Chapter – IV

The Sterile Garden

There has certainly been no denying the fact that Edward Albee is a playwright with a purpose. As an artist, he feels that he has a certain duty to perform to his society. He wants to be different from other writers in a way that he wants to shock his audience in order to cause awareness in them of what was actually wrong with them. In his numerous interviews, he has made very clear about his idea of theatre and its function. In his opinion, theatre is a shaping force. It should not be merely used as a medium to entertain the masses. In an interview with Walter Wager in 1964, Albee said, “I’m disturbed by lazy audience that only want to be assured that their lives and values are valid. For me, the theatre must be educating and upsetting as well as just plain entertaining...” (67).

As a playwright, his concerns are basically the problems that alienate the individuals, estrange the families and infect the society. As we have already discussed the problems afflicting the individuals and the families in the previous chapters, this fourth
chapter entitled "The Sterile Garden" is devoted to the societal concerns of the Albee who has been using his theatre to upturn the smooth stone of society to reveal the slimy multi-legged horrors that lie underneath (Conversations with Edward Albee, 80).

Throughout his career as a dramatist, Albee has all along proved that he has been a morbid social critic. All was not well with his affluent American society of the 1950s and 1960s. With materialism gaining a firm grip on the lives of most of the population, especially the middle-class population, the traditional values start losing its rooting in the society. The idea that the very face of America is fast changing and the very land is fast turning out to be the most promising paradise on earth, the land of gold, inundates the social life across the entire country. "The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow surely loomed just beyond the horizon, many Americans felt, even as Albee lamented in 1960 that too many people in America had substituted ‘artificial for real values in our society,’ and insisted that his theatre was ‘a stand against the
fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen” (Cambridge Companion to Edward Albee, 43).

People are so madly drowned in the dreams of a bright and fertile future that they hardly find time for the time-tested values and ideals that have so formed a protecting layer on their secure life. The symptoms of an inevitable decay start manifesting itself in many ways. As a keen observer of his society, Albee has noticed the deplorable turn of fortunes. In an interview with Adrienne Clarkson, Albee said that he was not certainly happy to see “how people exist in their society and how they cheat themselves…” (65). The welfare of his people and his society remains Albee’s core concern.

His prime societal concerns are about the loss of humane aspects that have been carried away by the current of emerging dreams and desires of the society. American dream was a major spark that has rapidly engulfed the entire nation, flaring up a burning desire in everyone to succeed in life. The insidious dream has unleashed a reign of hopes mostly
promising success and prosperity to every citizen of the land. The promise proves to be too heavy an undertaking for the nation to realize. The failure to accomplish the cherished goals results in disappointments, leading to delirious deeds. Albee tries to hold a faithful mirror to reflect only the painful reality afflicting the lives of the people of his contemporary America.

The loss of love and compassion, the complacency and cant, the painful breakdown in communication and human relationships, the racial discriminations, the bad preference of artificial to real values, the insidious inclination towards illusion, the corroding moral and religious codes, the consumerist bent, the familial frictions, the all-pervading American Dream that turned nightmarish in the lives of many, the corruptions in the Campus and the Church and many other maladies of modern life found an effective exposing expression in almost all his plays. In short, the absurdities of certain false notions and ideals of an ambitious society are
laid bare (not to rest) to all his viewers and readers.

It was with the suicide-murder of Jerry at the Central Park on a fateful Sunday evening that Albee has started expressing his concerns relating to the welfare of his society. In a healthy society, a death of that nature may not be even within anybody’s imagination. The sad end of Jerry is both an end and a beginning. It is the end of a long agony of an unfortunate victim of a degenerate culture. It is true that a deep-rooted desperation drives the drifter to his death. But the desperation is caused by the apathetic attitude of his fellow human beings. And, it is the beginning of a new life for Peter who, according to Albee, is not going to be the same person again. Jerry’s teaching lesson was more than a walk in the park; it was a profound challenge to boundaries, traditions, and ideologies.

The affluent society becomes so self-centered that if refuses to take part in any way in the affairs of others. A society is defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary as “people in general thought of
as living together in organized communities with shared laws, traditions, and values.” People live together with shared values in a traditional society. Togetherness and sharing are the pillars on which stands a healthy vibrant community. When these two things lose their meaning and importance, disintegration gains a destructive vigor to put lives in total disarray. Jerry is clearly a victim of the loss of human values amongst the people.

Besides the death of Jerry, Albee has also shocked his audience with his portrayal of the pitiable condition of the living standard of the middle class America. Jerry’s account of the lives of his neighbors in the rooming house is a classic example of this wretched life. Man is reduced to the level of animals. He is forced to live in structures which resemble the caged cells of the zoo. The dwellers of the rooming are without even a dwelling place of their own. They are forced to exist in some dungeons that are not their own. Theirs is indeed a lifeless existence, the painful reality of modern life. They are also barred from healthy social
interactions, from the togetherness and sharing of the society. Jerry is a victim of this modern woe.

Man is a social animal, but in the society that Albee pictures, the word “social” becomes obsolete. Man remains only an animal, struggles to survive the onslaughts of an ambitious generation. Albee, being a true humanitarian, has used the story of Jerry to drive home his concerns for modern man. People like Peter will surely learn the necessity of human compassion. The breakdown of communication between individuals is the result of the absence of the all-encompassing human compassion. Albee attempts to restore the priceless jewel back to the chest of human world.

Albee’s attempts to restore the dignity of his fellow human beings, who constitute the society, continue to find expression in almost all his plays. Both The Sandbox and The American Dream are but a severe indictment of Albee’s contemporary America, what Roudane terms as an “attack on what he saw as American complacency” (47). In these two plays, Roudane observes that “the then thirty-two-year-old
Albee directed his satiric, ironic assault not against an American work ethic, but against a culture that placed its faith in a consumerist, materialist cosmos” (46). The American work ethic is mainly directed towards accumulation of wealth. They entertain the wrong notion that money and material value will bring them happiness in life. They falsely perceive that property is prosperity and wealth is success. Albee derides this corruptly conceived idea in these two plays. In an interview with Roudane, nearly three decade after writing the plays, Albee has clarified this point:

There’s nothing wrong with the notion of making your own way. What is wrong with the myth of the American dream is that notion that this is all that there is to existence! ...Becoming wealthy is OK, I suppose, but it is not a be all to end all. People who think that the acquisition of wealth or property or material things or power; that these are the things in life; the conspicuous consumption of material things is the answer; this creates a problem. The fact that we set arbitrary and artificial goals for ourselves is a problem. (Roudane, A Playwright Speaks, 97)

A money-centered society will surely turn out to be a self-centered society. This is what exactly the problem with people like Mommy is. In The American
Dream, Albee attempts to show that the much-vaunted American Way of Life is absurd. The playwright seeks to show that Americans’ normal human feelings and relationships have become deprived of meaning. He points out that people go through the ritualistic motions of loving and caring for one another, and respond to sexual attractiveness or neighborly concerns, but no feelings are engaged. All the five characters may speak to each other, but they live in their own worlds, isolated from one another. Their repetitive language of endearments to each other is deflated and hollow.

Also, Albee pokes merciless fun at what he perceives to be a matriarchal society and at the impotence of the American family head. Mommy is the driving force in the family unit. Only Grandma, who symbolizes the past and tradition, can stand up to her daughter’s wiles and match her. Into this feminine beehive of activity comes Mrs. Barker, the club chairwoman. She makes herself very comfortable and even removes her dress when asked. Through Mrs. Barker’s arrival, it is revealed that Mommy and Daddy
adopted a little child from her years ago. They systematically dismembered their “bumble of joy” because it behaved in a normal and natural manner instead of adapting to their artificial values. Even a child is perceived to be a future property. Any deviation will result in dismemberment. The very idea of dismemberment is not a sign of a healthy society. This discordant note is what the playwright wants to be heard loud and clear.

Again, Albee is not happy with the American way of losing individuality. People lose their identities and become mere types in the society. They are mostly shaped by the opinion of others, clearly lacking the ability to form any ideals of their own. Only one character, Mrs. Barker, is actually given a name, and it is so telling that Daddy has trouble remembering it even when she repeats it several times. The society that Albee creates onstage has no distinctiveness, no identity; it is literally a society without a name or a single character of its own. Everyone in the play is a type: a Mommy, a Daddy, a Grandma, a Young Man, and
so on. Albee does not want his society filled with only types. As types one merely exists without individuality and dignity. A life with a sense of pride and honor of being an individual, not types, is what Albee seems to be aiming for.

*The American Dream* is obviously about the absurdity of late twentieth century America. There is a huge discrepancy between what Americans want and what they get. Mommy’s hat is an exaggerated example of frustrated expectations; she behaves as though she knows what she wants, yet she is easily swayed by the opinions of others, by the “authority” who tells her the true color of her hat. She realizes there is something “artificial” about her choices and about her environment, but she seems powerless to act as an individual. She can only act as a “Mommy.” In Daddy’s words, “That’s way things are today, and there’s nothing you can do about it” (*AD 86*). Albee wants to do something about it. He wants to change “the way things are today...” (*AD 86*). His critical view of the myth of the American Dream proves his sincerely felt concerns for the society -- a society
which is tempered by a blatantly self-reliant consumerism.

Albee’s societal concerns are overtly passed on in his play *The Death of Bessie Smith* which is very much a drama about racial bigotry. However, in the opinion of Bigsby, the play is not merely about the racial protest alone. More than the ethnic shades, the play reflects Albee’s concerns about the decline of society in general. Of course, the most noticeable theme of the play about the death of a blue singer is racism. Even in a world which is promised to be the land of opportunities and prosperity and even after all the technological advancement and development, the color discrimination off-colors the social climate, especially in the Southern parts of America.

In Albee’s play, the singer becomes a victim, not of an automobile accident, but of the intolerable raging in the south. A timely aid, as it is shown in the play, to Bessie Smith, may have helped saving the life of a celebrity. Albee takes enough care in not limiting his scope to a particular anecdote alone.
By not showing Bessie on the stage, he has clearly generalized his scope and argument in the play. It may well be argued that by using her name Albee necessarily restricted his message to a specific case. Debusscher writes that “the singer died in 1937 and the play was written in 1959 - that is to say, at a time when the circumstances of her accident and death had long formed a Bessie Smith legend. Thus, the name no longer referred to a single person, but to a whole race of pariahs, of the disinherited” (22). Besides, the scenes, relating to the accident and death, though significant to the central pattern of the play, are but “held to an undercurrent through most of the play, being directly expressed in barely three of the shorter scenes” (22).

The theme of racism is not limited to one accident alone. It is given an elaborate treatment in the play. It is developed into a long description of the racist climate of the South, the climate permeates with prejudice, cruelty and hatred. The color discrimination is deep-rooted in the consciousness of the whites. At one time the Father
(of the Nurse) fulminates against "those goddam nigger records" (DBS, 50) which aggravate his headaches. At another time, the Nurse amuses herself by humiliating the Orderly. She assigns him degrading errands. Albee’s presentation of the character of Orderly takes the theme of racism to a different level. His character is at once pathetic and repellant, a monster and a martyr. He longs to find a meaningful place for him under the sun. This legitimate desire is often turned out to be an obsequious opportunism. He endures all the insults heaped on him only with an intention of getting himself extricated from the condition that he is in. He even goes to extent of soaking bleach into his skin in order to escape his condition.

Orderly does not want to waste his time in the hospital as he has other plans in his mind. "I’ve told you. I’ve told you I don’t intend to stay here carrying crap pans and washing out the operating theatre until I have a ...a long gray beard... I’m...I’m going beyond that" (DBS 58). Nurse, who really feel sorry for the Orderly, says in a
patronizing voice: “...Boy, you just don’t know! I’ll tell you something...you are lucky as you are. Whatever do you expect?” Orderly replies, “What’s been promised... Nothing more. Just that” (DBS 59).

The word “promised” is purposefully used by the playwright. This word alludes to the promise implied in the myth of the American Dream. Using Nurse as his spokesperson, Albee comments on the word “promised.”

Nurse: Promised! Promised? Oh, boy, I’ll tell you about promises. Don’t you know yet that everything is promises...and that is all there is to it? Promises... nothing more! I am personally sick of promises. Would you like to hear a little poem? Would you like me to recite some verse for you? Here is a little poem: ‘You kiss the niggers and I’ll kiss the Jews, and we’ll stay in the White House as long as we choose.’ And that...according to what I’m told...that is what Mr. And Mrs Roosevelt sit at the breakfast table and sing to each other over their orange juice, right in the White House, Promises, boy! Promises... and that is what they are going to stay.” (DBS 59)

With genuine concern, the playwright addresses these lines not only to the Orderly but to all his audience, who are after promises.

According to Gilbert Debusscher, the play is a “social tragedy...(is about) the decay of southern
society, the shameful anachronism in the heart of America” (28). The image of the setting sun that the Intern talks about is highly symbolic of a dying society. Even the picture that Albee has created about the hospital is also full of disgusting images. Nurse talks about two different patients who are admitted recently. One is “the poor man lying up there with his guts coming out...” (DBS 58). The other one is the Mayor with his hemorrhoids is in Room 206. (That means the seat of the government is in Room 206.) He is there with “his ass in a sling” (DBS 58). Since the Mayor is an important person he deserves better attention than the nigger who has got his gut out. Nurse rightly observes: “...it is true that the poor man lying up there with his guts coming out could be a nigger for all; the attention he’d get if His Honor should start shouting for something...he could be on the operating table...and they’d drop his insides right on the floor and come running if the mayor should want his cigar lit...But that is the way things are. Those are facts. You had better acquaint yourself with some realities” (DBS, 58).
Her words sound meaningful and in spite of the political overtones, the words bring out Albee’s sincere concerns about the welfare of a population which fails to come to terms with realities.

Albee, the critic, comes to the fore, even vehemently, in his first full length play Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? It is a widely believed fact that parents give life while teachers give a better life. Teachers shape the mind and the body of an individual so as to make him a better citizen of his nation. As molders of students who are the very backbone of a country, teachers should remain a constant source of both information and inspiration. They should lead by example for everyone to emulate. George, the Associate Professor of History, and Nick, the new entrant to the department of Biology, are by no means an ideal portrayal of teachers. There is no denying the fact that George is intelligent and quick-witted, with a gift for wordplay, but the kind of life he leads with Martha, the only daughter of the President of the College, shows him only in poor light.
George and Martha, along with Nick and Honey, represent the corroding values in the campus life. Albee’s depiction of the New Carthage Campus provides no rosy picture. Ambition, corruption, and infidelity oxidize the very atmosphere in the campus. George, though not very particular about money, marries Martha not because he is madly in love with the only daughter of the College President. Also, Martha’s decision to marry George is not a result of any genuine love or affection; instead, they are united by the methods of calculation and expectations. George, after the death of his parents (hinted at in the story of the boy who accidentally killed his parents) found in Martha a prospect of a safe future while Martha found in him a scapegoat who can easily be put into the shoes of her highly successful father. Behind everyone’s action, there is a plan. There is calculation and expectation.

Martha’s father has reached the position of the President of the college not by means of sheer hard work. Of course, he “knows how to run things.” But all his money comes from his second marriage with “a
very old lady with warts who was very rich" (VW 122). The president’s second marriage is also a calculated, well planned risk. As expected, the old lady with warts died soon and all her money comes to Martha’s father. All are driven by the mad pursuit of success either by hook or by crook. Nick, the young ambitious entry into the campus is the very epitome of American dream. He marries Honey because she has money. He comes to the campus because the campus promises bright future. He wants to become the head of the institution. In order to realize this ambition, he confesses to George, he is ready to sleep with any influential women of the campus. Nick is no mere talker. If an opportunity comes his way, he will surely try to get the maximum out of it. Such an opportunity comes when he is seduced by Martha. Everything happens in the presence of George. Nick has indeed, tried his luck with Martha, the most influential woman of the campus. They continue wooing, and George pretends to be an indifferent spectator. Morality, the chief victim of
the ambitious campus life, finds no place in the
dictionary of the educated animals.

Albee has almost decimated the highly deplorable
state of affairs in the educational institutions. No
society can benefit anything from these people who
are actually hypocrites in the shape of teachers.
All the four characters, in the play *Who’s is Afraid
of Virginia Woolf?*, contribute nothing as their lives
are sterile. Their sterility is indicative of the
barrenness of one of the most important and
influential social institutions called education.
Albee has indeed shocked his audience, especially
those from the academic circles, with the
“Walpurgisnacht” at the New Carthage. In the words
of Robert Coleman, the play is a sick play about sick
people (19). He is absolutely right in calling them
sick. What is more sickening is that these sick
people are campus people.

The play does also hint strongly at a mass
progress towards impotence and depersonalization by
the declining western world, which George at least,
as a historian and a humanist, blames on scientific
advancement. He concocts a doomsday scenario upon which many of his attacks against Nick, the biologist, are based: through genetic technology, “All imbalances will be corrected, sifted out.... We will have a race of men... test-tube bred... incubator-born... superb and sublime... But! Everyone will tend to be rather the same.... Alike” (VW 81). One could argue whether or not George’s perspective is reflected in the play as a whole, but as American culture at the time was growing more culturally homogenous through technological inventions like television (which portrayed ideals for how people should look and behave), Albee’s resistance to such a process shows through in his play. The play is really a “cultural critique of a country that, for Albee, was in moral decline.” (The Cambridge Companion to Edward Albee, 43)

Despite the themes of sterility, corruption, and marital strife, the play will be remembered for the exorcism it exercised at the end of the play. Unlike other playwrights who allow their characters to keep some of their lies and illusions -- most notably
Eugene O’Neill and Tennessee Williams -- Albee strips all of them away from his characters. He makes it clear in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* that he believes self-deception is evil and that no fraud should be entertained, no matter how comforting. Only the passionate search for the truth can nurture and fulfill human beings. Albee says that people must live without illusion and accept the inevitable consequences.

After demolishing the declining image of a campus in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Albee moves on to indict the corrupt church in his *Tiny Alice*. Of course, the indictment of the church has already begun with Nick’s account of his father-in-law’s corrupt practices as god man. Nick’s account has thrown subtle attack on the ecclesiastical office of the time. The consumerist bent of mind leaves no stone, including religion, unturned to attain the pot of gold promised by the myth of the American Dream. The loss of religious faith is one of the reasons for the deterioration of certain values in social life. The church and its officials are mainly responsible
for the declining faith. Albee is very much concerned about the corrupt practices that have resulted in the tear and wear of the fabrics of the social life. He continues his dissection of the church in *Tiny Alice*.

The play has had its first performance in New York in 1964. Almost immediately, it has spurred intense controversy and sparked a debate that has been played out almost every day in newspapers and magazines. The critics and viewers alike demanded the very meaning of the play which remains the most obscure of all Albee plays. The play has opened a flood of somewhat furious critical responses at its premiere, ranging from "brilliant" to "sophomoric." Most of the critics, as well as the performers involved in the production of the play, have confessed that they find it difficult to understand the play and even called it a "metaphysical muddle." Subsequent revivals of the work have aroused the same acrimonious response. Albee, on his part, in his introductory remarks to the published text in 1965, has kept the controversy alive by writing: "It has
been the expressed hope of many that I would write a preface to the published text of *Tiny Alice*, clarifying obscure points in the play—explaining my intention, in other words. I have decided against creating such a guide because I find—after reading the play over—that I share the view of even more people: that the play is quite clear.” Despite Albee’s assertions, people continue to have a hard time deciphering the play, in which characters are symbols, words and actions have multiple dimensions, and religious expression mixes with sexual fantasy.

In spite of its confusing allegorical structure, *Tiny Alice* has a clear-cut plot structure and coherence. Miss Alice is the world’s richest woman who wants to donate two billion dollars to the Catholic Church if the Cardinal’s secretary—lay Brother Julian—will be sent to her for further instructions. Brother Julian is a strange individual. He is fully dedicated to the service in the Church and it is also important to note that he has spent six years of his life in a mental hospital. In time, Miss Alice seduces him into marriage, and
that sacrament, blessed by the Church, proves to be his undoing. He discovers that Miss Alice is a sham and is the personification of Tiny Alice, who lives inside a model house that is an exact replica of the real mansion. The play ends with Julian dying, alone and abandoned by everyone as he faces death.

The play is written in three acts. Unlike The Zoo Story, which opens weakly and then builds in dramatic intensity, Tiny Alice has a strong first scene. It begins with Cardinal and Lawyer crisply discussing the monetary gift to be bestowed on the Church by Miss Alice. The intensity and tension created in the opening scene is unfortunately not maintained in later scenes, as the two persons, representing the church and the state respectively, prove to be only minor characters in the play. Later the audience is introduced to Brother Julian and Miss Alice, and it is their star-crossed union that forms the centerpiece of the action.

Albee again brings in his familiar themes of isolation and illusions to which, he believes, people desperately cling. Albee has doubtlessly created
the model with Tiny Alice inside to represent a Platonic symbol of the bright world of ideals that people carry inside their minds. For Albee, Julian’s confusion and penance at the end of the play give him absolution and a state of grace. Julian has examined his conscience, abandoned his delusions, and will make the necessary sacrifice to God and Tiny Alice. His acceptance of death finally releases Julian from a lifetime of doubt and gives him insight into himself. Albee makes it clear that Julian’s illusory faith has finally been stripped away. To have a clear understanding of the ramifications of this play, it is essential to have a detailed look into the plot of the play.

The play opens in a garden. A character in the play namely Lawyer is seen talking nonsense to a pair of cardinals in a cage. He imagines the song-birds as Cardinals of the Church. As he is talking to the cardinals as though he was talking to Cardinals, a Cardinal in the Catholic Church, another character in the play, enters. Their Conversation reveals that the two men are school-mates and have been
maintaining a lasting dislike for each other ever since their school days. The two men throw around insults. Cardinal says it is fitting that Lawyer, who has always been a cheater and a liar, has chosen the legal profession, and Lawyer counters that it is fitting that Cardinal, an arrogant, pompous whore, is in the Church. Eventually, the men turn their attention to the business at hand. Lawyer informs his estranged church official that his employer, Miss Alice, wants to give two billion to the Church. The Cardinal is very excited at the prospect of so much money (though the currency is never named). At Lawyer’s request, he agrees to send his secretary, Julian, a lay brother to Miss Alice’s house to take care of the necessary odds and ends.

In the next scene, Julian has just entered the library of Miss Alice’s mansion. The room’s most prominent feature is a huge doll house model of the mansion itself. Butler, Miss Alice’s butler, comes into the library. He sees Julian looking at the house and points out that it is an exact replica of the mansion. Butler asks if anyone is in the
replica, which startles Julian, who ascertains that the model is empty. Lawyer enters the library. He reveals that he knows Julian’s history, with the exception of a six-year blank period, which Julian refuses to talk about. Then Lawyer proceeds to slander Cardinal, which causes Julian to protest. Lawyer eventually leaves to get Miss Alice. Once he is gone, Julian tells Butler about those six years. That was the time when he has lost his faith in God, suffered a nervous breakdown, and put himself into a mental hospital. His loss of faith stems from his inability to reconcile himself with the difference between God and the representation of God as imagined by human beings. Julian tells Butler that his faith is his sanity. A chime sounds, indicating that Miss Alice will now see Julian.

When Julian enters the sitting room, he sees an old lady. He is surprised, for Cardinal has said that Miss Alice is young. Lawyer leaves the two alone, and Julian is forced to yell in an effort to be heard, but then Miss Alice takes off a wig and her old lady mask, revealing her own, much younger face.
She says she has just played a game to lighten the mood. Alice asks what Julian thought of Butler and Lawyer. Miss Alice says that Butler was once her lover and that she is the mistress of Lawyer, but that he is a pig. Then she asks Julian about his missing six years, and Julian gives much the same explanation he gave Butler. Alice asks if Julian has slept with many women, but he does not know. Although celibate, as a lay brother must be, while in the asylum, Julian has had a hallucination that he has sex with another patient. However, he does not know if this really takes place. Miss Alice changes the tone of the conversation back to business. She suggests that Julian moves into the castle so he will be on hand to take care of the business, and he asserts.

Lawyer chases Miss Alice into the library, while she is yelling at him to stay away. Lawyer is angry that Julian is at the house all the time. He tells Miss Alice that she should “get it done with.” He thinks that she is sleeping with Julian. Miss Alice talks of her loathing for Lawyer but at the same
time, lets him fondle her. Butler and Julian return from their tour around the mansion. Julian notices that the model is on fire. Butler looks out the windows and he sees that the chapel is burning. The men run off to put out the fire, and Miss Alice stays in the library. Alternating between a "prayer" voice and a natural voice, she asks that the fire be put out and the mansion be saved. Julian returns with news that the fire is out. He wants to know why the real chapel and the model chapel were both in flames, but Miss Alice says she doesn’t know why.

Butler and Lawyer are in the library. Butler says the fire in the chapel helps bring Miss Alice and Julian together. Lawyer expresses his distaste of them sleeping together, but Butler reminds him that the situation will not last long. Lawyer has to go see Cardinal again, so they decide to play act; Butler takes the role of Lawyer and Lawyer plays Cardinal. Butler, as Lawyer, tells Cardinal that Julian will be taken from the Church in return for the two billion. The men slip in and out of their roles, discussing what Lawyer will say.
suggests that Cardinal marry Miss Alice and Julian. Then Butler takes the role of Julian, while Lawyer stays in the role of Cardinal. The men discuss what God is. Butler as Julian contends that God is an abstract ideal, but Lawyer as Cardinal asserts that while there is an abstract God, that God cannot be understood or worshipped. Lawyer says that Alice can be understood, however.

Julian and Miss Alice are in the sitting room. Miss Alice talks about sex, asking Julian about his body hair. Miss Alice continues to tease him. Julian makes a slip of the tongue and says that she is tempting him. He speaks of his desire to serve humanity, but Miss Alice tells him that he has done great service to the Church through his interactions with her. He speaks of his dreams of sacrifice and martyrdom. Alice asks him to marry her and to sacrifice himself to her. She engulfs him within the wing-like arms of her dressing gown.

Julian and Miss Alice have just married. Julian enters the library where Butler is covering all the furniture with sheets. Julian wonders where
everyone, including Miss Alice, has disappeared. Julian wonders why Miss Alice has not invited any friends to the ceremony, but Butler says that she does not have friends. Then Miss Alice comes into the room, but when she sees Julian, she immediately leaves again. Then Cardinal comes in and Butler leaves. Julian speaks to Cardinal excitedly about doing service for God through his marriage to Miss Alice. Cardinal advises Julian to accept what may happen in the future as part of his service and part of God’s will. After Lawyer comes into the room, Julian exits to look for Alice. Cardinal looks at the model, asking obliquely if it is really true. Lawyer says it is. He opens a drawer and takes out a loaded pistol. When Cardinal questions this, Lawyer says they may have to shoot Julian. Soon enough, everyone is gathered in the library. Butler opens the champagne and Lawyer starts a toast to the “ceremony of Alice.” As Lawyer toasts Alice and Julian, lights begin to flicker on in the model. Julian makes his own toast to his love for Miss Alice. As soon as he is done, Lawyer announces it is
time to go. Julian realizes that something is going on that he does not understand. Lawyer tells Julian that they are going, while he will stay behind with Alice. Miss Alice tells Julian that she has done her best to imitate her, meaning Alice in the model, but Julian, who has fought his entire life against “the symbol,” does not want to stay behind with Alice. He believes that he has married Miss Alice, but she informs him that he has married Alice through Miss Alice. Julian charges that “there is no one there,” meaning in the model, but everyone else tells him to accept that Alice is there. Julian resists, declaring that he is “done with hallucination,” but Miss Alice proclaims that she, not Alice, is the illusion. Julian refuses to do as they ask and declares his intention of going back to the asylum, so Lawyer shoots him. Julian sinks to the floor in front of the model. Miss Alice holds him while he bleeds. Cardinal leaves, after agreeing to send his new secretary to pick up the money. Miss Alice asks Lawyer how long they must do this, implying that they have acted out this drama before and will continue to
do so again and again. Julian is in great pain, and Miss Alice talks to Alice in the model, asking her to take him in. Then the three say goodbye to Julian and leave him alone.

Julian begins his final soliloquy. He talks about his abandonment by Miss Alice. He finds it hard to believe that he is dying. He remembers a boyhood accident that parallels his current situation. He also addresses Alice in the model, asking if she has forsaken him like all the others. He looks in the model at “his chapel,” but starts with fear when the light suddenly goes out. He begins to speak to the phrenological head that wears Miss Alice’s wig, asking if she is his bride. He wonders if this is his priesthood and demands that his bride—Alice, God—show herself. He begins to hear the sounds of heartbeats and breathing, growing louder and louder. A great shadow fills the room, darkening the stage. His final words are that he accepts God’s, Alice’s will. Julian dies with his arms spread wide like the crucifixion.
The plot of Tiny Alice, though seems to be coherent, is indeed a bit confusing. Whatever may be the reviews and interpretations of the critics, what is certain is that Albee has once again forced his audience to become fully aware of the reality, this time, of the church. The religious officials of the church, though serving God, are human beings, clearly tempted by the materialistic hues of the society. The two billion promised by Miss Alice tempts the Cardinal who agrees to enter into a contract to exchange a lay brother for the sum assured. The past life of both Cardinal and Julian reveal that the men of the church are not as pure as they normally appear to be. Cardinal has had a gay affair with Lawyer in the past while Julian has a sort of hallucinatory affair with a fellow patient in the lunatic asylum.

Besides the denunciation of the church, Julian’s marriage with Miss Alice has once again highlighted Albee’s continued concern about the concept of marriage in the modern era. Miss Alice confesses to having an affair with the Butler, and though married
to Lawyer, she tempts Julian and forces him to marry him. The degradation of moral values gets splashed in almost all his plays. Through these portrayals, Albee, according to Rana Nayar, has used his "dramatic imagination for the reconstruction of identity and assertion of moral necessities" (22).

In what seems to be a surprise deviation from his usual thematic preoccupation with death and the problems affecting his society, Albee moves positively on to stress the importance of life. As a true humanitarian, he produces a rose play, communicating that an awareness of death and feelings of discontent are but pathways to progress. He surely tries to inject positive attitude in the minds of his affluent but afflicted modern man. The play *Seascape* approves what Rana Nayar commented: "All those critics who choose to talk about Albee’s concern with problems other than that of relationships somehow miss the point that he was, first and foremost, a humanist. And as such, he was always conscious of the transformative potential of
As he was aware of his own role as a social critic” (p.23).

In spite of the turmoil afflicting modern life, Albee firmly believes that there is potential in life for man to live positively. In *Seascape* Albee writes with energy about the potential there is in life. Albee’s theatre challenges those who, as the playwright has said, “turn off” to the complex business of living, who “don’t stay fully awake” in relationships, who for various reasons choose not to immerse themselves in an “absolutely full, dangerous participation” in experience. The audience discovers Albee’s response to the fact that so many people turn off. A dangerous participation is preferable to being indifferent to the happenings around us. Whether good or bad, Albee advocates a full participation. Life requires active participation and not the passive turning off as most of the people in the modern day life are so fond of. A vibrating society with total involvement is better than a sterile attitude which leads to the decay of all values.
The play *Seascape* is not only a remarkable aesthetic achievement, but it is also a highly affirmative statement on the human condition. Albee seems to have employed the techniques of Pinter and Beckett, and transformed them so that he could make a highly personal statement, one almost antithetical to their own. He seems to be saying that human life is worth living and that it is desirable to climb the evolutionary ladder in order to experience love, art, and the complexities of human interaction. It is desirable even if that means a certain loss of freedom, natural beauty, and the security possessed by the creatures of the sea. Albee has never made so affirmative a statement in his career as he has made it in *Seascape*.

*Seascape* is a two-act play concerned with a middle-aged couple, Nancy and Charlie. The setting is an isolated beach to which the couple has come for a vacation. The first act begins with the deafening roar of a jet airplane passing overhead. This sound, which annoys and interrupts the couple’s dialogue, is heard three times during the first act. It serves as
a contrast to the quiet calm and pristine beauty of the sand dunes, and serves to remind us of the world outside the isolated beach. After the plane’s initial roar passes, Nancy and Charlie debate whether to spend the remainder of their lives beachcombing and seeking adventure or to rest and let the years pass by uneventfully. The direct consideration of Nancy’s beachcombing suggestion leads the couple to consider the meaning of life and the imminence of death. Nancy responds to Charlie’s desire to rest by asking:

But is this what we’ve ... come all this way for? (Some wonder and chiding) Had the children? Spent all this time together? All the sharing? For nothing? To lie back down in the crib again? The same at the end as at the beginning? Sleep? Pacifier? Milk? Incomprehensible once more?” (SS 9)

This statement, coupled with Nancy’s fervor in considering old age, retirement farms, and whether they will die together or alone, causes Charlie to agree smilingly to Nancy’s proposition of a life of endless beachcombing. He does so principally in an effort to pacify Nancy and to rest. Just as they reach a state of relaxation, the jet plane again
roars overhead. The plane’s droning actually serves as a kind of coda, leading the couple to a new area of discussion. Although this new period of discussion concerns numerous subtopics, it focuses primarily upon Charlie’s boyhood practice of diving underwater and staying submerged for long periods of time. Ever since Charlie was a little child, he wished to live under the sea, and so he often would let out all the air from his lungs, sink as far down as he could, and remain there as long as possible. He loved to watch the fish and see the variegated colors of the underwater world, and presumably he felt a sense of oneness with the sea, the place which all living creatures originally came from.

In contrast to Charlie’s impulse towards sea life, Nancy reveals that she wants to be only two things when she was young: a pony and a woman. As they banter about her having achieved her second aim, they move associatively—the play’s method—to the marvel of having built a family. The challenge, the excitement, and wonder of having built a family and the continuity of life are matters to which the
couple thrills in discussion. Albee indicates a true reverence for the beauty of togetherness and closeness, which the word *family* implies. There is truth and tenderness between the couple; there is also love. Albee reveals himself in this discussion and throughout the play as a man of much wisdom, warmth, and insight into life.

Again, Charlie returns to a description of his submergence -- this time at a protected cove at a summer place when he was a teenager. He tells how he has entered naked and remains under water for a very long time, becoming “part of the undulation and the silence” (SS 7). Appreciating the richness of Charlie’s experience, with its associations of youth, courage, sensuality, and deep communion with nature, Nancy, who from the play’s start has been trying to reactivate Charlie’s life impulses, encourages him to strip and submerge himself once more. When he hesitates, she encourages him by countering all of his objections, including the possibility that some other beachcombers would observe him. Nancy wants him to relive the experience both for himself and for
her own vicarious excitement. Since this experience has many sexual associations and ramifications, her encouragement leads them to a discussion of sex and the loss of potency. Associatively again, they go on to discuss marital fidelity and sexual fantasy.

Nancy tells of how, during a period when Charlie was melancholic, she had thought of divorcing him. She has been a modest girl before her marriage, but by marrying and staying with only one man, she feels that she deprived herself of much sexual experience. She reveals that she has dreamed of former boyfriends with whom she missed her chance for sexual involvement. She has thought of liberation and of regaining her youth by starting again. Such thinking, she contends (presumably, Albee agrees), is the cause of many divorces. Nancy’s own wavering comes when she is thirty. She recalls an instance when she has been quite pretty, pink, and literate; propped up beside Charlie in bed, she stares at the moles on his back while he, in a state of melancholia, lies there quite unresponsive and uninterested in her. Just at that time, Nancy has
even wondered if her husband has an affair with another woman. Knowing how various are the springs of attachment, she may not have really blamed him if he has had such a relationship. In any case, she divests herself of the notion of divorce within a week. While Charlie agrees with her that fantasy can play a significant part in sexual relations, he contends that he has been faithful to Nancy, both in mind and in spirit. They now feel quite close, and Nancy again encourages him to find his cove, to submerge, even to take her along if he wishes. She looks about and says that the other sunbathers have gone. This renewed exhortation by Nancy is motivated by her sense that so much in life is fleeting, “so much goes” (SS 25). She mentions her eyesight specifically and yet implies the more intangible commodities of youth and opportunity.

A recollection of a past incident, however, diverts them. Nancy recalls the time when Charlie is stung by a bee. He has ordered her to make mud. She recalls how, after years of working from recipes, she could not figure out the recipe for mud. She
explains that her petulance comes upon her like a bee sting, calling it involuntary behavior that momentarily closes off her impulse to kindness. Charlie accepts this explanation, and she goes on to state that what most often causes her petulance is his speaking as if their lives were over.

Charlie agrees with Nancy that all they really have is “ourselves and some time” (SS 37), and once more they express their opposed attitudes: Charlie wants to rest and Nancy wants to find excitement. Charlie contends that one must face reality, the reality of death. Nancy opts for not giving up, for seeking and scaling the “glaciers and the crags” (SS 38). Slowly the debate plays itself out and they speak of returning to the business of the day—writing postcards and gathering seashells.

At this moment, the act (and the play) makes its most dramatic and sensational shift. As Charlie and Nancy speak, two huge sea lizards, Leslie and Sarah, come up on the dune and squat down on their tails. Rarely in any dramatic experience, American or foreign, has fantasy been so strikingly imposed on a
naturalistic environment. Actually, the imposition is merited. The couple has just been speaking of reality and illusion, and the notion that life is dull and unexciting has been a major theme throughout. The appearance of Leslie and Sarah ends whatever it is that is dull.

To the appearance of these sea monsters, Charlie and Nancy have different reactions. Charlie is petrified, and demands (reminiscent of the bee-mud incident) that Nancy find a stick so that he can fight them. By contrast, Nancy, although somewhat frightened, is fascinated by the monsters. She brings a small twig to Charlie, while Leslie lifts a huge branch. Believing that they are both going to die after Charlie is defeated in battle by Leslie, Charlie and Nancy hastily declare their love for each other. At that moment, the airplane roars overhead for the third time in the act, and Leslie and Sarah become frightened and run away. Symbolically, the flight of the sea creatures serves to remind us how frighteningly far our modern technology has taken us.
from nature. For Nancy and Charlie, of course, the flight is hardly symbolic.

Nancy is awestruck by the entire happening. Although she has been frightened by the lizards, her sense of wonder and her exhilaration are greater and more compelling than her fear. In contrast, Charlie is relieved at the disappearance of the lizards and theorizes that their appearance is only a dream. He further conjectures that he and Nancy are dead. Nancy answers: "We may be dead already, Charlie, but I think we’re going to die again. Here they come!" (SS 51). With the reappearance of the monsters, both Nancy and Charlie are truly frightened. Upon Nancy’s suggestion, they both assume postures of animal submission and take on fixed smiles. The first act ends here. The second act begins where the first act has ended, as though the play were one long, uninterrupted act. The act division is useful. The opening of the second act provides almost as great a surprise as did the appearance of the monsters. The monsters talk! At least for the moment, we have entered a world of pure fantasy.
However, the sense of absolute fantasy lasts only a short time. That the fantastic creatures are capable of speech makes them less fearsome and more humanoid. Always aware at some level that the creatures are make-believe, we nevertheless become involved, in fact deeply involved, in the interaction between the two couples and in what is being discussed. The second act, like the first, is an extended conversation, interrupted periodically with a few instances of physical action. The second act actually begins with an example of such action. Charlie and Nancy are still lying on their backs with feet in the air, the postures of submission they assumed at the end of Act I. Thus a comic bridge is extended from the first to the second act. After Leslie examines the humans, the couples speak apart. The lizards wonder what the humans are doing, and the humans then try to decide what to do in the face of this awful danger. On Nancy’s urging, they decide to stay still and smile. During this examination period we discover what is to be the keynote of the entire act. Leslie tells Sarah: “Well ... they don’t look
very ... formidable—in the sense of prepossessing. Not young. They’ve got their teeth bared, but they don’t look as though they’re going to bite. Their hide is funny—feels soft” (SS 57).

He then declares that they smell “strange.” This scrutiny of the humans as a different and strange species continues throughout the act. As this becomes more intense, it deeply affects Nancy and Charlie and, as the examination is applied to the lizards, it affects them as well. In this way, Albee can ask what it means to be human and whether it is worthwhile trying to survive. The principal mode for this examination, set forth right away, is that of contrast. Two sets of beings from different worlds, or in some measure, two sets of humans from different cultures, meet and compare notes. After their initial scrutiny, the monsters decide to approach the humans together. Charlie is frightened but Nancy is somewhat fascinated. The lizards speak to the humans and the humans respond, despite Charlie’s hesitancy. They all say “hello” and exchange pleasantries.
When both the sets of creatures declare that they do not intend to eat the other, the way is paved for more facile and substantial interaction. This specific discussion of intention leads Charlie to comment more generally on the eating habits of humans; he tries to explain, for example, that “we don’t eat our own kind” (*SS 66*), but he is somewhat frustrated in making clear his meaning. This pattern of humans trying to explain fundamental things to nonhumans continues throughout the play and has the effect of exposing and confronting much of what it means to be human.

The human explanation moves from eating habits to an attempt to explain handshaking, which brings some funny moments. Nancy and Sarah seem to interact more smoothly than Charlie and Leslie. Charlie is driven nearly mad when he tries to explain to Leslie why humans differentiate between “arms” and “legs” while animals have merely “legs.” Despite the conversational tensions, they all ultimately shake hands, and this ritual seems to bring the couples a step closer. From handshaking, they begin to
consider what frightens them. This discussion is motivated by a desire to avoid panic and consequent belligerence if one of them should happen to become frightened. They all agree that they are frightened by the unknown.

Then, on a lighter note, the humans try to explain what clothes are and why they wear them. Nancy defines the need as “to keep warm; to look pretty; to be decent” (SS 74). It is the attempt to explain decency (exposing the ridiculous Puritanism of humans in the area of sex) that leads to a hilarious exploration -- to Charlie’s chagrin -- of Nancy’s breasts. Sarah’s definitive analogy of Nancy’s breasts to whale mamillaries is both funny and serious. Its funny side is the image of size with which Nancy’s breasts are being associated. Its serious side is the linkage again of humans with other, supposedly lower, species. When the couples begin to discuss pregnancy and birth, the apparently minor gap between animals and humans grows wider. While lizards lay eggs, humans do not. While lizards spawn hundreds of eggs at a time -- Sarah estimates
that she has laid seven thousand eggs -- Nancy
explains that humans give birth to one or two babies
at a time. Sarah reveals that her eggs are carried
for only a few weeks, while Nancy tells of the nine-
month gestation period. Their subsequent discussion
of child rearing also reveals radical differences.
While Sarah’s children merely float away, Nancy
indicates that human children are kept at home for
twenty years or so until they can care for
themselves.

While this comparison has both its comic and
educational facets, it actually leads into a rather
serious area, one of vital concern to Albee in this
play. In explaining “another reason” why humans keep
their children with them, Nancy says “we love them”
(SS 86). When the lizards inquire what love means,
Nancy responds that it is “one of the emotions” (SS
87), which leads Sarah to ask for a definition of
emotions. Defining emotions is one of Charlie and
Nancy’s most difficult tasks. Although they cannot
easily explain the emotions, especially love, it is
Albee’s notion that the human capacity for love and
the range of emotional life are what separate humans from other animals. Later Charlie makes Sarah cry as he asks her to contemplate Leslie’s ultimate departure through death. He then explains that her reaction is an emotional response.

After an unsuccessful attempt on defining emotions, the couples discuss courtship and sex. This transition to lighter subject matter provides a relief and again emphasizes the similarity between humans and supposedly lower species. Sarah describes how males chased her and fought over her when she reached maturity. Leslie, on her part, tells that he was attracted because she smelled good. This discussion of sex gets particularly funny when Nancy objects to Charlie’s thinking that Sarah may have had affairs.

Conversely, Charlie’s assumption that human standards are inapplicable to the lizards nearly gets him into a fight with Leslie. He says that Leslie “has no grasp of conceptual matters, ... hasn’t heard of half the words in the English language, ... lives on the bottom of the sea and has green scales” (SS
94). In fact, he suggests that Leslie is no more intelligent than a fish. This infuriates Leslie. Just at that moment, birds fly overhead and Nancy and Charlie try to explain what birds are. Sarah likens their flying to their swimming.

Their discussion moves on to matters such as life, death, reality and illusion. Then the couples are drawn into the ultimately unanswerable question of the reality of existence. When Charlie mentions Descartes’ proposition, “I think: therefore I am,” the prospect of having to define thinking for Leslie overwhelms him. In fact, everything, at once, seems to overwhelm him, and he starts to crumble. Nancy wins him back to the world of the living by giving him a long, lovely, French kiss. She explains that Charlie is all right; it is just that he has gone through life and found it a bit overwhelming.

Once again, their discussion is interrupted by the roar of a jet plane overhead. Leslie and Sarah have again run off in fear. Noticing their fear, Nancy and Charlie seem keenly sympathetic. Perhaps Charlie’s recent confrontation with his own
vulnerability, brought about by the lizards’ questions, makes him especially sensitive to their plight. After the roar dies down, the couples come together once more. Charlie explains that planes are machines and, to Leslie’s dismay, reveals that humans even have machines that go underwater. Such a reference leads Nancy to mention Charlie’s boyhood habit of submerging himself. Charlie is reluctant to discuss it and angrily asks the creatures why they came up on earth. Under stress, they reveal that they had lost a sense of belonging, of being comfortable down there. Here Albee attempts to show how dissatisfaction is a cause of change and development and how thoroughly grounded our human experience is in the life of the sea. Charlie is heartbroken as he considers the transition from simple, beautiful sea life to so-called higher forms of being.

Charlie proceeds to explain that humans also came from the sea and this naturally leads to an explanation of the theory of evolution. Nancy goes on to explain that she values tools, art, and an
awareness of mortality, and the discussion deepens. Charlie points out, rather harshly, that these things “separate us from the brute beast” (SS 126). He explains that the brute beast is “not even aware it’s alive, much less that it’s going to die” (SS 127). Here Albee is suggesting that this awareness, this crucial element of being a human instead of an animal, is also a source of human pain and perhaps of human accomplishment. With an impulse that is at once jealous, vindictive, and loving, Charlie is struck with a need to make the lizards humanly aware of life, human emotions and death. He says: “I’m impatient for you. I want you to experience the whole thing! The full sweep! Maybe I envy you ... down there, free from it all; down there with the beasts?” (SS 128)

He tries to encourage Sarah toward an awareness of death, but in so doing, he makes her cry and he makes Leslie intensely angry. Sarah wails: “I want to go back; I don’t want to stay here anymore. (Wailing) I want to go back (Trying to break away) I want to go back!” (SS 129). This is one of the most striking
moments of the play, as Albee sets forth the liability of being human, the deep sense of death and isolation that the human condition imposes.

Nancy, who has grown very close to Sarah, tries to comfort her. Charlie is very sorry for having caused her deep sorrow. Wildly angry, Leslie tries to choke Charlie to death for making Sarah cry. When Leslie states that “she’s never done anything like that” (SS 130), Albee drives home his point that to have emotion, to cry, to learn about death, is to begin to be human. Nancy and Sarah exhort Leslie to stop choking Charlie, and finally he does, declaring that he and Sarah ought to return to the sea. The beasts resist Nancy’s attempts to make them stay and, when Leslie touchingly puts out his paw to “shake hands,” Charlie takes it. Nancy, in a final attempt to persuade them to stay, explains that although they may leave, they (i.e., the lower species) will have to come back some day. Then, as the confused lizards hesitate on top of the dune, Nancy and Charlie make the only meaningful effort that creatures can make to each other in the face of the void. They offer to
help the lizards in their struggle to exist on this earth. Leslie, after descending a step down the dune and crouching, stands up straight and speaks the final line of the play: “All right. Begin” (SS 135). This is a highly affirmative conclusion to an essentially affirmative play, for Albee is suggesting that it is worthwhile to live upon this earth despite its troubles, its mysteries, and the imminence of death.

In *Seascape*, Albee has cast a broad, piercing light on the human condition. He has suggested that the human is but a step away from the simpler, lower animals, and that the simpler life -- the life of the sea -- is in many ways more attractive than life on this earth. The peace and beauty and mindless integration of the individual with nature are not to be found here. However, in the more complex human world, we have developed much that is artistically beautiful and technologically precise; such products have been the fruit of the developed human mind. More importantly, we have developed two principal capacities that distinguish us from animals: the
ability to love and the awareness of death. The two capacities are interrelated, for human awareness of mortality draws us closer to our fellow creatures. Love, then, is our only weapon against the void.

*Seascape* stands an excellent example of Albee’s love for man’s life as a whole. Within the overall pattern of the play, there are some highly meaningful thematic statements. The first statement is that discontent is the springboard of change or growth. The second tells that these developmental stages are gradual but inevitable. Growth is a never-ending process. Whether we are lizards or human beings, we must learn to accept changes. Whatever happens in the society happens because such changes are inevitable. Albee wants to put across the point that human beings need to accept the changes and, instead of turning off, they have to participate, have to experience the growth.

The play’s third statement is the most meaningful one. It says that the knowledge of one’s own mortality is the key to being truly alive and human. Charlie, whose great fear is separation from
Nancy in death, intuitively forces Sarah to face this same possibility. He asks her what she would do if she knew Leslie “was never coming back” (SS 129). Once they have absorbed Charlie’s question, Leslie and Sarah have learned what emotion is. They know their love for each other; they know the fear of loss. Sarah says she would cry her eyes out if she lost Leslie.

The play ends with the word “Begin.” The full meaning of “Begin” is contained in the play’s central analogy. Both the couples are ready now to begin the death of the old life and the birth of the new. Leslie and Sarah will die as lizards to be reborn as men. Now they can move their home from the underworld of the sea to the middle ground of earth. On the other hand, Charlie and Nancy will die as men and will be born again to a higher plane of existence symbolized by winged flight in the upper world of air. Albee lays bare the maladies of modern life in his other plays. But through this play, he hopes that these maladies are but a part of the society’s inevitable growth and man will sure to cast off these
problems to emerge to a higher plane of existence on earth. The earth is not a bad place to live on and the change of mind of Leslie and Sarah to stay on is symbolic of Albee’s affirmative intend.