not think about it, forget she ever said it, and thus make everything all right. Thus she exiles a potentiality traumatic idea from consciousness:

Mrs. Barker: Oh, what a jolly... Air Raid ... raids.

Mommy: Oh, hostile.

Daddy: Yes . . . hostile.

Mrs. Barker: Then . . . badgertility . . . (91)

As we will see in the subsequent sequence, a traumatic memory shared by the party has similarly been defended against. Though remembered, it remains, for example, unspoken, temporarily forgotten or, even worse, raised but without the characters understanding make up many of the play's dizzying, "absurdist" turns.

In this sense, Mommy and, to a lesser extent, Daddy's ignorance of Mrs. Barker's purpose here is less an intentionally devious game but an indication of their ambivalent struggle with a traumatic memory. This memory impels them to demand compensation; the "satisfaction" denied them; thus the invitation and violent treatment of Mrs. Barker. At the same time, this demand necessarily brings the memory against which they have defended themselves against to mind requiring further defenses, whether amnesiac, sophisticated, or otherwise. Thus, Mrs. Barker's visit can only occur on uncertain terms. Similarly do Mommy's attacks take place through, for example, the slip or the apparently unmotivated assault on Mrs. Barker's volunteer work, attacks that do not directly bring their trauma to consciousness.

As the audience increasingly senses the possibility that Mommy and Daddy have sprung a trap, Mrs. Barker comes to functions is a role perhaps analogous to Honey's in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* That of the ingenuous outsider who

cannot say abreast of the household's games. Indeed, like Honey she almost faints as a result. Note in this respect her telling confession to Grandma that she does not particularly like similes. This confession prefigures her ultimate failure to apprehend the purpose of her visit, a failure that will also number among the neurotic defenses the party elects against their shared traumatic memory.

Mommy: Good heavens . . . I'll take care of you later.

Grandma: Oh, go soak your head. Well, diaries how do You feel?

Mrs. Barker: A little . . . you Grandma.

Grandma: That's good.

Mrs. Barker: But . . . I fell so lost . . . I was here before.

Grandma: well, you were . . . apartment . . . if you like similes.(94-95)

Also of note in this sequence is Mommy's accusation that Grandma is a liar. The lie is a particularly important. Trope in Albee's theater as Lying is a matter of course here. Characters viciously stage fictions against each other in the course of their conversational battles thus Grandma warns Mrs. Barker against trusting anyone in this household. Often they speak borrowed language whether from television or book of the month selections. The lie also refers to the theater the actor and director figures professional liars. As we will see, their fictions woven by these figures will ultimately intrude into the action with decidedly traumatic results:

Grandma: While we're at it... Agriculture... Adult population... eighty Years old... or eighty percent is over Ninety years old...

Mommy: You're such a liar . . . one is middle aged. (91)

Finally Grandma reveals the traumatic cause of Mrs. Barker's visit: the purchase of a bothered child indeed, a "bumble" Here the discipline and prohibition of the child assumedly for the most part at the hands of Mommy becomes its mutilation. The child acts out on its desires and suffers a progressive disfigurement as its punishment.

Such images of disfigurement occur throughout the play, indeed, Grandma declares the age as one of deformity. Mommy had a banana shaped head at birth. Grandma imagined old people as twisted into the shape of a complaint. The accumulation of these monstrous births assumes almost prophetic dimensions, becoming omens in what Albee describes as the "Slipping land" of America.

Indeed, the violence perpetrated on the child follows a set of figures of speech. The child cries its heart out, it only has eyes for Daddy, and so Mommy gouges them. The child's dismemberment recalls Freud's notion of the hypochondriac's organ speech", in which certain particularly vexing ideas are translated into bodily effects. However, Mommy does not only violate the bumble's body. She disfigures language as well violently. Literalizing a figure of speech and collapsing it into the body. Importantly the violence on the body follows this first disfigurement. Disfigurements in the theoretical sense becomes the occasion for disfigurements. The play disfigures language and the body in the same gesture. Such disfigurements are further example of how the play explores the relationship between language and violence:

Grandma: She means . . . Mommy was born . . . she
had a head shaped like a banana.

Mommy: You ungrateful . . . done for her?

Grandma : Do tell ! What happen to you.

Mrs. Barker: Like a banana

Grandma: You, just like a banana (88).

Though it is more a revelation than a hint, Grandma's story fails to produce any effect on its listener. Mrs. Barker provides the play's most explicit example of defense in her failure to apprehend Grandma's thinly veiled and brutally sarcastic chronicle. This defense involves another failed trope, one which Mrs. Barker confessed not particularly liking earlier the simile. Here Mrs. Broker in a sense takes the trope too literally, emphasizing the difference established by the very much like" a modifier that in large part only refers to the fact that the characters have aged. She denies Grandma's "very much like" and thus obliterate any similarity between the figure of Grandma's story and the players on-stage. The Bye- Bye Adoption service is the Bye - Bye- Adoption service, anything "Like" it is not. She can not relate Grandmas hint to her visit, for her, the simile fails, nevertheless, she clearly knows the traumatic occasion for her visit: her attempt at defense is decidedly absurd:

Mrs. Barker: I can'tVery much like

The Bye- Bye- Adoption.....mulls it

Grandma: probably... I used to be.

Mrs. Barker: oh, well... good-by then. (104-105).

As we will see, the story of the dismembered child sets up the central allegory of the play. In the sequence to come, the bumble's lost their, the Young Man, will appear tropical him as the new son of the household. He will rehearse the trajectory of Grandma's tale, recounting how we suffer losses pearled to the punishments meted out

to his brother. His Brother's disfigurement will leave in a perfect "type", a clean cut and handsome icon who has been his emboweled, robbed of emotion and feeling, income Photo in spite of its beauty, its deal form. And such a type, roiled of inferiority, the Young Man becomes the commodity that the bumble of Joy" could not be in its unlatches, finally gibing Mommy and Daddy the "satisfaction" that they paid for:

Grandma : You ought to try out for them the movies

Young Man : well, actually....I've met a few people who...

Grandma : oh, that's nice...Face

Young Man : Yea, it[s Quite....clean -cut ...type ... (107)

Here the Young Man recounts the allegory of *The American Dream*. Certainly, facing characters named Mommy" and "Daddy" the reader has been aware of the play's allegorical intentions from the outset. Here the play betrays a certain embarrassment around the potential heavy - handedness of allegory: note the Dream's self conscious joke that he is a type.

As Grandma notes the Young Man is what his murdered double might have become - note the elegiac use of the conditional had he been. Again, this double was a child who suffered progressive disfigurement under Mommy's discipline - A blond, iconic, Midwestern beauty, the Young Man's physiognomy stands in clear contrast with the bumble of joy, the spineless, clay footed, and wholly disfigured specter of his twin brother, With the murder of his double, he is now nothing but a 'type' externally perfect but disemboweled of his inner life. Note the homosociality of the Dream's tale: his first lost love is a male twin, that twin loses his heart upon the loss of this brother and his eyes that he proves to love Daddy alone. He does so of course at the hands of

a terrorizing, phobic Mommy. Robbed of his desire, the Young Man will do anything for money to compensate for his lack. Thus he becomes a serviceable object, Unable to relate but necessarily related to. Certainly this adopts him to Mommy and Daddy's household, a place where children and the dreams or fantasies they might embody for their parents are utterly substitutable in the attempt to trade up and satisfaction. Tellingly, Mrs. Barker will suggest that they name the Young Man whatever they named the bumble:

Young Man:	Money talks.
Grandma:	Hey! You look familiar.
Young Man:	Hm! pardon?
Grandma:	I said ... familiar.
Young Man:	well...modeling.
Grandma:	No... no, I don't...
Young Man:	well, I am a type. (112-113)

At the same time, of course, the Young Man is not simply a prospective son, but the personification of *The American Dream*. Albee's allegory of *The American Dream* is certainly strange. The American Dream does not appear as that which one lives out or even as ideology, but as a person and possession. One possible reading of the allegory involves the all-important theatrical concept of the mask. The Young Man as American Dream is a mask without a man behind it, a personification without a person. The murder of his double is the murder of the man behind the mask, the elimination of the unruly body - indeed, the bumble- that can only mould itself into the perfect form through its mutilation. Thus Albee offers a sinister account of *The*

American Dream, imagining it as a mask disemboweled of man and his excesses.

This scene introduces a certain hiatus into the play, radically altering its tone, dialogue and action. The Dream's lament is almost lyrical its ellipses more elegiac than menacing. The scene of its narration evokes and almost sacred solemnity: the Dream must be sure- in a play structured by misapprehension and misunderstanding - that Grandma is old enough to understand. Grandma drops her 'act' prefiguring her imminent exit from the spectacle of the household, Reduced to pity, she can only murmur 'oh my child' - this marks the only gesture of familial affection in the play.

Notably Grandma hushes the Dream when he warns that he may be lying out of professional habit. Does Able then exclude the dream's tale from the rest of the dialogue's deceptions and defenses? Perhaps Grandma's gesture is an overture to the audience, asking that they suspend their disbelief before the allegory? or does she warn the Dream that such an admission of artifice might threaten the allegory's credibility ?

Grandma: Yopthe American Dream...

Youyou are the American Dream.

Young Man: Thanks

Mommy: Who rang the doorbell?

Grandma: Ten American Dream.

Young Man: I, m looking for work.

Grandma: Are you, well, what kind of work?

Young Man: ...anything...I, will do almost
anything for money.(108)

Grandma makes her exit. First, however, she waxes nostalgic over her departure, finally revealing the contents of the ubiquitous wrapped boxes. To this point, the audience has only had heard that these boxes are nicely wrapped, that they had to be wrapped even through wrapping frightened Grandma and hurt her fingers. Though Grandma almost reveals the boxes, purpose - and perhaps then her intention to escape halfway through the play, Mommy quickly silences her. Perhaps Mommy and Daddy's insistence on their wrapping stands for their negligence toward Grandma. In a play where an outwardly perfect Young Man becomes the son who Provides satisfaction, it is probably easiest to consider Mommy and Daddy's patronizing emphasis on the boxes wrapping as indicative of their satisfaction with surfaces. The boxes of course also serve as a diversion when the household attempts to ascertain the purpose of Mrs. Broker's visit. They perhaps then also allegorize the composition of the play, which largely consists of apparent and perpetually surprising diversions that keep the audience from the heart of the matter. In any case, it appears that Grandma has prepared for her flight from her entrance directly under the noses of Mommy and Daddy. She has eluded then through her obviousness. Perversely, she covers her last tracks by turning one of their fictions revenges itself against the household, intruding like the death of Martha and Georgia's child in *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* into the action. Notably the fiction does not invade the 'real' but into the equally fictional spectacle on stage. Instead, a subterfuge, a second order fiction so to speak, breaks in. This fiction concedes Grandma's exit from this spectacle's frame, her exit into the outside; the reality of the audience. This crossing back and forth like the Grandma's crossing between first and second order fictions only functions to contaminate that reality with the "absurdity" of the scene on the

stage:

Daddy: you ...you know Mommy.

Mommy: sur...prise.

Daddy: you remember ...here.

Mrs. Barker: Mrs. Barker if you don't mind.

Daddy: Yes, Mommy... about wanting satisfaction.

Mrs. Barker: (To Young Man) his Mommy. (123-124)

In crossing between the spaces of the action and theater, Grandma literally becomes commentator on the spectacle from the outside. Thus the reader should note how Mommy is quick to forget Grandma's absence upon the unveiling of the American Dream, The spectator perhaps wonders why she and Daddy do not perceive her by the footlights even as Mrs. Barker and the Young Man do. Certainly throughout the play Mommy wishes for Grandma's departure. Here their blindness to Grandma's presence- exaggerated by the Young Man's error over the glasses is also a blindness to the staged nature of the denouement and Grandma's ensuing criticism, a shared denial that aims at preserving the hope that satisfaction will be theirs. The celebration of the Young Man's arrivals, however, is certainly a joke. His unveiling is less a miracle than a vulgar transaction, note his stilted introduction to and Mommy's gratuitous reference to the family's prosperity. Mommy's intimate aside with the Young Man and Daddy's sudden sullenness conceivable suggests an attempt at seduction as well, an attempt wholly consistent with the play's fantasy of the bad mother. Thus Grandma Looks at ironically her abrupt interruption and glib farewell clearly offer up the household to the audience's judgment:

Young Man: why yes. That would be very nice.

Mommy: something familiar about you.....I can't quite
place it.....

Grandma: (Interruptionto audience) well, I guess
that just about wraps it up...this.....this is a
comedy ...while every body's happy...

Goodnight, dears. (127)

Albee has projected the vision of American decay caused by cultural deterioration whose root cause is moral disintegration. All characters of this play represent the moral disintegration. In her many sardonic, epigrams,

Grandma will position herself as an old person at the margins of human intercourse, a figure considered obscene in the social theater. Grandma's defense against the violence of social intercourse more precisely define many of what critics have vaguely touted as the American Dream's most absurdist movements. Mommy, an archetypal bad mother, is the household's sadistic disciplinarian, dismissing grandma and infantilizing Daddy at every turn. She recalls a number of other of Albee's female characters, most notably Martha from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Like Martha, Mommy's speech distinguishes itself as the most violent in the household in its trident tone, its exaggerated sarcasm, its shrillness, its scorn and derision. As Grandma makes clear, Mommy is a deceitful gold-digger who has married Daddy for his money.

Under Mommy's reign of terror Daddy is a negative entity. Indeed, early in the play Mommy reduces his speech to the echo of hers. Bent to Mommy's will, he

relies on her entirely for the conformation of his masculinity. A blond, Mid western beauty, the young Man describes himself as a 'type', upon their introduction, Grandma dubs him the "American Dream," one possible reading of this admittedly strange allegory of the American Dream might focus on Notion of the mask. In the same sense, the two twins stand in for the man and his mask, the perfect form of The *American Dream* requires the murder of the unruly body, the human bumble,

From this stand of freedom of moral values, the characters define themselves. They create their own world of moral values which don't tally with others. Each of them falls prey to evil as evil-mindedness is their foundation. Thus, moral disintegration dangerously prevails in the so-called sophisticated American society threatening its future, endangering its present and tarnishing its glorious past history.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Edward Albee's *The American Dream* has motivated many scholars and researchers to write an overwhelming number of books and essays on different layers and facets of its theme and meaning. The present study deals with the concept of disintegration of moral values in American society with reference to the text. However, the study and discussion of disintegration of moral values may not have the required depth of analysis because the dimensions of the moral values are multifaceted. Hence, only the prominent elements in the text have been analyzed and discussed to support the central thesis.

As noted in its preface, *The American Dream* is an allegory of the "American scene" gone away; a scene typified here by sadistic Mommy, emasculated Daddy, and embittered Grandma. The play imagines what is left of *The American Dream* in their shamed household. The American Dream is personified by the Young Man, a clean cut, Midwestern beauty, a self described type. Though physically perfect, he remains incomplete, having lost all feeling and desire in the murder of an identical twin from whom he was separated as a child. This twin, Mommy and Daddy's first adopted son, stands against his brother as a consummate deformity. He lacks a head, spine, guts, and feet of flesh. Moreover, he suffers a progressive disfigurement under Mommy's sadistic tortures, punishment specifically directed at each of his bodily excesses and infantile desires.

In his unruliness, this child, the so-called bundle of joy, fails to provide Mommy and Daddy satisfaction. The result of these tortures is the Young Man, a man disemboweled, voided of interiority but perfect in form, a figure who can not relate to others but accepts the 'syntax' around him in knowing that others must relate to him. Thus he becomes the son who provides Mommy and Daddy the satisfaction

they believe that they have long desired. He is ready to do anything for money. He, in a way, is their perfect commodity, the merchandise they want all along.

Albee's allegory of *The American Dream* is certainly strange. The American Dream does not appear as that which one lives out or even as ideology, but as a person and possession. One possible reading of this allegory involves the all-important theatrical concept of the mask. Linked indissolubly, the twins stand for the actor and his mask. The Young Man as American Dream is a mask without a man behind it, a personification without a person. As he tells Grandma, he is a type. The murder of his double is the murder of the man behind the mask, the elimination of the unruly body indeed, the bumble- that can only mould itself into the perfect form through its mutilation. The product of this mutilation is the Young Man. Thus Albee offers a sinister account of *The American Dream*, imagining it as a mask disemboweled of man and his excesses.

Thus, the society appears to be chaotic as there is hysterical rush toward an impending crisis. Moral values disintegrate when people feel disenchanting with social codes and start violating them. The disintegration of moral values finally results in all cultural chaos, anarchy and upheavals, which lead social institutions towards crisis and processional failure.

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