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Deconstructive Intertextual Presentation of Psychological Fragmentation and Alienation in the Selected plays of Edward Albee

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Abstract: This paper explores the deconstructive analysis of trauma and alienation keeping in view Julia Kristeva's Theory of Intertextuality and Jacques Derrida's Theory of Deconstruction to analyze the selected plays of Edward Albee. This paper tries to establish a relationship among various aspects of old and new American Dreams, thematic explorations of different American Playwrights and the existential approaches of Albee and other contemporary American playwrights. This paper has tried to offer an analysis of the selected plays of Edward Albee (1928-2016) to depict the social, personal, and familial emptiness, psychological fragmentation and stagnation while exploring the multiplicity of the texts. This paper will help future researchers to appreciate the texts of different authors while applying deconstructive intertextuality. This paper will also help them to understand the multiple approaches of the texts to develop different theoretical interpretations.

Key Words: Deconstruction, Intertextuality, Psychological Fragmentation, Alienation, Multiplicity of Interpretations

Introduction

The basic purpose of this Research is to show how far Edward Albee's plays represent different themes related to the American Dream and the individual's perception of it. This paper focuses on the different aspects of Postmodernism and The Theatre of the Absurd in relation to the discourse developed by Albee in his plays to reveal the multiplicity of linguistic interpretations. Albee's approach towards American Theatre is revolutionary as his characters expose the non-existent status of human life in Modern

and Postmodern American society. Albee focuses more on psychological fragmentation to expose the trauma and fear of alienation within. Albee's linguistic expression is unpretentious, intricate, and based on short statements, but this motivates the readers to explore the inner feelings of characters through language. Albee wants his readers to think and analyze the American Dream in postmodern drama. According to Kerstin Schmidt: "postmodern drama...treats the self as a sign among others in the process of theatrical signification. The theatrical

manifestation of the self, dramatic character, can be fragmented and subverted along the same lines that sign systems are taken apart, recognized, redistributed and/or simultaneously developed." (p.44)

Postmodern drama reveals the self with all its variations both positive and negative. No matter how the *self* (my italics) is, disintegrated, collapsed, chaotic or flustered; postmodern theatre presents it in its wholeness. Albee, in his plays, resents characters as fragmented but that fragmented self is presented in its entirety as this does not present the character only, it engulfs the whole American society. Peter and Jerry of *The Zoo Story* (1959), Mommies and Daddies of *The American Dream* (1961) and *The Sandbox* (1959) or George and Martha of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962), all these individuals present completeness in their fragmented presentations of both life and society. They represent both the signifiers and the signified as they are both images and their interpretations. Straightforwardness in the usage of language, simple vocabulary, and continuous yet jittery movement on stage all make Albeean characters weird yet interesting presentations of postmodern American Society. Grandma in *The American Dream* narrates the story of the twin adopted by Mommy and Daddy to Mrs Barker. GRANDMA: What did they do? Well for the last straw, it finally up and died; and you can imagine how that made them feel, their having paid for it.... they wanted their money back. That's what they wanted (p.101). Albee's deceptively simple discourse unravels the meaningful interpretations in seemingly meaningless excerpts. Derridean Deconstruction focuses on the absence of interpretations and logic and Albee seems to follow the same methodology in the use of language and the characters' revelation. According to Malpas & Wake (2006): "Derridean Deconstruction is primarily directed against what Derrida has called the "metaphysics of presence" or logocentrism;

by this, he means the dominant tradition of Western philosophy and the logic upon which it is founded –a logic which he consequently attempts to reveal as dependent upon certain founding metaphors, rhetorical gestures, and the self-fulfilling assumptions." (p.171)

According to Derrida, the presence of logic, meaningful utterances, and self-fulfilling statements are unable to accomplish the criterion of a deconstructive text. Text can only be deconstructed if language reveals the absence of meaning and logic. Derrida believes that the text should not provide reasoning or judgment rather it must be a challenging task for the reader to define chaos and confusion in the text. J.Hillis. Miller (1979) points out, "[Deconstruction does not] reduce the text back to the detached figments but constructs again in a different from what it deconstructs" (p.251). Albee makes his usage of language both meaningful and absurd. His words are easy to read but difficult to comprehend as they do not intend to bridge the gap between the reader and the text, rather they just lead the readers towards more complexities within the texts. Albee shares his process of writing, "Something very, very interesting happened with the writing of ...[the] play. I didn't discover suddenly that I was a playwright; I discovered that I had been a playwright all my life, but I didn't know it became I hadn't written plays..." (p.42). Though this specific statement has been made by Albee for *The Zoo Story*, this can be applied to most of his writings as this writing is a process in which nothingness creates meaning but not a permanent one. Albee also asserts, "One must let the play happen to one; one must let the mind loose to respond as it will, to receive impressions, to sense rather than know, to gather rather than immediately understand" (p.67). Theatre provides an impression of life, and that impression makes the reader realize the representational and sardonic expression of life.

Intertextuality

Albee consciously or unconsciously establishes a connection between the bleak presentation of life and intertextuality. Intertextuality is a literary device, that creates an interrelationship between texts, this term has been coined by the Post Structuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966. William Irvin expresses his view on this intertextuality, “[Intertextuality] has come to have almost as many meanings as users...a stylish way of talking about illusions and influence” (p.27). According to Julia Kristeva, “[the] Literary word she writes is an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning) as a dialogue among several writings” (1980, p.65). Multifarious presentation of various approaches to the American dream in different works of twentieth-century writers develops a collage to disseminate the fluid status of this dream. Albee's characters in *The American Dream* exhibit the nightmarish presentation of the new American Dream. Grandma's narrative regarding the butchery of the twin exposes the real and horrific truth of American Society. Grandma, though keeps forgetting lots of stuff, does share the story of the adopted child and cutting off her body parts with Mrs Barker which she listens halfheartedly and absentmindedly. Albee projects the uncaring and ruthless behaviour of the parents through this exposition of attitude. What Grandma says about Mommy, and Daddy and the ruthless assassination of the infant bring forward the ever-prevalent dissimulation in American society.

Approaches towards the American Dream

In *The Sandbox* (1959) Mommy and Daddy appear during the course of the play, but they fail to realize the purpose of their existence as well as their relation to Grandma, they just get rid of her by leaving her in the sandbox and believe that she will die soon; Grandma's

character brings forward the general temperament of American Society during the post-war era. The tendency to leave the old generation on its own shows an unconscious repulsion towards the Old American Dream and endless pursuit towards the New American Dream characterized by insensitivity.

Decentrality and Edward Albee

Nicholas Royle defines Derridean Decentralization “in terms of a decentring, starting with a decentring of the human subject, a decentring of institutions, a decentring of the *logos*, (*logos* is ancient Greek for ‘word’, with all its connotations of the authority of ‘truth’, ‘meaning’...” (p.13). Allen emphasizes, “Texts do not present clear and stable meanings; they embody society’s dialogic conflict over the meanings of words” (p.36). Text is decentred so is the language and this very notion of decentrality is embedded in Albee's usage of dialogic and context. This notion asserts that the text should be studied, understood, or explored differently while rejecting all the previous impressions posited by other readers or critics. Jonathan Culler, in his article on Roland Barthes, “Barthes, The Theorist” (2001) quotes Barthes’ essay “*Jeunes Chercheurs*” (Young Researchers 1972)” provides his hypothesis regarding the importance of text, “[W]hen we say *the text* it is not in order to make it divine, to make it the deity of a new mystique,...But to denote...a field requiring a partitive [expression]...all that can be said of a work that there is a Text in it” (p.73). Barthes' point of view regarding the significance of the text is important to understand the textual techniques used by Albee in his plays such as repetition, absence of proper names, the dichotomy between the expressions used by old and new generations and deceptively simple language used by the characters. Albee's texts have disjunctive parts and emotionally incomprehensible and socially

isolated beings and these characteristics convert his plays into a social and psychological study of modern American society. Albee shows in his play *The American Dream* the repetitious discourse to reveal both the limit and boundlessness of the language:

GRANDMA: Well, let's see. If you are not the Van man, what are you doing here?

YOUNG MAN: I am looking for work.

GRANDMA: Are you! Well, wat kind of work?

YOUNGMAN: Oh, almost anything..almost anything that pays, I will do almost anything for money. (p.109)

The discourse between Grandma and Young Man projects the bitter reality of American society, in which both young and old can do anything for money; money is the reality and the only relationship they want to have. Young Man exhibits what American Dream has become. Incomprehension is prevalent in modern American society, while absurdity is one of the major themes of postmodern American Drama as it represents many of the important characteristics of the Theater of Absurd. Martin Esslin provides the definition of Theater of Absurd in his article: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose...Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless..." (671).

Failure of Communication

Another significant play of Albee's *Three Tall Women* (1991) is not only autobiographical, but it also makes use of simple language while communicating a complex and intriguing relationship between the mother and the son and between the social and personal presentations of the desolation of American life. The play is about three women, one is in her 90s, the second woman is in her 50s and the third one is in her 20s.

These characters have not been given names but alphabets; A is the oldest one, B is in her middle age and C is a young one. Albee is careful about naming his characters as in *The American Dream* and *The Sandbox*; characters have not been given names but filial identities like Mommy, Daddy ad Grandma. In *Three Tall Women*, Albee's characters are given Alphabets instead of names, A is an old character taken care of by B and C is the lawyer of A. Only one male character is introduced is the son of A, who left home twenty years ago. This play represents his relationship with his adoptive mother. Albee talks about his inspiration for *Three Tall Women*, "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." (p.166-167)

As this play has been called a revenge play, Albee reflects on the memories of his adoptive mother and a strong conflict between him and his mother which forced him to leave the house due to his homosexual tendency. The problem in this play is not homosexuality only but also the absurdity of the relationships. Three women in this play represent three stages of an old lady and all of them are detached from each other, they have been given the alphabet instead of names. The Boy in this play is the son of the old lady who has abandoned her but comes to meet her without having any warmth of a familial relationship. The existence in the play features inauthenticity of the characters as A is unable to connect between the past and the present; when he enquires about her son, "Will he come today? Is today the day he comes? He never comes to see me, and when he does, he never stays. (*A sudden shift in tone to hatred.*) I'll fix him; I'll fix all of 'em.?" (24). The absurdity of the familial relationships is evident in her dialogues, she wants her son to be with her, but he does not want to stay with her, and her dialogues show

both her anger and helplessness. This tinge of helplessness, anger and mental confusion can be found in *The American Dream & The Sandbox* where Grandmas are taken as burdens and as unwanted relationships that should be dumped and forgotten as soon as possible.

This *decentered self* (my italics) is predominant in the plays of Edward Albee; *Mommies*, *Daddies*, *Youngmen*, *George*, *Martha*, *Peter*, and *Jerry* are all decentralized selves as they represent their fragmented individualities in unsettled and destabilized situations. The postmodern drama focuses on the subjective and objective presentation of the self. Ihab Hassan remarks about this dual presentation of self in the following terms: "impulse of self-un-making" (118). Derrida also expresses his opinion regarding the "self": "To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence...The subject is not some meta-linguistics substance or identity, some pure cogito of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language. My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it" (1984, p.125). Decentrality holds an important place in the concept of intertextuality as Riffaterre puts forward the concept of intertextuality, "the text refers not to objects outside of itself, but to an inter-text. The words of the text signify not by referring to things, but by presupposing other texts" (28). Deconstruction and Intertextuality are somewhat interrelated to expose and explicate the relationship between the language and the multiple dimensions in which this is spoken or written. Graham Allen in his book, *Intertextuality* (2006), "Texts do not present clear and stable meaning; they embody society's dialogic conflict over the meaning of words" (32).

Deconstruction and the American Drama

For Derrida, Deconstruction does not mean to destroy something rather it means the analysis, reiteration, and opening of the

interpretations. "Understanding of Self" for Derrida is not its obliteration rather it means its re-definition. Postmodernism is indifferent to centrality; it decentres the text to understand its language as well as themes. Niall Lucy expounds in her book on Postmodernism: "In a postmodern world, nothing is central, and everything is a paradox. Compared, then, to the idea of Literature, the idea of the text is antifoundationalist" (ix). This decentrality is very much related to the Derridean Deconstructions where the centre of language is removed to explore continuity within the text. Deconstruction and postmodernism are related to each other as both reject systematic analysis, set rules and established norms.

In "Notes and Counter notes", Ionesco unveils the different themes of Absurdity, "For me, it is as though at every moment the actual world had completely lost its actuality. ...as though there were no foundations for anything or as though it escaped us...Nothing holds together, everything falls apart" (25). One more aspect that Albee has borrowed from Ionesco's Absurd plays is the senselessness of the characters such as their uniform, similar responses, and failure to judge the situation in which they are living. David Dunson states in his article "The Meaning of Life in Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*" (2012) about the senseless of the characters in Ionesco's play:

"This ridiculousness can be seen especially through their reactions to the two rhinoceros that run past the café in the first act. The people say simultaneously, "oh, a rhinoceros!" and then, "Well, of all things!" Their comments are very similar, and they seem to lack the ability to make original judgments. Even at this early point in the play we see a "mass mind" at work, in which each person unthinkingly repeats the actions and words of someone else." (45)

Albee demonstrates and expounds on this confused condition in his plays. The

circumstances are like a vortex in which these characters try to survive. They have no purpose other than to work for their survival. Their actions, conversations and their movements are monotonous and repetitious. They imitate each other as they speak each other's dialogues, and this represents their sense of emptiness. In almost all the plays of Albee, repetition is one of the chief characteristics as this feature gives his plays a complex projection of human behaviour in the modern era. Albee's plays reveal the purposelessness of the language as Esslin asserts, "the devaluation and disintegration of language" (396). Esslin's comment on language and its usage make a connection between the language and the drama to reveal the social, moral, and psychological shallowness.

Characters as Irrational Beings

Characters in Albee's *The American Dream* and *The Sandbox* are less rational, isolated, and self-alienated. They feel themselves out of place as Berenger in Ionesco's *The Rhinoceros* states, "it's a sort of anguish difficult to describe. I feel out of place in life, among people and so I like to drink" (35). This sense of agony, incomprehensibility and inner conflict makes Albee's plays different from his contemporaries. Language cannot communicate nor can actions do justice to expose the psychological and spiritual anguish.

Devoid of traditional plot structure, narrative and language, Edward Albee's plays such as *The American Dream*, *The Sandbox* and *Three Tall Women* accentuate the illogicality of human existence in a world. There is no proper conclusion or beginning, middle or end to his plays rather they just show the endless plat of suffering, chaos, and despair. One can sense the escape from self, reality and past in Albee's characters. This trait is similar to the style of other playwrights of his time such as in Sam Shepard's play *Buried Child* where characters

escape from the realities of life and their past by talking, fighting, running away from the past and accusing each other of their pathetic circumstances instead of changing them. Albee makes the reader and the audience realize the conditions in which his characters are existing particularly and the audience generally in American society. Family as an institution and marriage as a bond no longer attract this society because every institution has collapsed due to money-mindedness and materialism. In *The Buried Child* (1978) Shepard presents a family where an unpleasant past and pungent reality have demeaned and humiliated the *self* (my italics) of the characters, "Shelley: so, the past never happened as far as you're concerned. Dodge: the past? Jesus Christ. The past what do you know about the past? (p.58) The dialogue between Shelly and Dodge reveals Dodge's fear of thinking about the past. Dodge's past is haunted by the incest between his wife Haile and his son Tilden and that makes him shudder with inexplicable feelings. For him, the past is a buried child; it should not come to the surface, and it should not be discussed as it is warped and distorted. The whole family keeps a secret that in fact is not a secret to them and in hiding it they reveal the secret. Mathew Roudane (2002) writes, "One needs to be a devout follower of Freud to respond to the Oedipal dimensions in the play..... the buried child and buried truths of the past, repressed through years of denial, rejection, and indifference, are the greatest source of disconnection in the family" (p.178).

Characters as Escapists

In *The American Dream*, Grandma mirrors the whole American society to project the bitter truth of the dwindling family system. Family means strengthening and loving each other and taking responsibility when needed, yet Mommy and Daddy, two binding forces of the family, fail to acknowledge the significance of this unit. Both escape from the

situation and the responsibilities and due to this, they mutilated the twin they adopted, and after committing this heinous act, they wanted their money back. Mrudula points out, "The boy was mutilated by the parents, part by part, organ by organ. At last, the child got killed. Now they want to get back the money. This is the world. A kind of consumerism and materialistic attitude is prevailing" (48). Mrudula asserts that Mommy and Daddy believe in consumerism and materialism, they are greedy, coward and mean and they represent malaise prevalent in the family system. Both Mommy and Daddy have no sense of belonging to the child and towards each other, they are socially and spiritually alienated beings.

Realism and Fantasy in American Drama

Blanche in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) escapes from the delusion of belonging to the upper class. Loman depicts the North while Blanche exposes the South, yet both have the same dream to be successful and respectable despite their backgrounds. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the boundaries of fantasy and reality are blurred, and fantasy becomes reality and reality forces the characters to be escapist. Blanche is an outsider in the play, and she wants to wrap all her truths regarding her past in fantasy. Williams mentions this in the stage notes as, "incongruous to this setting" (p.12). This sense of incongruity and illogicality are the manifestations of blurred boundaries between the past and the present. She is in search of Elysian Field (in Greek mythology, the home of the Blessed after death) while wearing a white suit which symbolizes purity, innocence, and righteousness. Blanche desires to escape from her past which has been contaminated with sexual desires and expulsion from Laurel school. She believes that her imaginary life is closer to reality or reality itself than the bitter reality of the existing world. She states to her lover, Mitch,

that she replaces the truth, "what ought to be the truth" (56). Blanche tries to escape from the reality and past as both haunt her and both carry destruction and disorder. Her excessive intake of alcohol might be taken as an effort to get rid of reality, but she fails in doing so.

Blanche's fear of history in *A Streetcar Named Desire* might have a similarity with Martha's histrionics towards her husband George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. George is an acknowledged failure as a History Professor and his conversation with his wife about their never born son exhibits their inner fear and insecurity. Both ladies (Blanche & Martha) face difficulty in accepting the truth and for them, truth should be disguised in a lie. Blanche mentions in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, "I don't want realism. I want magic!" (p.34). Blanche wishes to escape from the reality and to get the fake self-absorbed artificiality. At the end of the play, she has been admitted to Asylum where she has to live with both reality and illusion. In Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Martha's hysterical laughter denotes her escape from the past and the existing reality. Martha wants to differentiate between past and present, yet she has to surrender before illusion and reality as George makes her clear that both complement each other, "Martha: Truth or illusion, George; you don't know the difference. George: No, but we must carry on as though we did. Martha: Amen" (67). Martha's version of reality seems to be similar to Blanche's belief in falsehood as both ladies lead a fake life in the greatest country in the world. Their lives represent artificiality and illusion within society. Both resist accepting the pungent reality and this resistance reveals controversy in American society as its people are escapist despite having a strong vision of the American Dream.

Intertextuality and American Drama

Edward Albee expounds on the disfigured

and disoriented characters in *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream* and Man, woman and young Couple in *The Play about the Baby*. Zsanett Berna (2010) mentions in his article two types of American Dreams and the clash between the old and new American Dreams. Berna further asserts that the grandmas from *The American Dream* and *Sandbox*, George and Martha from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and Man and Woman in *The Play about the Baby* are the old American Dream, and the new American Dream will include all the other characters of three plays: Young Man, Mommy, Daddy, Mrs Barker, Nick, Honey, Boy, and Girl. Intertextual association among these Postmodern American playwrights focus on the basic elements of language and that is the mutability of its function and multiplicity of interpretations. According to Kristeva, "Intertextuality [can be understood] as the passage from one sign system to another...the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one" (59). Kristeva asserts this point that intertextuality destructs and deconstructs the meaning to devise a new one which itself is not absolute but subject to another change and interpretation. In almost all the plays of Albee, the concept of dream is reflecting the illusionary life of the characters and their confusing and blurred self.

In Albee's *The Zoo Story*, the dream to have a normal, integrated, and contented life has been shattered since the play exposes not only an escape from the existing situation but also projects alienation from each other and within the characters. According to the playwright, John Guare, "*Zoo Story* is the work that spawned a whole generation of park bench plays..... To show you were avant-garde, you needed no more than a dark room and a park bench" (12). Guare's comment on *The Zoo Story* projects the reality of American people who are living in small apartments and dark rooms, and they are unable to communicate with each other. The darkness of the room reveals their inability to

communicate with each other, incongruity in their behaviour and settings, and an escapist tendency from their past – the important components of modern American life. Harith Ismail (2009), in his article, states:

"The setting of the play is very important. Parallel to the caged animals in the zoo is the caged man who is no longer free. The restraints and complexities of the modern age incarcerate him and alienate him from his fellow people... He loses contact even with animals. Jerry's visit to the zoo shows his desperate attempt to find contact with other human beings." (77)

Ismail projects the real condition of American people in the settings of Albee's *The Zoo Story*; human beings are caged not only physically but also psychologically and spiritually. They are unable to have contact with animals. Jerry tries hard to have contact with his landlady's dog which projects his desperate desire to communicate with somebody or some creature. Lisa M. Siekfer mentions in her article, "Jerry wants to give voice to the people of his stratum whose bypassed histories seem lost in the fast-paced tumult of society" (33). Jerry believes that his life is meaningless and futile. He is like a caged animal, both physically and psychologically in a laughably small room with alienated beings living aimlessly and apathetically with each other. Jerry's escape from a stagnant apartment building and his escape in the zoo project the breakdown of human communication. His escape from the zoo and his effort to be loved by Landlady's dog is a desperate attempt to communicate and more precisely to be heard. Jerry in *The Zoo Story* (1958) mentions this to Peter:

Jerry – I loved the dog now,

It's just that It's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS....(P.67)

Jerry wishes to be convivial with the dog, but the dog does not love him, and the truth is human beings do not love him (Jerry) as well.

Rose Zimbardo points out the relationship between Jerry and the Dog: "a perfect model of most human relationships" (1965, p.56). He is alone, an outcast, a stranger towards all the other people living and existing around him. Jerry's failure in communicating and getting friendly with other people does project the failure of communication among humans and between men and animals. Albee himself comments on the Dog story in his play, *The Zoo Story*, "I suppose the dog story in *The Zoo Story*, to a certain extent, is a microcosm of the play by the fact that people do not communicate, ultimately failing and trying and failing" (67). In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry's confession is evident, "animals are indifferent to me.... (he smiles slightly). like people....most of the time" (P.46). The purpose of Jerry's futile efforts is to expose an individual's dilemma in a postmodern and postwar American society. According to Ismail, "All in all, *The Zoo Story* enacts the story of the caged isolation of the modern man whose real essence has lost in a world where people do not consider human values, but materialistic ones" (P.72). Escape from the realities, secrets, and truths have made modern man's life full of complexities, artificialities, hypocrisy, and shallowness. Benjamin Oppipari (2010) also believes that human beings have been caged in modern American society, though he says this in the context of Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*, yet it can be applied to *The Zoo Story* and *The American Dream* as he talks about the postmodern American society, "The Shepard's family's suppression of the secret has a deleterious impact upon all interpersonal interactions of the play...They see no way out, either physically from the house..." (P.43). The quote reveals a disturbing picture of postmodern American society and this situation can be applied to many of the American plays that have been written in the perspective of the inability and impotency of families in handling the familial and social crisis.

Intertextuality and the Philosophy of Life

The philosophy of life and fate has been an important theme for all writers and especially for modern writers because to them, the meaning of life cannot be found, and destiny is like a riddle. Arthur Adamov points out: "that the destinies of all human beings are of equal futility, that the refusal to live (of the character called N.) and the joyful acceptance of life (by the employee) both lead, by the same path, to inevitable failure, total destruction" (164). Adamov defines life and destiny as unavoidable destruction and this sense of inevitable fate and destiny has also been discussed by Albee. Albee's plays showcase the same issues in American society, which are shared by this society. Ionesco also shares the same concern and theme in one of his essays: "As I am not alone in the world, as each of us, in the depth of his being, is at the same time part and parcel of all others, my dreams, my desires, my anxieties, my obsessions do not belong to me alone" (78). Both Adamov and Ionesco emphasize two important things, one is man's status in society, and the second is his place in the universe. Jerry's place in society and in the universe is utterly disoriented, he has no one to communicate and he can be identified with many people who share the same fate as they are social outcasts too. Jerry is desperate to communicate so he starts visiting the zoo with a desperate need to communicate with animals. His first and final encounter with Jerry exhibit both the best and the worst of human expression as that encounter projects that Jerry wants to communicate regarding the situation he has been facing and Peter is comfortable with the situation in which he is living as he has a family to communicate with. On the other hand, Jerry cannot converse properly that's why he tries to communicate with the animals at the Zoo. Albee declares after writing *The Zoo Story*, "Something very, very interesting happened with the writing of that play. I didn't discover suddenly that I was a playwright; ...And so when I wrote *The Zoo*

Story, I was able to start practising my 'nature' fully" (121). Albee asserts that this play has revealed human nature completely to himself. After writing this play, Albee feels a certain sense of achievement not that he had completed his play, but he got to know the eternal issue of mankind, the failure of communication. Jerry wants to communicate; Peter does not like to communicate with him. Albee asserts: "Everything in my life had led to this moment; the writing seemed to flow some inner need and conviction" (133). Through the character of Jerry, the audience gets to know the reality of life as he declares, "I find it hard to believe that people are such as they really are" (67). The reality of life is explicated through Jerry who is more courageous than Peter to define the ugliness of life and destiny. Jerry provides a perception of life as Albee asserts, "*The Zoo Story* is neither nihilistic nor pessimistic. My hero is not a beatnik, and he is not insane. He is over-sane. Though he dies, he passes on awareness of life to the other characters in the play; the play, therefore is obviously not a denial of life" (48). Jerry's character cannot be taken as an insane person, rather his vision of life is far different and clearer than the stereotypical and fixed attitude of life propounded by Jerry. Jerry's expression of life and destiny are not limited to *The Zoo Story*, this is also exposed by the other characters in Albee's plays. In *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream*, characters, who are identical in both plays, are unable to communicate and their discourses are meaningless.

Indifference and Insensitivity in the American Families

In Postmodern America, a sense of detachment and isolation have been prevalent themes. Albee and the other playwrights reflect this sense of bereavement in American society. This sense of alienation is somewhat apparent in Albee's *Three Tall Women* where three characters A, B, & C represent one character who is isolated from

the people and withdrawn from her real self and has been turned into trouble, "I don't have any friends anymore; most of them are dead, and the ones aren't dead are dying, and the ones aren't dying have moved away or I don't see any more" (26). This is an autobiographical play, where Albee portrays her adoptive mother as Albee declares, "I knew my subject -my adoptive mother, whom I knew from my infancy ... until her death over sixty years later, and who, perhaps, knew me as well (67). Albee's adoptive parents' character is portrayed not only in this play but also by Mommy and Daddy in *The American Dream*, who bought an infant and then murdered him after mutilating his body. Albee was adopted by Reed and Frances Albee; they belonged to the filthy rich class of American Society. They belonged to that era when Fitzgerald was writing *The Great Gatsby* in order to expose the reality of the shallowness of the American high class. Albee's childhood was like Alice in Wonderland, he had every facility in life for which people could only wish for. As Bigsby points out, "With a St. Bernard dog to pull his sleigh in winter and a Rolls Royce to take him around town, the young Albee tended equally to precocity and corpulence" (p.167). Yet, Albee could not receive the love, care, and attention he should have been given. Albee's adoptive parents Reed and Frances could not show that affection to their adoptive son as their own marital life is dull and void of any feelings. This was suspected that Frances married Reed just because of his money. Both spent much of their life in attending social gatherings to get photos with people of high profile. Most of Albee's childhood was spent in his room waiting for his parents but they never showed love and affection to him, as Albee once mentioned, "I spent most of my time with my nannies or away at summer camp and at school. I didn't see those damn people - my parents - more than six weeks of the year" (p.34). Albee's father could not communicate with Albee, so he hired a

person as a father figure to communicate with his son. Albee had been taken by his parents as a possession not as a human being as Albee points out, "They bought me. They paid \$133.30" (p.34). Albee was threatened by his parents on his behaviour that he would be returned to where he was born. Albee's childhood and youth are reflected in his plays. In *The American Dream*, the memory of his parents had been reflected through the characters of Mommy and Daddy who wanted their money back after mutilating and finally murdering the twin, *The Three Tall Women* shows alienation and social isolation in Albee's life. Bruce Mann points out, "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" (p.98). This play of Albee reveals the complicated and confusing relationship between him, and his mother and this play also reveal her mental and social

deterioration.

Conclusion

In this paper, postmodernism, Intertextuality, Deconstruction, and the Theater of the Absurd have been discussed in reference to Albee's plays along with his contemporaries. The purpose to discuss all these above-mentioned issues and plays is to show how are they connected to each other and how each theory shares certain aspects of modern American Drama. Another purpose is to reveal the linguistic fluidity of Albee's plays and their diverse elucidations according to the theoretical interpretations of postmodern American Drama. In the forthcoming chapter, Derridean terms Différance and Erasure will be discussed in reference to different plays of Albee along with his contemporaries and the basic focus will be the language used by Albee in his plays to show its chameleonic status in the postmodern world.

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