The present Chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the major themes incorporated in Albee’s plays which signify his vision of the contemporary reality that characterizes modern ethos with all its implicit and implied associations. The discussions in this chapter also provide a creative rationale for the kind of linguistic strategies and technical dramatic devices he employs to embody the complex matrix of interpersonal and social relationships along with the disconcerting inner yearnings, agony and angst his characters are continually confronted with. The labyrinthine situations his characters are invariably placed in ultimately reflect upon the precarious human condition. An exploration of the multifarious dimensions of the prevailing reality and its constraints is therefore analyzed in this chapter.

Moreover, the present chapter discusses the social structure of the American society and the dichotomy between the rich and poor strata in Albee’s *The Zoo Story, The American Dream, Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, A Delicate Balance, The Goat, Every Thing In The Garden, Seascape, The Man Who Has Three Arms, Marriage Play, and Three Tall Women* which provide an engaging picture of various issues affecting the society in general.

Further, it can be noted that the struggle between rich and poor has a very long history in literature as in society. In society one can find two groups, economically prosperous, enjoying a high status and on the other hand people are also poor and can hardly make the two ends meet. Conflict between rich and poor is the common theme in
most of Albee’s plays. The theme is the reflection of real and hidden struggle which takes place in the American society. A comprehensive critical analysis of his plays elucidating socio-economic themes which betray the inherent contradictions in the American social structure is therefore also undertaken in the present Chapter.

Furthermore, American disparities and disjunctions ruthlessly shatter the delicate balance of relationships. Imbalanced and ill-suited familial, interpersonal and even sexual relationships, Albee’s plays establish that it cannot and will not be conducive to self fulfillment and also to the promotion of a healthy and sane society. Insights, therefore, are browsed from other allied disciplines like sociology, psychology, psycho-analytical, and cultural studies to comment on the urgency and authenticity of the thematic patterns of Albee’s plays. His contemporaneity is farther commented upon with the corresponding accuracy between his themes and dramatic techniques and stage technicalities. Each one of the selected plays offers illustrious dramatization of the most important social issues engendered during the modern era, both in the chronological as well as terminological sense. A detailed look unto the above noted plays is as under.

Edward Albee’s literary work covers nearly about half century of America. His first play *The Zoo Story* was published in 1958. Most his work which he produced during his lifetime carries some autobiographical elements. On 14th January 1960, *The Zoo Story* opened at the Provincetown play house in New York. The play was well received by audience and some critics too but according to some critics the play had homosexual overtone.

*The Zoo Story* presents two complex characters. Jerry, the protagonist of the play, is a complex character while Peter, the second
character, appears less complex. Albee presents the contrast which we
find in Jerry and Peter. Jerry, a much more complex character, lives in
two different and contrast worlds. One the one hand, he has a world
where thousands of peoples are living. The food, clothing, shelter,
friendship, luxurious life is present. He has also created his own other
world which is completely different from the actual world in which
seems to live. But for him the actual outside world is not as real as his
own concept of other world. The outer world consists luxury, happiness, joy, beauty etc., and the inner world which is hidden from
the other characters consist pain, suffering, etc.

The inner and outer realities are depicted in The Zoo Story. Albee has painted the characters which are completely isolated and
neglected by the society. The theme of isolation is delineated very
craftily. The theme of isolation repeatedly occurs in his other plays
also. The character, like Jerry is living a dead life. Every day he is
experiencing “death in life.” The issues of social harmony and social
integrity at large are masterfully weaved through the complex
dimensions of socio–psychosis. Homosexual overtones of the play
clearly but intelligently touches upon the predicament of the
characters. While communicating with Peter, Jerry makes a painful
confession of his failure to come to terms with the opposite sex. He
clearly tells Peter that he does not find himself emotionally attached or
much interest in them.

Jerry the protagonist in The Zoo Story is facing internal as well
as external conflicts. But the intensity of internal conflict is much more
than of external conflict. The internal conflict emerges due to the
duality in his thoughts, emotions, views, or some internal feelings.
Here one thing is evidently notable, that the character of Jerry involves
into external conflict with Peter only due to the influence of internal conflict. The internal conflict faced by Jerry is completely out of his control which makes him get involved in to the external one.

There is one major difference between *The Zoo Story* and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, that the family life of George and Martha was disturbed due to marital conflict whereas, the life of Jerry becomes a burden not due to conflict but due to isolation or alienation from his family as well as from other characters.¹

The characters like Martha and George release their tension by struggling with each other or by creating a fantasy. George recounts the story about an unnamed boy who kills his parents which raises curiosity in the audience about whether he is George himself? Both George and Martha create the story of an imaginary child whom George killed on his birthday. These things help to release the tension between Martha and George but Jerry’s plight is something different. Jerry does not share any of his internal feelings with anybody. Therefore, the internal tensions keep increasing day by day which finally propel his move towards suicide.

Jerry’s mind is like a well which has an entry door but after entry there is no exit. The isolation, alienation and other feelings completely disturb his life of which he wants to get rid of. *The Zoo Story* brought American silence, isolation and alienation on the stage.

The play, *The Zoo Story*, opens when Jerry and Peter are in the open space of the zoo where we find only a bench. The scene has a symbolic importance in the life of most of the Americans. We find Jerry is conscious of the isolation. This episode has an expressionistic quality. While telling the story? He tries to show his desire to kill himself. The action of the play, a non-realistic episode and the classic
dramatic progression in which the protagonist develops through “purpose” and “passion” makes *The Zoo Story* a perfect drama. Jerry starts from suffering and ends all the sufferings at the last by killing himself.²

The play starts with the dialogues between Peter and Jerry. Jerry starts the discussion and later on both of them try to know each other through sharing of their thoughts and past experiences. Jerry tries to attract the attention of Peter by beginning the communication:

*Jerry: I have been to the zoo (Peter doesn’t notice)*
*I said, I’ve been to the zoo. MISTER? I’ve BEEN TO THE ZOO!*

*Peter: Hm?...What?...i’m sorry, were you talking to me?*

*Jerry: I went to the zoo, and then I walked until I came here. Have I been walking north?³*

It can be clearly noticed that it is Jerry who starts the discussion and makes Peter to talk to him. He tries to know all about him by asking him several questions, identify his profession, family size, area of residence and income etc. The questions which are asked by Jerry helps him to reveal the personality and life style of Peter. The questions are equally revelatory of Jerry. Jerry questions Peter in a self-revealing manner and becomes painfully aware of difference between Peter’s and his own lifestyle. Jerry says that he has been to the zoo. Peter replies that he knows this already, Jerry adds the enigmatic statement, “you’ll read about it in the papers tomorrow, if you don’t see it on your TV tonight.”⁴

Jerry looks a very confused character at the beginning, he himself is not sure of what he is doing. As his dialogues suggest that for him animals are more important, as he finds a resemblance in the
behavior of animals and human beings. Through Jerry a confused character who doesn’t know what he is doing, but, he knows very well what he wants. His whole action is related with his wanting. He makes Peter act as how he wants to act himself.

The conservation of Peter and Jerry turn towards Peter’s family, that time Peter hesitates to answer him. When Jerry inquires about whether his children are boys or girls, he answers, “girls…both girls”.

Analyzing Peter’s silence in this passage Kane observes: his evasive attitude is no longer one or evasion of speech, but rather an avoidance of subject. The Motifs of Peter’s impotence, first intimated here and linked by innuendo, disease, will reiterate throughout the lay.

When Jerry tells a dog’s story that time he says that the dog has affection with me but I am tried to kill him by poisoning his food. But now the dog does not show any sign of love or affection. He does not bark by looking at me. I tried to kill the dog who loved me. I wanted to kill myself. These dialogues of Jerry was well-planned and not a sudden reaction. His intension was already fixed. He wanted to kill himself and he used Peter as a tool to complete his wish. Peter unconsciously helped him in activated satisfaction.

While discussing with Peter Jerry admits that he likes to know about people when he gets the opportunity because he gets very less chance to meet other people:

“I don’t talk to many people ... except to say like give me a beer, or where’s the John, or what time does the future go on, keep your hands to yourself”.

It seems that Jerry does not feel comfortable while communicating with others and he gets very less chance to talk to other people. It suggests that he lives a lonely, isolated and alienated life, completely separated from other people. But, Peter does not feel any trouble while talking to others. The developing dialogues between
Jerry and Peter show that Peter feels trouble speaking about his sexual relationship with his own wife. But, it’s very clear that he is proud of his career, his salary, his general home situation, etc.

Jerry is strongly aware of his impoverishment in communicating with other people in the world. In the beginning of the play, Jerry impresses the audience as being “not properly dressed, but carelessly.” His external appearance represents his great weariness. The outer appearance is symbolic which suggest the audience that the person is tired of his own life. He is tired of it due to his awareness of isolation.

After convincing Peter to talk to him, a new phase of their relationship begins. Initially, the dialogues seem comical. Jerry is someone who feels the deprivation of not owning something important. It is clear that he wishes to have it, something, may be a person or even an animal. His internal feeling of lack and loss keeps on increasing.

Jerry had contacts with his landlady and her dog when he was in boarding house. The sexual encounter with the landlady is described as a parody by Jerry. It seems that he is gentler when he describes about the dog than of the landlady. Jerry attempts to win friendship with the animals like dog, cat, etc., after he recounts his relationship with the dog, Peter claims not to have understood Jerry, the landlady, “or her dog”. This line is the cause of the final development and the final action. When Peter refers the dog as her dog, Jerry shows a sudden reaction that

“her dog…. It is her dog! I thought I was my ....no. no. you’re right. It is her dog. (looks at Peter intently, shaking his head) I don’t know what I was thinking about; of course you don’t understand.”
He blames Peter for not understanding him. Now he fights for the ownership of the bench Peter is sitting on, even at the cost of his life.\(^9\)

In the above situation Jerry turns into an actor and he is acting outside himself. As far as intensity of his feeling is concerned he becomes an expressionistic actor. Critics have called Jerry “schizophrenic” as he suddenly allows himself to be killed.

According to Roudane, Peter rejects not only “\textit{a crazed man}”, but as Albee suggests, all experience associated with the visceral, mysterious, non rational when Peter shouts on him,” \textit{I don't want to hear any more}.\(^{10}\) For a moment everything was silent. The meaning of silence is unspoken in the play, but we can guess what Albee means and what the unspoken sayings are. The speech about pain and alienation of the homosexuality is reflected in his weariness. The silence demands emotional satisfaction for that he commits an extreme act. When Jerry fails to gain Peter's understanding, he becomes more violent. He forces Peter to pick up a knife. Beside loneliness, alienation and absurdity, another important contemporary issue, as we have seen in the above discussion, is the issue of violence that has plagued the society. It is through the dramatization of individual and interpersonal violence, Albee makes an indictment that very effectively delineates the disintegration of man and devastation of larger human values which stand for the mobility and integrity of man. His treatment of the contemporary issues is continued in \textit{Seascape} also.

\textit{Seascape} fetched Albee his second Pulitzer Prize for drama. Like many of Albee's plays, \textit{Seascape} focuses on the failure communication in interpersonal relationships, in this case between couples. \textit{Seascape} is different from other dramas on several counts, for
instance, the play is not strictly a drama but, according to various critics, has elements of comedy, fantasy, satire, and/or absurdism.\textsuperscript{11}

In *Seascape*, Nancy and Charlie, an American couple on the verge of the major life change of retirement, are having problems in their relationship. They are discussing these matters on the beach when another couple appears, two human-sized lizards named Leslie and Sarah who speak: and act like people. The lizards have evolved to such a degree that they no longer feel at home in the sea and are compelled to seek life on the land. What the lizards experience with Nancy and Charlie nearly drives them back to the sea, but with an offer of help from the human couple, they decide to stay. This relatively happy ending is not common in many of Albee's previous plays, and some critics find it refreshing.

Leslie, in *Seascape* play, is the male lizard who appears at the end of act I. Like Charlie, Leslie is a bit more fearful, defensive, and mistrusting than his mate. It is he who first watches the human couple. Leslie is also the first to approach Nancy and Charlie, poking them in the side. When Charlie does not reply right away, Leslie becomes frustrated. While Leslie's guard remains high, especially around Charlie, for most of the play, he is also curious, much more so than his human male counterpart.

Both Leslie and Sarah speak English, though they do not understand many words and concepts of human life. Leslie does not know what emotions are, what cooking or clothing is, or what the names of limbs are. When Nancy tries to shake hands with him, he is completely unfamiliar with and mistrustful of the process.

Though Leslie wants to understand for the most part, he becomes impatient when the humans cannot easily explain complex things like love or consciousness. Though Leslie does not possess or
understand some human ideas like love, he does have prejudices against others. Charlie tries and fails to explain what bigotry is to the lizard after Leslie speaks badly of fish. Leslie thinks they are dirty and too numerous. He also looks down on humans because they do not lay eggs. Yet Leslie also has some empathy for the humans. Leslie knows that he and Sarah must look odd to Charlie and Nancy. He also understands that Charlie is being difficult when Nancy mentions that her husband thinks they are dead and that this situation is some sort of hallucination. ‘Leslie acts most often on instinct, like an animal’. When birds and jets fly overhead, he runs to find an escape route.  

Leslie is very protective of Sarah. When Charlie hurts Sarah asking her what she would do if Leslie left and never came back, Leslie attacks him. After hitting him, Leslie nearly chokes him until the females intercedes. After the incident, Leslie decides that he and Sarah will go back into the sea, to escape this threat. When Nancy tells him that they will have to come back eventually and offer them help, it is Leslie who accepts this fate.

Sarah is the female half of the lizard couple, the mate of Leslie. Like her mate, Sarah is cautious and fearful around the humans. Yet like Nancy, she is curious about them and tries to make a connection. Though Sarah defers to Leslie much more than Nancy does to Charlie, she does play a buffer role between the couples. Leslie often consults Sarah on what he should do and what she thinks about the humans and the situation at hand. At first, Sarah urges wanness, but she also emphasizes the importance of contact. Though Sarah is more deferential than Nancy, she does assert herself to Leslie when an experience is important. For example, she insists on accompanying Leslie after they have taken their submissive pose.
Sarah wants to see everything for herself. Most of the new things she encounters intrigue her: the handshakes; Nancy's breasts; human gestation; and the birds flying above them, among other things. But she is also fearful. The jets frighten her, as does Charlie when he asks her what she would do if Leslie went away and never came back. Like Leslie, Sarah does not grasp many human concepts like emotions and nonaquatic animals, though she tries. Sarah is also more open to explaining their way of life to the humans than her husband is. Leslie tries to curb her, but Sarah says what she believes she should say.\(^\text{13}\)

Sarah does not fully share Leslie's prejudices and tries to make the humans understand her. For example, Sarah shares information on their reproduction and how she and Leslie met. It is also Sarah who tells the humans why they decided to come out of the sea. Leslie is reluctant to part with this information. After Charlie asks a question that makes her cry, Sarah wants to go back into the sea. Leslie agrees with her. Later, Sarah intercedes when Leslie tries to beat up Charlie over it. Though Sarah wants to return to their home, Leslie decides, with Nancy's help, to stay.

In *Seascape*, Charlie seems to be uncomfortable with Nancy and her desires, but he also has bigger problems with the lizards. Charlie is uncomfortable with the lengths to which his wife goes to connect with the lizards. Because Sarah has never seen a mammal's mummeries, Nancy shows Sarah her breasts and explains their function. Nancy would also have shown Leslie except for Charlie's protestations. While Nancy does become a bit frustrated with the lizards' intellectual limitations, she becomes increasingly annoyed with Charlie's condescending attitude toward them. Yet, when the lizards want to go back after Charlie drives Sarah to tears, and Leslie beats him up
wants them to stay and offers them help. This experience has given Nancy the excitement she craves, and she ensures that it continues.

At first, Charlie insists that they are a death hallucination caused by rotten liver paste sandwiches. While the creatures intrigue Nancy, Charlie continually acts with fear and resistance. He follows his wife's lead on posing submissively when the creatures first approach, but he will not respond to them until she orders him to. Even after the ice has been broken, Charlie remains uncertain about the creatures and their intentions. Leslie and Sarah's ignorance on many things (emotions, anatomy, etc.) adds to Charlie's negative attitude. When he has to explain these ideas to them, he is easily frustrated and often condescending. He drives Leslie to beat and choke him. Yet at the end, Charlie agrees with Nancy that the lizards have to stay on land and not go back into the water. Though he helps because Nancy will do it whether or not he agrees, Charlie does offer to take them by the hand.

Critics are divided in their opinion of the Seascape and its content. Some believe it is witty and original, while others find it to be pompous if not gimmicky, primarily because of the lizard characters. One critic who found Seascape noteworthy, Clive Barnes of the New York Times, writes, "it is a curiously compelling exploration into the basic tenet of life. It is asking in a lighthearted but heavy minded fashion whether life is worth living. It decides that there is no alternative." Yet the Seascape stands out, even alone, in the Albee canon as a full-length play that finds hope in the shadow of death and tender loving care in the institution of marriage.

The plot of the Seascape is centered on Charlie and Nancy, who are discovered on a sunny shore discussing their future and their past. Now that their children are grown, Nancy wants to travel and explore;
George just wants to stay home and rest. Their debate is interrupted by the arrival of Leslie and Sarah, fearsome looking, green-gilled amphibians making their maiden exploratory voyage on dry land. And guess what? They can talk. They also turn out to have a comfortably monogamous relationship similar to that of Charlie and Nancy, who wonderingly take it upon themselves, as Charlie puts it, to "explain evolution to a couple of lizards." Such moments occur often enough, at least in the first act, to give the Seascape an emotional gravity rarely found on Broadway these days. For the most part, though, this revival is notable for being perfectly likable and, to be honest, forgettable. Even more than the presence of talking lizards, these traits makes the Seascape a novelty within the body of work of a playwright who is rarely either.

Like many of Albee’s plays, Seascape explores the human habit of creating illusions to fill an internal void or to sweeten the bitterness of life. In the case of Seascape, “its theme is the need to recognize and accept death as part of life’s process.”

Seascape is set in a world whose citizens have erected all manner of buffers and protections against the idea of death. Such technological advancements allow humans to deny death more easily than ever before, according to Kübler-Ross, but “for Albee, the need for recognition of the human condition in pain and suffering is absolute.” Thus it becomes imperative that these characters confront their own mortalities as they begin the next leg of the evolutionary journey. But the “dull, bleak now” of existential awareness is “shattered by a primeval then” when two primitive creatures rise from the primordial soup.

Seascape juxtaposes man’s consciousness against the obliviousness of the “brute beast” that is “not even aware it’s alive,
much less it’s going to die.”\textsuperscript{20} The character’s simplicity reminds us of innocence lost, and their curiosity about the practices of the human life identifies the conventions that are pointless and illuminate what is truly worthwhile.

As self-aware beings, Nancy and Charlie are conscious of death’s certainty, but their responses to its inevitability are vastly different. Charlie responds with submission; “he revels in the prospect of gradually and painlessly easing out of the picture by withdrawing from all purposive activity.”\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, he hopes for a “release” from the responsibilities and fears of life. His childhood habit of sinking under water is a “retreat into a pre-moral condition . . . free from the terror that is an inevitable part of life.”\textsuperscript{22} Moreover, when Charlie encounters the lizards he would rather believe that he is already dead than face the unfamiliar.

According to Nancy, she rather sees the certainty of death as a reason to live life to the fullest. In Nancy’s eyes, since people “are not going to be around forever . . . [they] may not do nothing.”\textsuperscript{23} Life’s inevitable termination is the very thing that makes it precious. She refuses to resign herself to the purgatory before purgatory but instead “accepts flux as … a necessary precondition for progress and growth.”\textsuperscript{24}

Thereafter, Charlie wonders “what’s to be gained” by spending energy doing things some illusion, I suppose; some smoke. He feels that Nancy’s efforts to see everything twice are a futile effort to resist what cannot be repelled. But Nancy’s zeal for adventure is merely a “Kierkegaardian leap of faith [to] find some positive value in life.”\textsuperscript{25} She is determined to find inherent worth in the using of tools and in the making of art, in being more interesting than a rabbit all they do is eat
carrots. To her, moving forward is essential, while to Charlie progress is simply “a set of assumptions that will eventually dwindle into obscurity”.  

Nancy and Charlie face in *Seascape* the crucial question which is what, if anything should be done with their life? The answer seems to be “something.” Nancy and Charlie find their answer in Leslie and Sarah, who are unaware of their own mortality. It seems that Albee’s pattern of saving-others-in-order-to-save-oneself is the only way to quiet the terror of being alive. The innocence of Leslie and Sarah reminds us, in almost childlike terms, of what is really important in life and also offers Charlie and Nancy a solution to their existential crisis.

Charlie shows Leslie and Sarah the pain of self-awareness by forcing them to imagine their lives without one another, and then quenches their fear by extending his hand in a human gesture of compassion and solidarity. The ultimate realization of the play is that human connection eases the pain of mortality and the resolution comes with Leslie’s agreement not to re-enter “the pre-human security of the sea,” but instead to “begin” living.

The nod to absurdism is not only found in having half the cast being human/lizards but also in a few staging elements. For *e.g.*, several times throughout the play a jet flies above, and each time Nancy and Charlie repeat the same dialog for two or three lines.

Many symbols are employed by Albee to underscore the action and themes of *Seascape*. The most obvious symbols are the lizard characters, Leslie and Sarah. Leslie and Sarah represent many things, including a literal depiction of evolution and progress and an ideal of a relationship that works in stark contrast to Nancy and Charlie's relationship.
The setting itself is also symbolic. The beach where land and sea meet represents a place of progress. In the theory of evolution, creatures emerged from the sea to live on land like Leslie and Sarah do in the course of the play. Changes for all four characters are taking place at the beach.30

Another symbol is the jet planes that zoom overhead. The jets are another symbol of progress, but a more mixed one than those already discussed. The jets are described to Sarah as the mechanical evolution of the seagulls that fascinate her. Yet Charlie worries that a jet will one day crash into the dune—a temporary if not symbolic end to evolution. The jets also scare both Sarah and Leslie. But the jets continue to fly and never crash, and the lizards decide to embrace their evolution. Though feared by everyone but Nancy in Seascape, change seems endorsed by the play's complex symbolism.

Albee’s creative and thematic stance which signifies the central problem of the thesis is masterfully continued in his next play Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? a satirical play, was first performed in New York city in 1962. It was the period when America was in the stage of development and many of the Americans considered success to have one’s own house, car, kids and dog.31 The people had developed a liberal view towards the life and therefore after getting the job or once the person settled he preferred to live a very luxurious life. The arrangement of parties and drinking costly wine was the part of upper class American families. It was the condition of most of the American families and therefore through his plays Edward Albee tried to raise the issue the social problems affecting America people.

This play has a resemblance with American Dream as far as the setting, characters and themes are concerned.32 The characters of
George and Martha are the major characters of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The others characters are Nick and Honey. The couple lives in the same house like Mommy and Daddy but fails to understand one another. The couple has only the marital relationship but there is no emotional attachment: love, care and affection for each other. In both of the plays a women character is dominating over the male character. Martha’s character in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is more dominant and prominent than the character of George.

In this play, George is successful in his profession but Martha’s expectations from George are much more. Both of them have the different definitions of success, satisfaction and honor. According to Martha to acquire the topmost position is the success but George thinks success is nothing but it is the satisfaction. These contradictory views cause the marriage problems in their family.

*Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Focuses on the marriage problems of contemporary American society. Both couples *i.e.*, George and Martha on one side and Nick and Honey on the other, are highly educated and having a very good position in their work and are the representatives of American society who often face marriage problems. For instance, even though they have all the facilities in their own life, they are not a happy couple. Thus, it is noticed that happiness cannot be brought with the help of money and wealth. That depends on not only the mentality, psychology, thinking capability of an individual, but also on the understanding of both wife and husband. In this regard, it is important to quote a conversation between George and Martha:

*Martha: I swear... if you existed I’d divorce you...*

*George: Well, just stay on your feet, that’s all....*

*These people are your guests, you know, and .......*
Martha: I can’t even see you...I haven’t been able to see you for years....

George: ....if you pass out, or throw up, or something....

Martha: I mean you’re a blank, a cipher...33

Edward Albee observes that if a couple could understand and respects each other’s feelings, then no inner or outer sources can snatch their happiness.

Martha and George blame each other even for petty reasons and this proves that the couple has developed some misunderstanding mainly related with their past. This apart, it may be noticed that there is lack of face to face communication between the couple. The husband, being a professor ought to respect the emotions and feelings of his wife and it is also Honey’s duty to understand the problem of her husband but both of them do not talk with each other with a view to seeking solutions to their problems. Instead of solving their problem, both of them are busy in making the situation even more critical. Nobody is ready to accept the mistake. Everybody blames other which makes the problem more concrete and critical.

A public insult on each other reveals the secrets of George and Martha’s other life. For instance, George and Martha even attack on their own guests. Edward Albee also throws a light upon the alcoholic natures of Martha, George, Nick and Honey. Martha is more alcoholic than all other characters. They all start drinking from the afternoon.

Through the alcoholic nature of Martha and all other characters, Albee portrays the reason as to why they become alcoholic. In the drunkard condition they humiliate each other which look worthless and a kind of non-sense. Actually, the characters like Martha and George
have developed several misunderstandings among themselves and nobody can dare to speak to one another directly. Therefore, the two characters might have surrendered to the wine. In such condition, they have only one option and that is to release their tension with the help of wine.

The family problems are the output of their alcoholic nature. The alcohol is the root cause of their quarrel. Because wine make a person to speak what is hidden in the mind. It made George and Martha to unfold their internal feelings about each other. The intensity of the family problem increased due to it.

The other social issue which can be clearly seen in this play is the extra marital affairs of the American women. In this case Martha is having a good looking and well educated husband who holds a good position in the History Department. He is able to fulfill all the needs which a wife expects from her husband yet she tries to have an affair with a person who is younger than her. When Nick and Honey visit Martha’s house, she not only wears a sexier dress, but she also tries to humiliate her own husband just to impress Nick. Moreover, she tries to seduce him in her own house in front of her own husband. On the one hand, she shares a glass with her husband and on the other she intends to share a bed with Nick. Irony and satire that Albee incorporates here is worth noticing.

Apart from focusing on extra marital affairs, Edward Albee also throws light upon Honey’s pregnancy before marriage. The reason behind Nick and Honey’s marriage is the pre-marriage pregnancy of honey. Extramarital affairs and pre-marriage pregnancies are the general issues in American society. It suggests that the love relation has crossed all the physical boundaries. Nick who has a very beautiful
wife also gives a response to Martha which makes it clear that Albee’s intention is to focus the sexual desire of American men and women with new partner. Both the characters, Martha and Nick have their own life partners but yet they are involved or trying to involve in sexual happiness with each other.

To have boyfriend or girlfriend is very common in the countries of the west. But there is a lot of difference between to have a girlfriend or boyfriend and to cross all the moral and physical boundaries. In this regard, the following conversation is important:

*Martha:* ... not on Associate Professor’s salary. I mean, he’d be .... No good ... at trustee’s dinners, fund raising. He didn’t have any ... personality, you know what I mean? This was disappointing to Daddy, as you can imagine. So, here I am, stuck with this flop...

*George:* don’t go on, Martha ...

*Martha:* ... this BOG in the History Department ...

*George:* ... don’t Martha, don’t ...

*Martha:* ... who’s married to the President’s daughter, who’s expected to be somebody, not just nobody, some bookworm, somebody who is so damn... contemplative, he can’t make anything out of himself; somebody without the guts to make anybody proud of him ... .

The problem like professional failure also acquires a place in the play and has its own significance. With several efforts George could not achieve the position of Head of the Department and therefore Martha humiliates him several times. Through he has a good position in History Department, but in her view, he is just the member of the Department and not having the top-most position. For a short period he
was on the position of head but later on he again lost it. In the view of Martha it is the professional failure of George which she doesn’t like. Internally she thinks a lot about it but without becoming an observer there is nothing in her hand.

Being a member of History Department George is satisfied but Martha has more expectations from him which he could not fulfill and it is also the cause of their family quarrel. They fight with each other, tries to humiliate one another but do not stop drinking. Even Honey slips in the bathroom but yet she demands more drink. The conflict can be seen in every family. Everyone bears a tension but its solution is not to be an alcoholic. George’s ambition did not match with her goal and therefore, he fails to advance beyond the position of an Associate Professor.

*Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* gives an account of the social issues of America in 1960s. A private domestic scene on a public stage with all of its imperfections *Who is afraid of Virginia Woolf?* broaches uncomfortable topics that most families kept hidden during the postwar years. Albee was an adopted child in a very rich but unhappy family. The family members never showed their love and affection for the child. *Who is afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is Albee’s reference to his own family. When measured against the phenomenon that was the 1950s Americas housewife, Martha, undeniably comes up short. Characterized variously as a childless, messy, adulterous, aging alcoholic, she is never certain of her value in a society. Her life lacks the meaning and she could not find fulfillment in household chores.

George and Martha’s dialogue introduces the reader with their relationship and the expectations from each other. As a housewife she couldn’t fulfill her husband’s need and as a daughter of a college
president he couldn’t make true her expectations. Their relationship is based on attack and counter attack pattern. Even the couple uses their imagined son as a weapon to hurt each other. Both of them are in search of truth and peace which they get at the end of the play.

Martha and Honey, both have wealthy and powerful fathers. Their fathers are the symbols of power. They both are very proud about their fathers power and don’t have their own separate identity to be proud of. With the help of their dialogues readers come to know that the mothers of Martha and Honey (which is considered to be the symbol of love, pity, and affection) are dead. All the four characters of the play are alienated from their parents.

Edward Albee further brings into for the issue of women’s infertility on the stage. The infertility which could be seen in most American women is of the post war era. The cause of family conflict between George and Martha may be infertility. Patricia P. Mahlstedt explains how coping with infertility leaves one to depression and anxiety and annoyance. Through the play *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Albee challenges the image of the safe nurturing family by positioning the childless women.

*The Zoo Story* reflects the highest level of cohesion between the form and content to be seen in any of his works. Through this play, Edward Albee experiments with fusion of realistic dramatic devices. He has used such a technique in the play which allows Jerry to face his social incident.

The influence of Eugene O’Neil can be found on Albee’s *The Zoo Story* and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* When in an interview Albee was asked about it. He observed:
[i]t wouldn’t surprise me that it was influenced by Eugene O’Neil in the same way The Zoo Story was affected by. Critics also give the same response. C. W. Bigsby writes that the subject of Albee’s plays is “loss, desolation, spiritual redemption”, [this is depicted also] in The Zoo Story, and Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? This generates the faith in the possibility of redemption.  

Referring specifically to O’Neil’s vision he further writes,

Jerry’s and Peter’s sense of consciousness ultimately enables them to go beyond Billy Loman’s or Blanche Dubiors’s worlds. I think Albee has brought the American Silence in the play The Zoo Story. He also provides a sufficient place to the reader to discover the own meaning.

The play of Delicate Balance is yet another play which seriously dramatizes the issue that plague the contemporary American society, but in a different tone and texture. One of the plays of Edward Albee that has an odd place in the American repertory is perhaps A Delicate Balance. Even though Edward won his first Pulitzer for this play, most critics feel it is inferior to his Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf which perhaps deserved the prize but was denied the prize due to squeamishness on the part of the Pulitzer jury; it also had a successful Broadway run and was made into a memorable Hollywood film, while the prize-winning A Delicate Balance disappeared quickly from the theatrical radar screen.

It is an odd play that does not dazzle with the earthy immediacy of Woolf, but instead partakes of a refined delicacy. If Woolf is all blood and guts, then Balance is surely nothing but bones and dust. In fact, A Delicate Balance introduced audiences to a remoteness and pretension in Albee's work that made him an increasingly obscure and
unpopular playwright who for nearly two decades, until the success of *Three Tall Women*, seemed played out to his benefit.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* blend in so gracefully as to allow one to forget that there is a set. The family consists of Tobias, the father, Agnes, the mother, and Julia, their grown-up daughter and Harry, Claire and Edna who are the main characters in the play. The play explores the stresses and strains within family life, and the forces that are implemented to keep things in balance - a balance necessary for survival.

Harry is Edna’s husband and Tobias’s best friend. At one point in the past, Harry and Tobias, coincidentally, had an extramarital affair with the same young woman. Besides both having been businessmen and meeting at the same club, it is unclear what else Harry and Tobias have in common except that they have known one another for a long time and neither sleeps with his wife. Harry is something of a reflection of Tobias, but he is even more reserved.

Of all the characters in this play, Harry speaks the least. And when he does speak, he is a man of few words with lots of pauses around each one. He prefers to talk around things rather than going at them straight on. He also avoids questions, as when Agnes tries to find out why he and his wife have come to their home. Instead of giving Agnes an answer, he compliments the furnishings in Agnes’s home. He also has the tendency to repeat himself; at one point he repeats the same line four times when he tries to explain how fear has driven his wife and him out of their home.

It is Harry, in the end, who tells Tobias that he and Edna have decided to leave. Although Harry prompted the discussion with Edna about resolving the issue of staying at their friends’ house, it is implied
that Edna had made the decision and that Harry just delivered the message.

Another crucial character in *A Delicate Balance* is Julia who is the catalyst of the play. Julia is the thirty six year old daughter of Agnes and Tobias. Three times divorced, she has just recently left her fourth husband and has returned home. Her father calls her a whiner, and her mother has little time for her. Julia, based on a relative of Albee’s, his cousin Barbara Lauder, has set a pattern in her life of marrying for the wrong reasons and then divorcing and returning home. Her parents welcome her, although they make it clear that they wish she would establish an independent life of her own without depending on her parents.

While the other characters in the play either hide their emotions in alcohol or avoid confrontations by smothering their feelings in banal social sweet talk, Julia brings matters to the forefront. She has wants, and she demands that they be at least heard, if not satisfied. The most obvious thing that she wants in this play is her bedroom in her parent’s home. However, upon her return, she discovers that her room is being occupied by Edna and Harry, her parents’ so-called best friends.

In her attempts to regain control of her bedroom, Julia makes everyone confront the issues of the play, namely, defining relationships, wants, needs, and rights. At one point, Julia forces the issue first by having an emotional tantrum, then by upsetting the furniture and all the clothes in her bedroom, and finally by threatening everyone with a gun. This apart, Julia tends to put down her mother and commiserate with her mother’s sister Claire. She acts as if she is Claire’s friend, until Claire points her finger at Julia and lets her know that she is as much a visitor in her parents’ home as Harry and Edna.
are in the same home. Agnes and Tobias portray Julia, Claire, Harry, and Edna as invaders in their lives. They all have their own reasons for needing to be there: none of them is able to make it alone in the outside world. Julia falls back on her childhood to claim her spot, even though she is nearing middle age. She has little empathy for the others who are also seeking comfort in the same house.

Claire is another character in *A Delicate Balance*. She is Agnes’s younger sister. She claims that she is not an alcoholic but rather a willful drinker. Of all the characters in the play, whether it is due to the alcohol or not, Claire has the loosest tongue. She speaks her mind and is the least affected by social politeness.

Since Claire has no means of support except with Agnes and Tobias, she lives with them. Her main role in life seems to be to annoy and embarrass her sister. She is everything that Agnes dislikes. Claire makes the statement, after telling Tobias that he would be better off if he killed Agnes, Julia, and herself, that she will never know whether she wants to live until Agnes is dead. With this statement, Albee makes it sound as if Claire holds Agnes up as a role model, a model that she has never been able to reach. And instead of trying to reach it, she does everything to live her life in a diametrically opposed manner as compared to the rest.

Claire’s relationship with Julia is closer than her relationship with anyone else. She and Julia identify with one another in their roles as the “other” people on the periphery of Tobias’s and Agnes’s lives. Claire and Julia are the rebels, the failures, the embarrassments that must be tolerated. When Julia arrives home, Claire greets her more honestly, more warmly than do Julia’s parents. Despite Claire’s open disdain for her sister, she has never told Agnes about Tobias’s affair. It
is not clear if she does this out of love or out of spite. She keeps the affair a secret, almost as if she has a hidden weapon that she protects in case she may have to use it one day. When Agnes comes right out and asks Claire to confirm her suspicions about Tobias, Claire’s answer is, “Ya got me, Sis.” Shortly after this exchange, Agnes describes Claire in this way “Claire could tell us so much if she cared to . . . Claire, who watches from the sidelines, has seen so very much, has seen us all so clearly ... You were not named for nothing.” 39. Claire is said to closely resemble Albee’s aunt Jane, an alcoholic and frequent visitor to Edward Albee residence.

Tobias, another important character, is Agnes’s husband and the father of Julia. He is a well-to-do, retired businessman. Although he is tolerant of people around him, he, like his wife, tends to avoid emotional topics. His tolerance toward his sister-in-law Claire is shown in his nonjudgmental attitude toward her drinking. Although he encourages her to return to ‘alcoholics anonymous’ at one point in the play, he does not berate her for drinking. In some ways, he even encourages it or at least does not discourage it. There are a few subtle insinuations that Claire and Tobias might have, at one time, had an affair, but this is initially only alluded to by script directions that have Claire open her arms to Tobias in a “casual invitation”. Later in the play, Agnes asks Tobias (when he cannot sleep) if he went to Claire.

The question whether Tobias had an affair with Claire is not certain; however, his infidelity is. Claire knows about an affair that Tobias had with a young woman, but she has never told Agnes about it. Claire only uses the information to taunt Tobias. Some critics have suggested that the young anonymous woman with whom Tobias had the affair was actually Claire. Despite all this, Tobias appears secure in
his marriage with Agnes, even though they have not shared the same bed for many years. Their marriage seems to have become something of a habit. Tobias shows very little affection to his wife except in the way that he reinforces her thoughts, giving her assurances, for instance, that she, of all people, should not worry about going mad. Tobias appears to be closer to his daughter than Agnes is. However, the degree of intimacy is not considerably greater.

Tobias is the more concerned parent when Julia becomes hysterical, although he does nothing but ask Agnes to console her. It is Tobias who takes the gun away from his daughter, and it is Tobias to whom Julia apologizes for her outburst at large. If Agnes is the fulcrum, then Tobias is the energy behind the fulcrum that works at keeping a balance in this dysfunctional family. He is constantly asking people to talk more kindly about one another. Or, in the least, it is Tobias who keeps silent while fury flares around him. It is also Tobias who serves everyone drinks, as if trying to soften the edges of their grievances with alcohol. It is Tobias’s friend Harry and his wife; Edna who bring the play to its conclusion, forcing Tobias to define what friendship is all about.

In the end, Tobias proclaims that friendship is not about wants but rather about rights. Tobias’s friend Harry has the right to move into Tobias’s house even if that is not what Tobias, or the rest of his family, wants. Contradicting this conclusion is the story concerning his cat that Tobias tells in the middle of the play. In this case, the cat wanted to be left alone. Tobias was uncomfortable with the cat’s noncompliance, and eventually he hits the cat and then has the cat put to sleep. But disregarding the cat, Tobias seems true to his definition of friendship. He has, after all, allowed his sister-in-law to live off him. He allows his
thirty-something daughter to continually move in and out of his house, and he tolerates his wife. He also tolerates his friend Harry’s moving into his house uninvited. At the end of the play, Tobias questions Harry’s efforts at friendship and honesty. Then he apologizes. Albee admits that the character of Tobias is based on his adopted father and he can’t do anything about it.

Edna is Harry’s wife. It is not clear if she is really Agnes’s friend or if she and Agnes know one another only because their husbands are friends. Edna arrives one day at the door of Agnes and Tobias’s home. She takes it for granted that they will let her and Harry stay there for however long it takes them to get over their unnamed fear. Despite the fact that the relationship between Edna and Agnes is not clear (their names are very similar), Edna sometimes takes on the role of mother to Julia. Although Edna’s manner is dissimilar, her sentiments are comparable to Agnes’s. Edna is not afraid to voice her opinions. Edna tells Julia that she is no longer a child and should take more responsibility for her life. She also declares that Julia no longer has rights in her parents’ house. Edna also confronts Agnes and tells her to stop making fun of her and her husband, Harry.

Edna may not be able to name the fear that has driven her out of her own house, she, nonetheless, appears to be quite capable of naming the things that other people are doing wrong in their lives. But then again, it is Edna, in the end, who realizes that there are boundaries, even between friends. She understands that there are some boundaries that should not be pushed, some things that “we may not do . . . not ask, for fear of looking in a mirror.” And it is also through her reflection that the play resolves. Edna has looked into that mirror at the end of the play and has decided that if the tables were turned, if Agnes and Tobias had come to her, she would not have allowed them to stay at her house for some times.
The main female character of *A Delicate Balance* is Agnes. She is a woman in her fifties, well off, and married to Tobias. She is also the mother of Julia and the sister of Claire. Agnes believes herself to be the fulcrum of the family, keeping everyone in balance. She often maintains this balance, or order, by not confronting issues, not taking a stand, and not processing emotions. She tries to keep the peace by not dealing with anything that might upset it.

Agnes is completely supportive of her husband Tobias, apparently and looks to him to confirm her thoughts as she confirms his. It is not until near the end of the play that she brings up issues that show cracks in her relationship with her husband. When the memory of the death of her son is brought to the surface of her thoughts, she reminisces about how difficult a time that was for her, a time when she questioned everything, including her husband’s love and faithfulness to her. Although she feels as if she is the fulcrum, Agnes begins and ends the play on her musings of insanity. She wonders if she could just suddenly slip off into madness and what that would be like. She wonders what her husband would do if that happened. Would she be an embarrassment to him? Embarrassment is a very large issue with Agnes. She is easily embarrassed by her sister Claire, who, Agnes believes, has wasted her life and her potential. When Claire insists that she is not an alcoholic, Agnes states sarcastically, “that’s very nice.” Then she lists times that Claire has vomited, fallen down, and called from the club to have someone come and get her. She concludes this commentary with the words:

“If we change for the worse with drink, we are an alcoholic.”

The relationship between and Julia and her mother Agnes does not fare much better. Julia embarrasses her mother. When Julia
becomes hysterical, Tobias asks Agnes to go talk to their daughter. Agnes’s response is, “I haven’t the time.” Instead of empathizing with Julia, Agnes becomes more self-absorbed. She tells her husband that she has suffered far more than her daughter. This same self-absorption is apparent in all of Agnes’s relationships. She easily becomes lost in self-pity and at the same time believes herself to be above everyone around her. If she is the fulcrum of the balance in the family, Albee portrays her as a very unstable one. Albee has admitted that the character of Agnes is based on his real-life adopted mother of several years.

The vital concept around *A Delicate Balance* is the dilemma of what to do with Harry and Edna. Their situation is the focal point for all the characters, including Harry and Edna themselves. Albee uses this dilemma to cause emotions to rise. As his characters try to figure out what to do about the Harry and Edna, they have a series of discussions or debates that slowly rise in emotional temperature. Each character has his or her definition of what the dilemma is, as well as a means for resolving it. The tension in rises with the rise of emotions as the characters move toward a climax or a moment of truth. This moment is played out most specifically by Tobias and Harry in the conversation that defines their friendship: one that is built on rights and responsibilities rather than love and affection. In the end, Harry and Edna decide to go back home, thus solving, or at least releasing some of the tension of the dilemma that existed.

Bigsby makes conclusive about remarks *A Delicate Balance* that, “indeed it is possible to see *A Delicate Balance* as, in part, an expression of Albee’s own sense of artistic frustration: the frustration of a dramatist to be able to command the attention of an audience in
the theatre, but unable to wring from it an admission of the connexion which exists between the enacted drama and their own lives.  

The play *The American Dream* focuses on American culture. In this play, the Mommy and Daddy are the major characters, a couple living in a city apartment. From beginning, it may be noted that there is no mutual understanding in Mommy and Daddy. Edward Albee has focused on the inanity of middle class family through these two characters.

Mommy and Daddy, though living together, their marriage does not show any signs of love. When Mommy and Daddy express their love for each other, it is generally hollow, without any feelings, emotion and affection. The dialogues between them look very formal. The life is like a journey in the desert. There is not any pleasure which symbolizes happy married life. Their marriage is a living partnership and not the loving partnership. Both of them have the opposite family background in that Mommy is from a very poor family whereas Daddy is from a very rich family. But after the marriage, according to Daddy, Mommy has also become very rich.

Apart from Mommy and Daddy, the other member of the family is Grandma who is Mommy’s mother and lives with the couple in the same house. Through she is their very close relative but Mommy and Daddy speak to her rudely and treat her like a servant. She is always busy with the household chores, including cooking, polishing silver and moving the furniture. Moreover, in Mommy and Daddy’s household, natural order is reversed. Rather than demonstrating care for grandma, the offspring expect the elderly women to “earn her keep” and take care of the house. Despite doing all such work, the couple behaves rudely with her and even sometime snaps at her:
Grandma, when you get old, you can’t talk to people because people snap at you. When you get so old, people talk to you that way. That’s why you become dear, so you won’t be able to hear people talking to you that way. That’s why you go and hide under the covers of big soft bed, so you won’t feel the house shaking from people talking you that way. That’s why old people die eventually.\(^{46}\)

In the apartment that Grandma lives, another visitor arrives, a young man with clean-cut, good profile, straight noise, honest eyes and wonderful smile whom Grandma labels “The American Dream”. At the end of the play, grandma realizes that the young man is nothing but the new adoptee whom Mommy and Daddy were looking for. Consequently, Grandma knows that her time with the family is over therefore she asks to the young man to help her to move out of the apartment. According to Ruby Cohn, her exodus represents a symbolic death of the values for which she stood.\(^{47}\) Soon after, the couple forgets the good old grandma.

Just like the dialogues of a baby, the dialogues of grandma are as well unintelligible. They indicate the devaluation of a language. Grandma has found herself in an absurd situation. She also gives her autobiographical information including that her husband was a farmer and had died when she was only thirty years. She lost the husband very early which indicates that there was nobody to take good care of her. As such, the pleasure of happy married life was not in her fate. In such worse condition she brought up her daughter. She struggled to earn and educated her daughter. But Mommy has forgotten about all these things. Her behavior with grandma indicates that she has no value in the family or in their life.
In the last of the play grandma leaves the house but nobody thinks about her absentee. Mommy and Daddy both are busy in their life. The play also points out upon difficulties of Grandma. There is no understanding in between Mommy and Grandma. Grandma is the real symbol of Humanness. Through her character Albee strongly attacks on the American society. She is the voice of indignation, as if she says,

“Look at me see how they have victimized me do something about this mistreatment”. 48

Grandma maintains more realistic characteristic of an absurd play. Grandma departs from the house after arrival of the young man. She was quite emotional, and had so many things in her mind but nobody to listen. She says to the young man:

I don’t know why I bother to take them with Me. They (Boxes) don’t have much in them... Some old letters, a couple of regrets... Pekinese... Blind at that... The television... my Sunday teeth... Eighty six years of leaving... some sound... A few images, a little garbled by now... and, well... You know ..... the thing one accumulates. 49

Apart from the sorrowful words spoken by Grandma to the young man, she as well speaks of her quiet often. In this regard, she says: “My sacks are empty, the fluid in my eyeballs is all caked on the inside edges, my spine is made of sugar candy, I breathe ice; but you don’t hear me complain50”. From this dialogue, it is very clear that she is very much old but she remembers the past and has the power to see the things more clearly than other characters in the play.

As compared to Grandma, there is a lot of difference in Grandma and Mrs. Barker who is considered a symbol of real mother in The American Dream. It is suggested that she has an ambition to achieve high social standing which seems greater than her desire to
raise her children.\textsuperscript{51} During her conversation with other characters it is clear that she is the member of many committees, including the Responsible Citizen’s Activities and the Ladies Auxiliary Air Raid Committee. She is proud to have the positions in the committee. Mrs. Barker is a character who helps the children like young man to achieve the American dream. She has a husband and two children but voluntarily works for the children like the adoptee young man.

From the beginning of The \textit{American Dream} the nature and roles of all the characters are very clear. Every character represents something. Mommy is an opportunist character concerned only with her own needs and wants. She is also a cruel lady who rudely behaves with her own husband and mother too. Her behavior with her husband doesn’t show any sign of a lovable wife who takes care of her own husband and supports in the condition when the needs. She doesn’t like to do the household work; a kind of laziness is developed in her nature. Her own old aged mother is busy in household work in the house of Mommy and she is not ready even to help her. Instead of that she gives order to the old lady. Whole day grandma is busy in the work and Mommy is busy in time pass. She just wants to live the happy and luxurious life. She also has an interest in women’s committee. Mrs. Barker is the chair of women’s committee and used to wear a hat. The same hat is purchased by Mommy. Instead of showing interest in her own family she is interested in other things like becoming a Chair of Women’s Committee.

There are unique features to Daddy’s character as well. For instance, he cannot make his own decisions. He just follows whatever Mommy says and has no courage to disobey her. Daddy has a fear in his mind that if he took a step against Mommy he will have to lose her.
Daddy is a rich person married to a poor lady, and behaves like an obedient boy. A good example of the dialogues between Mommy and Daddy can be heightened hereunder especially when somebody knocks the door:

Mommy: ... well go let them in daddy what you are waiting for?

Daddy: I think we should talk about it some more maybe we’ve been hasty.... a little hasty, perhaps.

Mommy: There’s no need you made up your mind; you were firm; you were masculine and decisive.

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

Mommy: I won’t argue with you; it has to be done; you were right open the door.52

The above dialogue suggests the manner in which Mommy makes use of Daddy. It is the treatment which Daddy has to face every day from his own wife. The readers learn more about Mommy’s destructive powers when grandma reveals to Mrs. Barker the fate of the boy that Mommy and Daddy adopted from the Bye Bye Adoption Agency. Grandma says that

“one night they would cut his heart out I hope they cut his hands off at the wrists and if he spoke against them they will also cut his tongue out. Such terrible things would happen with him and one day he would die”.53

This statement therefore highlights the cruel nature of a woman, who is her daughter and her husband.

The orphan children like young man were also the problem of American society in 1960s raised by Edward Albee. Young man who is named as an American dream by Grandma is the representative of such children. There were some adoption agencies that used to gather
such children. Grandma foretells the future of the young man when she
discusses with Mrs. Barker. Through the communication she gives a
clear cut hint to Mrs. Barker that something evil will happen with the
young man if he disobeys the orders of Mommy and Daddy. The
young man will suffer a lot due to the cruel couple which will make
him to die.

Though Mommy and Daddy adopted the young man but it is
quite impossible that they will give him all the rights as their son.
Instead of that he will become a servant and will have to do all the
household work which grandma had done for several years. The same
treatment will be given to him, the treatment which received by
grandma. It can happen that the treatment given to grandma could be
light due to her relation with mommy and daddy. But the young man
has no blood relation with the couple. The kind woman like Grandma
just makes aware to Mrs. Barker about what can happen in future. She
speaks like a fortune teller on the basis of her own experience. Through
Mrs. Baker is involved in a holy work but she doesn’t take grandmas
warning seriously which therefore raises an alarm.54

The show that presented *The American Dream* opened in Berlin
at the Schiller Theater-Werkstatt on 7 October 1961. Albee wrote a
note for the program in which he makes explicit that *The American
Dream* is intended to be critical of middle-class society. Albee wrote
that his criticism is not only against American society but also against
all west European culture, tradition and beliefs.

Moreover, *The American Dream* reveals that there is a satire on
American and European society. The American dream has the
characters which are searching for satisfaction. The characters of
Mommy and Daddy move from dissatisfaction to satisfaction. Mommy’s character is more capable to achieve satisfaction than
Daddy. The characters like Mommy, Daddy and Mrs. Barker are in search of gratification. At the beginning of the play, they desire to be satisfied and take several steps towards their goal with the development of play. Mommy and Daddy tries to get satisfaction by adopting a child from Mrs. Barkers adopting agency. Mrs. Barker presents the young man as a substitute adoptable boy; having fulfilled her function, she feels satisfied. The characters like Mommy, Daddy and Mrs. Barker are the representatives of American citizens which really are in search of satisfaction using various ways.

Likewise, the young man addressed as American dream is satisfied to have found a job that promises to be lucrative. Grandma is also satisfied by leaving the apartment of Mommy and Daddy. All the major characters of the play move from a state of dissatisfaction to the satisfaction. The character of Daddy is not completely satisfied. He only plays to bring satisfaction to other characters. The Daddy looks somewhat disturbed and dissatisfied in the whole play. Besides, he feels insecure and dominated by Mommy. He listens every work of Mommy and doesn’t oppose her. Even the work of opening the door for guests is also done by him. The satisfaction of Daddy is superficial. Albee intended the play a scathing social criticism. In the preface to the play he wrote, “the play is an examination of the American scene, an attack on substitution of artificial for real values in our society”. Albee wrote the play with the intention that it should seem to be a comedy, as grandma’s final speech indicates:

“well, I guess that just about wraps it up. I mean, for better or works this is a comedy, and I don’t think we d better go any further. No, definitely Not. So, let’s leave things as they are right now.... While everybody’s happy.... While everybody’s got what he wants ... or everybody’s got what he thinks he wants. Good night dears”.55
An analysis of *The American Dream* brings to fore that American society is a mockery. The first thing is that all the characters of the play move from the state of dissatisfaction to the satisfaction with the development of the play. The grandma who represents the mixed feelings is replaced by young man who is also satisfied at last. The young man’s appearance and reality is different. He is a kind of hollow man. His appearance is only attractive but in actual condition he is incomplete being and a fearful person. But outwardly looks confident. The couple does not want to understand the young man understood by grandma. Throughout the play grandma follows the moral order. She is also aware of Mommy and Daddy’s lack of morals and therefore finally decides to leave them. She is contrasted with the other characters.

As soon as grandma leaves, the moral force also departs. The characters in Albee’s *The American Dream* are in search of satisfaction but their satisfaction is artificial and not real. The satisfaction achieved by mommy and daddy are not real and seems symbolic and superficial. Mrs. Barker feels satisfied by her work but she does not consider grandma’s warning seriously when grandma gives her a hint from a story about what will happen with young man in future. It means Mrs. Barker wants to complete her work and does not consider it as her responsibility. The young man’s security is her responsibility and not mere the work for satisfaction. It means the satisfaction of Mrs. Baker is also superficial.

The western social behavior is ridiculed mostly by *The American Dream*. One more problem is also pointed out by writer. In whole play two families have taken pictures, one is of Mommy and Daddy’s and other is of Mrs. Barker’s. Through Mommy and Daddy
are married. They are living with each other in the same family. But in their life they lack love, both emotional and sexual too. Not a single scene of the play deals with the love scene of Mommy and Daddy. Due to lack of love their life has become rough and routine. Love plays very important role in the process of satisfaction but they lack emotional as well as sexual love in their life which turned them to find out the superficial satisfaction.

Mommy and Daddy have no sex. When Mommy asks Daddy to come to sleep Daddy says, “I don’t want to sleep with you anymore. I am sick”. The above statement of Daddy may be related with his sexual sickness. But it is clear that the couple lacks sexual pleasure and it turned them to adopt a second child.

Mommy and Daddy never discuss about their own children. Every couple thinks that they should have their own child. When the door of possibility is closed down, the couple can think to adopt a child. Mommy and Daddy never went to the hospital if there is anything wrong with one of them. They didn’t consult to the doctor about it. It makes us to think. Why? If a married couple economically well settled, well-educated, never go to consult a doctor. There can be two possibilities, first is if they don’t want a child and second is they know completely that there is no use to go to the doctor. It is very clear that they desire a child because Mommy and Daddy contacted to adopting agency of Mrs. Barker. If they don’t desire the child they may not have asked Mrs. Barker about it. They wish a child but do not take any step to have their own. If there is anything wrong with Mommy or Daddy they might have gone to hospital. But neither the play discusses about hospital nor about doctor. Due to the lack of love and lack of child the life of Mommy and Daddy seems very rude.
Married couple should have the love, affection and care for each other. But it is very rare that either Mommy or Daddy cared for each other. Through they have become husband and wife but they couldn’t become loving couple. The lack of love turned them into lack of children and lack of child for them is lack of satisfaction in marriage life. They are searching the thing outside the house by contacting the adopting agencies can be in their own house. The question arises in readers mind, why?

The second couple is of Mrs. Barker and her husband. From dialogues of Mrs. Barker and Mommy reader come to know that Mrs. Barker is married and has two children. She also occupies various important roles in various social committees. But the pair again seems not the loving one. Every time Mrs. Barker is busy in her work. She goes to her home only to sleep. The time which should spend with her children and husband, she spends with society and in other work.

There is again a lack of love in Grandma’s life. As Grandma tells that her husband died when she was of twenty nine means, she lost a source of love in an early phase of life. The husband who is supposed to be the symbol of love is not in Grandma’s life. She raised her daughter with affection and love but Mommy could not become her stick of old age. Instead of being a stick/ a support for old age Mommy made her to leave the apartment by substituting young man in her place. Whole life the love runs from Grandma and she never succeeds to catch it. As it flies from one branch to another, she follows it but till the end of the play could to have it. Not from husband and not from her own daughter. She lacks the sexual as well as emotional love in her life. This therefore stresses her most.

Apart from Mommy and Daddy, the next important character of the play is the young man, sometime considered to be The American
Dream and some time a hollow man, has a lack of real love into his life. The life of hollow man is also hollow, which does not show any sign of love, affection and care. The young man unfolds some event of his life while communicating with other characters. He tells to Grandma that his mother died with his birth. The mother is a symbol of love, a first source of love for child. He not only loosed his mother when he was born but loosed all the love, affection, pleasure and care which he could get from his mother. The death of mother at very birth suggests that there is no love in his life. He has nobody who could care him in his childhood.

It may be noticed that all the characters of The American Dream lack the love, affection and care in their own life. The characters live the life like an orphan child. The life and their relation seem very formal. The appearance of young man as an adopted child brings happiness in the life of Mommy and Daddy, but it looks superficial and artificial. Mrs. Barker tries to become satisfied by doing social work all the time but while doing this she loses very valuable moments of her life which she could spend with her children and husband.

In Every Thing In The Garden, the main characters are Jenny and Richard. They're white, and they live in a $240,000 suburban home, but they can't always afford amenities like Dunhills, Stoly, a power mower, and a greenhouse. Richard refuses to let Jenny take a job, although she wants to help out. She argues that money is the issue in all their quarrels. It's a sound argument, since they don't seem to think about anything else.

The young couple Jenny and Richard had moved out to the suburbs in search of the good life. They soon find out that joining the in crowd costs money that they don’t have. Desperate to fit in with the
suburban elite, they’re unprepared for the woman who arrives on their doorstep with an offer as shocking as it is tempting. It is therefore evident that Jenny and Richard are a sweet couple, not really struggling too much, yet still yearning to attain the level of affluence enjoyed by their neighbors.

Jenny and Richard smoke cigarettes they don’t like for the coupon premiums, know the difference between the cost of domestic and imported vodka, and watch every nickel to keep their teenaged son Roger in private school. Clearly they believe in upward mobility whenever possible. Their neighbor Jack is a bit eccentric, philosophical, introspective, and usually tipsy. Richard and Jenny don’t care that he’s a bit of an odd duck, and he functions both as legitimate character and metaphor. He’s wealthy enough to pay any conceivable debts, present and future, and thus able to sail through life without stress.

The scene is the suburban home of Jenny and Richard. The only thing that seems to stand in the way of Jenny and Richard’s happiness is a lack of money. The action starts in an entertaining comedy of manners style. Then abruptly there enters a Mrs. Toothe crusty, upper-class English madam who offers Jenny the opportunity to make more money than they have ever had, to buy a greenhouse and all the other luxuries that they require for their garden and their lives. She solicits Jenny to service afternoon clients while Richard's away at work. Jenny agrees. Six months later the cash has piled up, and (how British can you get?) Richard discovers a huge stash in the window seat. Jenny soon confesses and Richard is outraged.

Richard's realization that their newfound money is being earned by his wife's whoring comes almost simultaneously with the return of
their fourteen-year-old son from school and a champagne cocktail party which they are giving to impress their country club friends. As a result, his horror, disgust and rage has to be kept under wraps in order to keep up essential appearances until tragedy strikes, and Richard realizes that the assembled wives are all involved and their husbands are aware and condoning." More than that, they are prepared not merely to justify but defend the ends through which their means are attained—and the devastated Richard, left in agonized despair by the ironic events that charge the final moments of the play, must face the fact of his own share in their communal guilt.

The play reiterates the theme that greed causes people to prostitute themselves, that easy money creates more greed, and that the whole thing is a vicious cycle, and, of course, a touch of the essential Edward Albee indicates that even the most ordinary people can become extraordinarily vicious.

Satire discussion clearly indicates the absurd situation, the characters are helplessly placed in. domestic discord and a disconcerting fact of contemporary society are seriously addressed by Albee’s plays.

The last literary work published by Edward Albee is perhaps The Goat or Who is Sylvia in 2002. The play that revolves around Martin and Stevie Gray’s family in which Edward Albee again ridicules American society and mostly the way in which the Americans live their life.

Martin is a successful man in his profession. He is on the top most position. The problem arises into the happy family when Stevie came to know that her own husband has an affair with Sylvia. She feels very irritating especially after she learnt that ‘Sylvia is not a woman
but a goat and her own husband is goat fucker’. Stevie receives this shocking news from Ross who is Martin’s best friend.

Martin and Stevie couple is quite different from Mommy and Daddy couple in *The American Dream* and George and Martha couple in the *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? As such, Edward Albee has picturized them as a very lovable and caring couple which could not be seen in Albee’s other plays.

*The Goat* or *Who is Sylvia* couple Martin and Stevie is a happily married couple and there is nothing wrong with them. At a first glance, a reader can understand that nothing wrong with Martin and Stevie means nothing is right with them. It is the sign of coming distraction, a calmness before the war that is able to destroy everything. When Stevie receives the news, she directly asks her husband about an affair though he hesitates. A conversation between the two is evident:

*Stevie*: I suppose you’d better tell me.

*Martin*: I can’t! I can’t!

*Stevie*: Tell me! Tell me!

*Martin*: Her name is Sylvia!

*Stevie*: Sylvia? Who is Sylvia?

*Martin*: She is a goat; Sylvia is a goat! (acting manner dropped normal tone now; serious, flat) She is a goat.

*Stevie*: you’re too much! (exists)

*Martin*: I am? You try to tell them; you try to be honest. What do they do? They laugh at you.57

The dialogue at first indicates that Martin does not let her know at the beginning but later on he realizes that there is no use to hide the matter. He confines to Stevie about Sylvia. Martin had revealed the truth to his best friend Ross. Martin reluctantly admits that he has an
affair. Ross naturally is astonished after listening all this. He doesn’t stop on hearing the news of affair and demands for more information from his friend. Martin hesitates to reveal the truth. But he reveals the truth to his supposed best friend, who is a local broadcast journalist and has arrived to interview him for a television segment in commemoration of Martin’s acceptance of the Pritzker prize for architecture. Ross listens but does not condemn for his infidelity. He also openly discusses about his own extramarital affairs. Till this movement his behavior is like a true, intimate friend and he himself creates a fantasy of Martin’s love affair. He hungrily imagines a fantasy scenario. Martin speaks about her blonde hair, shoulders, big tits in the calico, bare midriff, blonde down at the navel and piece a staw in her teeth. Martin admits that ‘Yes! Yes! I am! I am in love with her. Oh Jesus! Oh Sylvia! Oh, Sylvia’! Ross can only investigate the lurid fantasy. It is not until Martin present the other man with a picture of his paramour that the reality sinks, “This is a goat”, he exclaims, “You’re having an affair with a ‘goat’! ‘You’re fucking a goat’. The secret is now revealed to his best friend expecting that he definitely would understand what feeling he has for Sylvia. But being a true friend he fails to understand him even through martin urges Ross to desecrate about their conversation.

In the next scene Ross reveals the secret of Martin directly to his wife Stevie by writing her a detailed letter about their communication on Sylvia. The act which is done by Martin is destruction of morality according to Ross. Martin must face the consequences of his affair. The damage is irreparable. Ross being intimate friend seduces Martin and tells the secret to Stevie who felt ashamed when she realized that her own husband to whom she supposed to be intelligent, wit, loving husband has an affair with beast. Martin admits honestly about an affair.
For Stevie he is decent, liberal, right thinking, talented, famous, gentleman who right now would appear to be fucking a goat. Stevie asks herself a question as to whether he is the man whom she knew from last 20 years? Martin is not seeking any forgiveness from his wife nor does he attempt to justify or rationalize what he has done. He just expects that Stevie should understand his feelings for Sylvia. He loves Stevie and equally to Sylvia also. Martin protests that he still loves her so much.

Being a wife, Stevie can never allow Martin’s divided love. Martin protests that he loves both of them but, as a woman, how could she permit that anybody should divide the love of her husband. The relationship of Martin and Sylvia seems very painful to Stevie. She suffers a lot due to the goat fucking of Martin. She questions the very foundation of her marriage. The relationship turns their happy married life into confrontation.

Martin a successful and prize winner architect also suffers a lot due to the acceptance of the truth. He loses his intimate friend and his own marriage is questioned by his wife. She also questioned the 20 years of their candid relationship they had. In the support of his own act Martin tells his wife about zoophile support group that he attended. Stevie angrily labels the group “goat-fuckers anonymous”. He speaks about a group where man and women freely involve into the sexual relationship with animals. One of the women loved a German shepherd and man in the group who bedded a pig. Martin explains that each member in the group was in the arm of an animal. According to him not everyone was satisfied in that way. I was happy there, for they were all unhappy. The zoophile support group that Martin had attended in his past life makes reader think about the hidden wish to have a sex
with animal. Martin was the member of that group and he says to Stevie that each member of the group was having sex with the animal. What it meant? It meant that it is not the Martin’s first time to have a sex with animals. He had attended that group which meant he might have been involved into the sex with animals. His hidden feeling burst into reality when he came in contact with Sylvia who is the root cause of all the problems.

Before the arrival of Sylvia in his life everything is all right. Every day was happy. He had good relations with his friend and loving relation with his wife too. As Sylvia appears into his life, problem occurs into the life. Through his feeling for Sylvia are real but he has crossed the moral line. Twenty years of marriage relationship and several years’ of intimate friendship raise a question about him. He was sick person according to Ross. The animal sex and gay problem is raised by Albee through this play. The characters like Billy and Martin are mere the instruments of Albee which helped him to shape the desired frame. He used the characters to reach at the desired goal. The point which he intends to raise is focused through the play *The Goat* or *Who is Sylvia*.

Martin is the reflection of several characters like him who are happy for being sexually involved with animals. There are the people who support their act and say that human being is also an animal thus, questioning why it is wrong if anybody want to sexually get involved with animals. According to these peoples the experience is unique. Through such act created several problems into their family life yet they defend themselves. The several groups like Zoophile Support Group are available and active in the America. Such groups openly support the act of animal fucking. The men and women are the
members of such groups. The intension of the group is just to get sexual pleasures in order to satisfy themselves.

The problem of Martin and Stevie extends to their son Billy, who is only 22 but openly a gay. The family feels proud about their liberal thoughts. They assume that it is the ornament for the liberal and talented family. Through Billy is a young man but yet the couple i.e., Martin and Stevie considers him eight years child. When there is a discussion in between Stevie and Martin about the relationship of Martin with Sylvia, the couple asks Billy to go outside.58

Martin and Stevie’s marriage is characterized, at least in part, by an unwillingness to fully engage with painful truth. Rather than exploring the underlying cause of Martin’ anxiety, the couple turns his concern into a clever joke, even later in the play, after Steve’s discovery of Martin’s affair, as their marriage and living room lie in shambles, the two reveal in their own wit and use their linguistic acumen to deflect pain and confrontation among themselves.

Stevie is suffering a lot due to bestiality of Martin who is supposed to be the topmost architect of America. On one hand, Stevie is so irritating that her own husband to whom she considered a talented, caring and lovable turned to a goat fucker. The act of Martin attacked on Stevie’s trust. It is very difficult to Stevie to trust Martin again. According to him whatever he has done is nothing. The other people including Stevie, Ross and Billy are making issue. There is nothing different in that. Sylvia is an animal and human being is also an animal. He has just made sex with another animal whom he loves deeply. He loves her as he loves Stevie. He openly accepts that he loves both Stevie and Sylvia equally. But when Martin compares Stevie’s love with that of goat, it was really very shocking for her. The
love, the caring is compared with the animal. Stevie may never recover from the emotional damage. Nevertheless Martin does not bother about what happened even though his friend Ross blamed him and his wife is suffering a lot due to the act.

From Stevie’s point of view human being and animals are different. Martin has crossed the moral line by having sex with the goat which no human should cross. She observes “today, Martin said that I love her a lot, it is possible that tomorrow he may say that now I want a child from Sylvia. This again will create problems. He may bring that goat at home and can have openly relation with her.” Being human it is our duty that bestiality should be condemned.

In scene three, Martin tries to reconcile with his son Billy, who is obviously very distraught. Billy is a confused character due to his father’s behavior. He is gay but was never opposed by his father or mother. They frankly accept it. But on the other hand, Billy is blaming his own father for the act. “If the act of goat fucking is immoral, then how the second act can be moral”, asks the son. Then, we also have to accept that definitely nature has not intended that man should fulfill his sexual desire from the man.

It may however be noted that one thing is accepted by Martin and his wife that Billy is gay. This thing is like ornament for the liberal minded family then what matters is Martin has an affair with the goat and he is sexually involved with Sylvia.

The play The Goat or Who is Sylvia contains a mixture of styles. In the play, the characters and their feelings appear to be real however the situation is utterly abused. Ross comes to take an interview but Stevie leaves the place before it begins and then returns in scene two. When Stevie is not there that time Martin confessed his affair with
Sylvia to Ross who later informed Stevie about the affair. Stevie and Billy both blame to Martin, accuses him for the bestiality. Martin also strikes out at Billy’s homosexuality. Stevie tries to protect her son saying that:

I said your father’s sorry for calling you a fucking and goat because he is not that kind of man. He’s a decent, liberal, right-thinking, talented, famous, gentleman who right now would appear to be fucking a goat; and I would like to talk about that, if you don’t mind or….even if you do.  

Though Stevie believes that her husband is a decent man, she calls the son a “fucking faggot”. She conflicts with Martin for his statement about Billy. She just wants to protect her son. Her own life has become a problem due to Martin. But yet she campaigns against her husband and on other hand, she protects her son. She asks her son to leave his room because she doesn’t want him to be involved in confrontation with Billy. She is however, confident that she can alone handle the problem.

Edward Albee has created a very strong character in Stevie. Through her dialogues, Albee pours philosophies into her. Martin tries to explain that how he is deeply in love with Stevie too? How he had never had an affair with anybody? He always loved, cared, wanted and desired her. Stevie also gives response and says that she had always been faithful to him. Later on she discusses with her mother. The relation between Stevie and her mother is like the relation between two sisters. They behave and treat each other as good friends. Stevie’s mother said, “be sure you marry someone you’re [deeply] in love with and wholly in love with …”. Such kind of advice, given by mother to the daughter cannot find in Albee’s other plays.
Billy comes back again, while the coming, he thinks a lot about the cause of the quarrel of his mother and father. He worries that Martin has done something to his mother. He talks about his other friends and says that most of his friends are the product of broken homes. He doesn’t intend that his parent should also separate. He wants to reunite and not to separate them. He recalls the past scenes how happy his family was and he intends to keep it intact.

Sylvia, according to Stevie is the root cause of all the problems. If she could finish Sylvia, everything will be all right. It was not easy for her to change the mind of Martin about Sylvia. She experienced him nearly about twenty years and therefore comes to the conclusion that it is better to destroy the problem than to solve it by trying to change the mind of Martin.

Just as Martin is beginning to understand the devastation he has brought upon his family, Stevie returns home. She enters into the room dragging a dead Sylvia. Stevie has slit the goat’s throat delivered it to Martin. The death of the goat indicates the end of all the problems which had aroused in the family. She was aware about the fact that through Martin will take some time to forget her but definitely everything will be all right. Unlike many of the wife/mother characters that Albee created, this character finds a solution of her problem. She is the real mother who protects her son and take efforts to save the marriage through suffer a lot. She accepts life’s difficulty and also accepts the truth that happiness and pain, love and hate are the two sides of a same coin. She deals with the situation honestly and with full courage. The Stevie has the power to change the worst situations. The character of Stevie is more powerful than Albee’s other female characters in the same play.
Edward Albee’s next significant literary work is contained in the *Marriage Play* – a drama for two actors. The play opens with a blow. Jack informs his wife that, after thirty years of marriage, he intends to leave. Gillian, his wife, does not react as he would expect; therefore he enters three times more. Gillian's answers make him angry. Finally Jack collapses on a chair. After expressing his frustration and insecurity, he learns that Gillian keeps critical notes on their lovemaking; he becomes even more paralyzed.

Gillian and Jack, like George and Martha in *Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* play ritual games to express and contain their sense of life-disappointment. In the middle of the play, the couple starts fighting with each other, clawing, punching and biting, even after they fall on the floor. Exhausted by the fighting, they start to talk about the memorable times in their life. However, Gillian is determined to return to the previous insults and tells Jack he is not the only one who was unfaithful to his partner.

Stylistically unsure, Albee's writing aspires to the brittle wit of Noel Coward and the spareness of Beckett, and Gillian even alludes to other writers in her desire to be "eclectic." But if it's a scathing, conclusive statement about marriage you're after, a number of acerbic Stephen Sondheim songs make their points much quicker. Not that Jack is a bargain. After all, he's the one who wants out. Ostensibly, he is a spokesman for the "animal instinct" that proves the futility of monogamy, which exists only for "a few birds and a weasel," Jack says. But Gillian knows just how to make him stay put.

Between Jack and Gillian, the invective, competitive edge, predictable taunting and relentless nastiness cannot be assuaged by a last-minute reference to loving, honoring and cherishing, all disposed
of by rote. That Albee has conveniently put thirty years behind them -- "Thank God, the kids are gone," Gillian says -- means that the real issues that unite or separate couples do not have to be dealt with, only the abstract, existential ones.

In the end, the playwright attempts to reclaim worn-out absurdist roots. A nod to Beckett provides an all-too-pat conclusion, a variation of lost souls, ever waiting, yet agreeing to go, but not moving. But a Beckett character can sing of genuinely happy days once lived in a cosmic void. By contrast, the vacuum in "Marriage Play" is self-created, the theme recycled. After an evening of such hostile archness, one is relieved to escape into the night's bracing air, eager to shout, "Get over it."

In *Three Tall Women*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1994, as well as the Drama Critics Circle, Lucille Lortel, and Outer Critics Circle awards for the best play, contains a the protagonist, a compelling woman who is more than ninety years old, she reflects on her life with a mixture of shame, pleasure, regret, and satisfaction. She recalls the fun of her childhood and her early marriage, when she felt an overwhelming optimism. She also bitterly recalls negative events that caused her regret: her husband’s affairs and the death, and the estrangement of her gay son.

The woman’s relationship with her son is the clearest indication that Albee was working through some troubled memories of his own in *Three Tall Women*. The larger contemporary implications, however, remain intense and engaging. Raised by the conservative New England foster parents who disapproved of his homosexuality, he left home at eighteen like the son in this play. Albee admitted to *The Economist* that the play "was a kind of exorcism, and I didn’t end up any more fond of the woman after I finished it than when I started."64
In the introduction to *Three Tall Women*, Albee confessed that it took him all his life to write the play. It is the lack of love in his relationship with his adoptive mother and the lack of his biological mother that become converted in the textual form of his dramas. Moreover, in the introduction to this most personal ‘play, one reads that the drama coincides with Albee’s first awareness of consciousness. The ‘very tall woman’ loved money, clothes and horse riding. This play places in symbolic opposition the masculine, powerful figure of an adoptive mother with that of the mother as a caring, loving person.

The members of the play's speaking cast are indeed three tall women, whose roles, if not necessarily their functions, change in the play's two acts. Set in a bedroom whose conventional but lavish appointments bespeak an insulating affluence, the play devotes its first half to dialogue among the aged A; B, her 52-year-old acerbic but empathetic caretaker, and C, a brashly confident 26-year-old from A's lawyer's office who has come to discuss finances.

Albee baldly sets these characters up as representatives of three ages of woman. C embodies all the intolerance and the conviction of immortality of youth, and is impatient with the old woman's meanderings. The caretaker, in turn, is impatient with C's impatience and given to sharp-tongued reminders that A represents C's future and throughout all this, A fades between past and present.

In the second act, a body with an oxygen mask, representing A, is found lying on the bed. The three actresses return, now as A at different phases in her life. Although this allows Albee to create a more complete and reflective biography of A, particularly involving her thorny relationship with her son, the symbolic triangle remains much
the same, with the youngest woman shouting at the oldest, "I will not become you!" There are some eloquently made statements in this act about the vantage points afforded by different ages, particularly on the subject of sexuality. Unfortunately, the revelations built around the reasons for A's son's leaving home have less than their intended dramatic impact. Moreover, one could do without such leaden touches as Ms. Seldes's choral repetition of the phrase "and so it goes."

Brenda Murphy claimed that this play is “scrupulously honest”.66 The scene of act two in *Three Tall Women* always moves the playwright. This is, according to Pullocci and Gussow, when “the son, Albee’s surrogate, comes onstage and sits by the bedside of his mother”.67

In *Three Tall Women*, character A and her unnamed husband, who likes only tall women stand for Reed Albee and Frances (Frankie) Albee. The son of A not only bears the trademark of the playwright Albee but is closely identified with him. Bigsby draws attention to the fact that the silent young man, who is the fourth figure in the play, is plainly Albee, observing, present yet not a full player in a drama in which the old woman is the primary actor, staging her death as she has her life.68

There is a special monologue in the *Three Tall Women* play, which is given by B, who is in fact a younger version of the central figure, A. As Mária Kurdi suggests, the women in *Three Tall Women* like the characters A, B, C in Samuel Beckett’s *That Time*, are centered on a specific dramaturgy that explores the multiplication of their respective characters where the notion of the different and some are intertwined in order to enact the continuities and discontinuities of the self.69
The self is materialized here in a less homogenous character, namely in A, who is the product of Albee’s reconciling attempt to put together the fragmented memories of his adoptive mother, which resulted in a memory play similar to *The Sandbox*. The character B recalls an episode of lovemaking she had with a groom in a stable stall, an affair that her son (the Young Man) discovered.\(^{70}\)

The child figure of *Three Tall Women* is the silent Young Man, or the Boy, who is twenty three years old and wears a preppy dress. This character is described by C, who is the younger version of B and A. In act two the Young Man appears as “the son” who is “how nice, how handsome, how very…”\(^{71}\) The sentence is not finished, nor is the characterization finalized and the image of the Young Man fades into silence.

A and B cannot forgive the Young Man. They ‘play the game’ but ‘never forgive him’ because he ‘never belonged’ to their group. They reject his homosexuality, and accordingly, taboo the subject. The Young Man does not talk, and he does not even utter a word, his presence is only physical, not verbal. Bigsby sees here another autobiographical connection between the figure of the Young Man and the playwright:

*No wonder, then that the young man never speaks. There is nothing he can say that will interest her [...] It was, presumably, why the young Albee had left home. His parents had no interest in granting him autonomy. That came when he sat down to write a play in which what he had seen and heard was reshaped into a drama in which he could finally speak the woman who effectively silenced him.*\(^{72}\)

Albee reflects on his inspiration for *Three Tall Women*: 

95
I knew I did not want to write a revenge piece—could not honestly do so, for I felt no need for revenge. We had managed to make each other very unhappy over the years, but I was past all that, though I think she was not. I harbor no ill will toward her; it is true I did not like her much, could not abide her prejudices, her loathings, her paranoias, but I did admire her pride, her sense of self. As she moved toward ninety, began rapidly failing both physically and mentally, I was touched by the survivor, the figure clinging to the wreckage only partly of her own making, refusing to go under.73

Albee further attributes his absorption in this particular play to being fascinated by the horror and sadness he was recreating. As Mann asserts, Three Tall Women should be classified as an autobiographical drama in which “[w]hat we see on stage is really a mental landscape at the roots of his imagination where his sense of self was born.”74

Despite the evidence linking Three Tall Women to Albee’s life, specifically his adoptive mother, Frances Albee, Solomon remarks that “Albee downplayed the autobiographical aspects of the play, so that the actors would not feel inhibited in his presence. When questions turned to details of his life, he usually dismissed them by suggesting that all plays, after all, are autobiographical.

Indeed, one can see similarities between A and other women in Albee’s plays such as Agnes in A Delicate Balance. Ultimately, Mann argues that Albee’s Three Tall Women is an attempt to “reconnect with his mother and renew his sense of self.”75 Mann further writes, “In Three Tall Women, Albee solves the problem. He uses the play to understand his mother, thereby freeing himself from her hurtful treatment. This liberation allows him to develop a stronger
‘autonomous’ self and resolve his crisis. He creates a character in her image, an imperious, vain, and fragile figure in her nineties and in the first act, he looks at her from the outside. In the second act, he transforms the actresses into his mother’s younger, middle-aged, and older selves so he can explore why she became such a bitter woman.” As such, each character in Three Tall Women “acts as an integral part of Albee’s self rejuvenation”, his engagement with the disconcerting contemporary issues notwithstanding.

Edward Albee's Man Who Had Three Arms at the Lyceum, isn't a play - it's a temper tantrum in two acts as has generally agreed upon. A celebrated man known only as ‘Himself’ stands at a lecture-hall podium, backed by potted plants and flags, and spends nearly two hours alternately insulting the audience and announcing how bitter he is. Himself is mad because he was once "the most famous man in the world" and now he isn't so famous anymore. A standard-cut advertising man with a wife and three kids, he had one day awakened to discover that he was growing a third arm on his back. Suddenly Himself was sought after by royalty, cheered by ticker-tape parades and toasted by talk-show hosts. He had become, one might say, a contemporary Elephant Man - complete with trunk.

The play takes place in a theatre where the main character Himself is about to speak to the assembled group about his life of celebrity as "The Man Who Had Three Arms". The other two actors of the play, The Man and The Woman, play, variously, two people who are introducing Himself, the parents and wife of Himself, and the manager of Himself.

In the first act, Himself describes his transformation from a successful family man to a person who is horrified to discover that a
third arm is growing from between his shoulder blades. In the second act, Himself describes being on the celebrity circuit and all that entails, “money, sex, adulation”, while he grows more and more in debt. His wife leaves him. He falls apart in front of the audience only to deal with a final surprise.\(^7\)

*The Man Who Has Three Arms* play embodies harsh satire on the Catholic Church, the excesses of the culture of celebrity, and the shallowness of parent/child relationships, and involves some interaction between the lead character and the audience. It also contains quite a bit of humor and occasional vulgar language. The third arm may be a metaphor for the discovery and development of genius or talent in an otherwise unremarkable person. The third arm ultimately withered away, and so did the protagonist's celebrity and fortune.

While he used to command twenty five thousand dollars for a personal appearance, he now speaks for "half a grand and a toddle or two of gin." In the lecture we see, Himself is a last-minute replacement for a more famous speaker who has died. Drunk and in debt, he's now just another ordinary-looking man at the end of his rope.

One of the more shocking lapses of Mr. Albee's writing is that he makes almost no attempt even to pretend that Himself is anything other than a maudlin stand-in for himself, with the disappearing arm representing an atrophied talent. Though the speaker tells us about his family and advertising career, we never believe in these fictional biographical details for a second. They're thrown in without specificity or conviction, and, before long, they're forgotten as Himself lashes out against drama critics, speaks in the same overripe language as past Albee narrators and starts wrapping himself in the cloaks of such literary men as Agee, Melville and Nabokov.
But whoever Himself is - whether a one-time freak or a playwright in mid-career crisis - his beefs with the world are shrill and unmoving, no matter how much the author tries to inflate them into an indictment of the *American dream*. It's hard to feel much sympathy for a man who, by his own account, greedily helped himself to the perks of fame, unlimited publicity, power, money and sex - and now complains that the adulation was ‘idiotic’, that the power was short-lived, that the fortune was recklessly squandered, and that the sex was empty. He even gives us endless tirades about the food on the lecture circuit, as if his lucrative speaking engagements were a mandatory jail sentence rather than an easy, voluntary way to make lots of money for little work.

While *The Man Who Had Three Arms* is mostly an act of self-immolation, its final display of self-revelation holds out at least the slender hope that Mr. Albee might yet pick himself up from the floor. For all the plays discussed above Albee’s concern with the burning issues of the contemporary American society, in particular, remains central to his vision and art.
ENDNOTES:


2. Ibid., p. 342.


5. Ibid., p. 168.


8. Ibid., p. 497.


13. Ibid., pp. 78.


22. Id., at 181.

23. Ibid. at 180.

24. Id., at 182.

25. Ibid. at 148.

26. Ibid. at 148.


28. Id., at 56.


49. *Id.*, at 143.


