EDWARD ALBEE'S DRAMA UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SAMUEL BECKETT

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I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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Edward Albee is influenced by the Absurd Drama of Samuel Beckett whose works involve existential concerns. Albee follows Beckett's traces in the dramatization of uncertainty, alienation and the question of freedom. Albee's characters do not have fixed identities, and they suffer from their identity problems. The notion of Other enhances this uncertainty. The ambiguity of existence, whether they really are or not, presents another problem for these characters. Their lives are based on illusions, and the line between the reality and fantasy is absent. Alienation of the human being from the self and the others is another existential theme that Albee deals with. Alienation is partly caused by lack of communication, and as a result, the isolated self is entrapped in his own condition. Freedom becomes a confusing question in his works as it makes the characters anxious while choosing one option among various others on his own, and as it renders the characters responsible for their free choices. So, the characters tend to be passive agents in life, which is in fact another choice. Albee extends Beckett's absurdist ideas and adopts the Absurd Drama to highlight his social concerns as he is also a social critic. The targets of his criticism are materialism, loss of values and broken human relationships. The playwright challenges the audience for a reform on these points.

Key Words: Uncertainty, Identity, Existence, Beckett, Albee.

ÖZ

SAMUEL BECKETT'İN ETKİSİ ALTINDA
EDWARD ALBEE'NİN TİYATROSU

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Edward Albee varoluşçu kaygılar içeren Samuel Beckett'in Absürd Drama'sından etkilenmiştir. Albee, belirsizlik, yabancılaşma ve özgürlük sorununu dramatize ederken Beckett'in yolundan gitmektedir. Albee karakterlerinin oturmuş kimlikleri yoktur, ve kimlik problemlerinden dolayı acı çekmektedirler. Öteki kavramı bu belirsizliği arttırmaktadır. Varoluş karmaşası, gerçekten var olup olmadıkları, bu karakterler için başka bir problem oluşturmaktadır. Hayatları yanılsamalara dayalıdır ve gerçekle hayal arasındaki çizgi kaybolmuştur. İnsanoğlunun kendine ve ötekilere yabancılaşması, Albee'nin ilgilendiği diğer bir varoluşçu temadır. Yabancılaşma, kısmen iletişim kopukluğundan kaynaklanmaktadır, ve bunun sonucunda da yabancılaşmış benlik kendi durumuna hapsolmuştur. Özgürlük, sadece kendi başlarına, birçok farklı seçeneğin arasından birini seçerken karakterleri kaygıya sevk ettiğinden, ve özgür seçimlerinden dolayı da onları sorumlu kıldığından, karmaşık bir soru haline gelmektedir. Bundan dolayı, karakterler edilgen özneler olmayı seçmeye eğilimlidirler ki bu da aslında başka bir seçimdir. Albee bir eleştirmen olduğundan, Beckett'in absürd fikirlerini genişletmekte ve Absürd Drama'yı kendi sosyal kaygılarını açıklamak için kullanmaktadır. Eleştirisinin hedefleri maddecilik, değerlerin kaybolması ve kopuk insan ilişkileridir. Yazar bu noktalarda düzeltmeye gidilmesi için izleyicisini zorlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Belirsizlik, Kimlik, Varoluş, Beckett, Albee.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Edward Albee (1928, -) is one of the significant writers of the 20th century American drama. Born in Washington, he was adopted by a wealthy couple. His father, Reed Albee, was the owner of a vaudeville circuit; so Albee's tendency toward drama started there. He was raised in luxury; yet he did not have a happy childhood, finding the strong minded and rigid step-mother suffocating. He became a problem child and was expelled from various schools. Instead of becoming a member of the wealthy social group, he chose to leave home and find his way by himself at an early age. Being an adopted child with a domineering step- mother must have a negative effect on the psychology of the writer. Some questions like who he was, where he came from, and who his natural parents were, always troubled him. He also wondered about the meaning of being a parent, and brooded over the responsibilities of the parent to the child, the child to the parent and the other members of the family. During his twenties, he lived among the artists and bohemians of New York's Greenwich Village. He tried several jobs which did not suit him. He was an experimentalist, and he tried several genres and styles of playwrighting. He wrote poems, plays, even a novel. At the age of thirty, he wrote his first play, *The Zoo Story* (1958) that brought success and notoriety to the playwright (Bottoms 3). His other significant plays are *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1960), *The American Dream* (1961), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), *Tiny Alice* (1964), *A Delicate Balance* (1966), *Seascape* (1975), *Three Tall Women* (1994), and *The Goat or Who is Sylvia* (2002).

Albee was influenced by the existentialist movement and the absurdist drama, especially that of Samuel Beckett. He transmuted this influence into the American domestic drama and produced his unique style. He was the successor of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Eugene O'Neill, who perfected domestic drama. However, his name was listed among Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter and

Samuel Beckett, who wrote in the vein of Absurd Drama, as his distinguished style developed. He is depicted as "a deeply serious, highly erudite figure, very much a member of the literary establishment…, a writer of many faces, many moods" (Bottoms 1). His plays, which are usually set in domestic settings, satirize the society and the modern man. They present an attack on the cruelty, complacency and hollowness of the American scene.

Regarding his plays, Albee follows the trace of the absurdist playwright, Beckett, in most of the subject matters and style. In *The Theatre of The Absurd*, Eugene Ionesco, one of the forerunners of the Absurd drama, defines the term *absurd* as follows: "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" (qtd. in Esslin xix). Although they did not form a deliberate school for this attitude, the absurdist writers share some basic themes and techniques to explore these themes (Esslin xviii). Nevertheless, each absurdist writer has analyzed these themes and used these techniques in his own way. Especially in the European countries, after the World Wars, people lost their faith in religion, in the conventional establishments, and they also lost their hopes for the future. This situation was not the same with America because "In the United States there has been no corresponding loss of meaning and purpose. The American dream of the good life… [was] still very strong. In the United States the belief in progress… has been maintained into the middle of the twentieth [century]" (Esslin 225). As a result, there are not so many absurd plays in America as there are in Europe. However, Edward Albee is included in the category of absurdist writers as he "attacks the very foundations of American optimism" (Esslin 225). Albee uses the subject matter and the form of the Absurd drama in his own American way. While his inspiration is Beckett's work, Albee walks in his own way and manages to become both an absurdist writer and a social critic.

Albee's works reflect Beckett's existential ideas, which are mostly derived from the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's perspectives. Existentialism was one of the major philosophical movements in the 20th century. In the middle of the 20th century, the existentialist philosophy was the major inspiration for the literary figures. The existentialist philosophers declared "the complete autonomy ... of the individual" (Macquarrie 7) since this philosophy is based on the subject, in

other words, the human being. Beside this, "Existentialists are usually rebels against the establishment. In many fields – theology, politics, morals, literature – they struggle against the accepted authorities and the traditional canons" because "it is only after the total denial of conventional beliefs and standards that new possibilities can arise and a transvaluation of values take place" (Macquarrie 16, 17). The major figures of this movement are Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre; the latest one being *the* most influential on the literature of that age. Samuel Beckett absorbed Sartre's existential ideas deeply. He blended these ideas with his absurdist worldview. Existentialism inspired not only the European but also the American writers as "the period after the end of World War II brought existentialism, [and] absurdism… to the American stage" (Sternlicht 151). However, as "Albee's concern for the theatre derives from his concern for the society" (McCarthy 27), Albee deals with Beckett's existential concerns to a certain level. Albee is first of all a social critic. So, he does not explore these concerns in a metaphysical sense as Beckett does.

Samuel Beckett (1906- 1989), an Irish writer, is the most influential figure on Albee's playwrighting. In fact, "Beckett's minimal approach to his work and his radical freeing of the traditions of writing and theatre has influenced and informed many of the artists working today" (Coots 4). Beckett experienced World War I and II. He saw the German invasion and the chaos of the post-war period, and these were terrible experiences for him. However, they were very important contributors to his playwrighting. "Beckett can be classed as a true twentieth-century writer. Not only for his commentary on the human condition during the turbulence of the period but also because his life spanned the century" (Coots 1). The masterpiece that made him a forerunner of the 20th century Absurd drama was *Waiting for Godot* (1953), which is a corner stone of the Theatre of the Absurd. *Endgame* (1955) follows this play securing Beckett's place as an absurdist writer. He takes a radical approach to the theatre with no concern for the conventional theatre and brings his language and his characters down to practically nothing to try to find out "the true identity and essence of what it is to be human" (Coots 2). Beckett thinks that an artist's duty is: "to express the totality and complexity of his experience regardless of the public's lazy demand for easy comprehensibility" (Esslin 2). According to him, the form of a work is as important as its content. This belief can be traced through his plays.

The stark structure and the settings in his plays complement their content of isolated characters in a hostile world.

Although Samuel Beckett was deeply inspired by the existential philosophy of Sartre, at some points he slightly differs from Sartre's ideas and establishes more pessimistic and absurdist world views. What haunts Beckett's characters is the great uncertainty in their life, or more generally the unbearable burden of the human condition. His characters have ambiguous identities. "Consciousness" is a key term in the discussion of the uncertainty of identity in Beckett's characters. It is what distinguishes man from an animal or an inanimate object. Sartre states: "One must be conscious in order to choose, and one must choose in order to be conscious" (595). According to Sartre, man makes himself, or in other words, man becomes somebody because at first he is nothing. He makes himself whom he chooses to be by his free will. Man is totally free, and this freedom is equated with consciousness. However, at this point, there are ambiguities and conflicts that man finds himself in. Beckett's characters do not accept being fully conscious of their plights. Semi-consciousness is their state. Beckett does not provide clear personal data for his characters. Their past lives, occupations or the relationship between them are not clear. Even their names are not recognizable, and they change throughout the play. The playwright puts pairs of characters on the stage. Almost in each play, he uses this technique to reveal that these characters are not a whole by themselves. These dependant couples complement each other to build a sense of complete identity. However, when they are alone, they are almost nothing.

In his *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre mentions three kinds of beings, which reveal the identity as a conundrum for Beckett's and later for Albee's characters. These are being-in-itself, being-for-itself and being-for-others. Macquarrie explains these terms as in the following: "The 'in-itself' has its being in itself, and this is essential being", "The 'for-itself' is free to choose its essence. Its being is its freedom. Yet, paradoxically, its freedom is also its lack of being" (47). The being-in-itself has no consciousness. It is just there, and it does not confront itself. It does not concern itself about its existence or its condition in the world. However, being-for-itself is a conscious being, which is conscious of its own consciousness, and human beings are to be being-for-itself. Sartre denotes that the for-itself is "the nihilation of the in-itself" because it is "a *flight toward*" and "this flight takes place

towards an impossible future always pursued where the for-itself would be an in-itself-for-itself… an in-self which would be to itself its own foundation". He argues that the for-itself is that which "is not what it is and is what it is not" (472). This situation is inevitably problematic for the characters of Beckett who are in constant search for their own identity, and it creates the first cause of existential anguish about their identity as they come face to face with the nothingness. Sartre talks about a third kind of being which makes the question of identity more enigmatic for the human being. It is the "being-for-others". Here, the Other is a turning point with his *look* because "I recognize that I *am* as the Other sees me" (Sartre 302). Sartre also adds: "The For-itself refers to the For-others" (303) and goes on: "it is in the light of *the Other* that the experience is interpreted" (316-317). Thus, on the one hand, the human being as a conscious creature is always in pursuit for his future and for his other possibilities to become whomever he chooses. He is always in a state of becoming though he cannot be complete until he is dead, which would also be an escape from his consciousness. This is an unbearable burden for Beckett's characters, and it possibly makes them wish for being a being-in-itself. On the other hand, man, who is in conflict with himself about his own self, is outweighed by the definition of the other people which will make his identity static . The uncertainty of identity of Beckett's characters matches Sartre's definitions.

In a conflict with themselves, Beckett's characters mostly tend to be in the mode of being-in-itself, which has no consciousness, and as a result, no suffering. Innes supports this idea: "all Beckett's characters…aim …to escape -'blindly'- from the 'anguish of perceivedness', into the state of 'non-being' designated by …zero label"(432). They seem to be aware of the fact that their being a for-itself-in-itself, "the ideal of consciousness which will be the foundation of its own being-in-itself by the pure consciousness which it would have of itself" is impossible. The reason is that it is the ideal "which can be called God" (Sartre 723-724). Thus, they do not want to bother themselves with this enigma. Living like a vegetable is preferable for them. They cannot answer the questions about why, whether or how they exist, and this adds to their existential anxieties.

Beckett asserts that time flows and changes everything. Sartre also discusses temporality of the being-for-itself. According to him, while being free with various possibilities to make himself, man is open to future. However, he cannot escape his

past. He is shaped by his past and is also responsible for his past deeds. The being-for-itself is always bound to change. He can never stay what he is, and this conflict creates identity problems for the individual. Beckett's characters have several identity problems, most of which echo in Albee's characters. As they suffer being human beings, they would like to escape their consciousness, and "evasion of consciousness is seen as the normal state" (Innes 439). The lapse of memory, uncertainty about the motives for what they say or do and the fragmented backgrounds can be included among these problems. In several of Beckett's plays, madness is mentioned as a relief for their condition although one does not become mad intentionally. Besides, some of his characters *play* a role, to give them an idea about their identity as something or somebody with a static identity. Closely related to this identity problem is what Sartre talks about *play.* Sartre exemplifies this with a waiter working in a café:

> His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid…trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray… his gestures and even his voice seem to be mechanisms; he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things. He is playing… he is playing at *being* a waiter in a café. (101-102)

Beckett's characters play the roles that they invent themselves such as playing a master, a slave or a mother-like figure; but these attempts are unable to give them the sense that they are self-sufficient human beings.

Beckett's impact on Albee is present in the latter's occupation with the same existential issues. Albee is concerned with the uncertainty, which involves both the uncertainty of identity and the uncertainty of existence. To start with the former, Albee handles this concern in two separate ways as Beckett does: uncertainty of self and uncertainty of the Other. At this point, the fact that Albee takes the individual man as a social being should not be ignored. His suggestions or concerns about the individual cannot be separated from his social perspectives as the society is formed of the individuals, which means that the folly of the individual be reflected in the folly of the society he lives in or vice versa.

Some of Albee's characters have self-awareness; they question themselves and try to find an answer to these questions. They are being-for-itself; yet to a certain point. They generally hesitate and prefer to escape responsibilities and consciousness at the moment of a crisis or recognition. Some other characters wish

to live in the mode of being-in-itself. Consequently, the battle of the self within itself which bothers Beckett's characters goes on in Albee's characters, too. Most of Albee's characters are beings-for-others. They decide, act or live regarding what the others will expect from or demand of them. The evaluations of the other people are the inseparable parts of their lives. So, they cannot decide whether they are the one who they become, or the one that is defined by the others.

Albee's characters experience inner and outer pressures, which make their own sense of identity blurred. Although he generally creates realistic characters in realistic settings and gives personal data about their backgrounds, his characters suffer from identity problems. Consciousness is a great pain for most of them, as it is for Beckett's characters. They are in a vain attempt to evade this pain. Albee's characters may yearn for madness, reversal of their sex, even death as they are not satisfied with themselves or with their lives. The playwright also mocks the people who think that they have to belong to a group, an organization or a club in order to perceive a fixed identity. Albee's characters, akin to Beckett's, play the role of being somebody, an adorable husband, a good wife or a family man. However, the playwright is aware that although these roles can be one of the constituents of one's identity, that function cannot be equated with his selfhood. Besides, Albee's characters cannot face their past; mostly they want to forget about their histories, resembling Beckett's characters. Sartre claims that past decides the present which decides the future (637, 640). So, man's past is inseparable and inescapable, no matter how much man tries to escape from it.

Albee believes that not only inner conflicts but also outer forces prevent an individual's building a whole selfhood. The social conventions, the norms and the rules all represent limits and obstacles for an individual to become who he wants to be. Even the family or the parents of a person may want to shape him however they would like without thinking that he is an individual who is free to think for himself and act accordingly.

In Beckett's plays, the Other is portrayed sometimes as a threat and other times as someone needed. Sartre argues: "The fact of the Other is incontestable and touches me to the heart. I realize him through *uneasiness*; through him I am perpetually *in danger* in a world *which* is this world" (367). The Other's look makes the human being, who is a being-for-itself, an object. The Other may also limit

one's freedom (Sartre 671). On the one hand, Beckett's pairs need each other as man is always being-for-others; on the other hand, they push each other away. Beside generally being indifferent to a person, the Other may also insult, kick or even beat him. Thus, the Other is both necessary and unbearable for the human being, which is one of the paradoxes that underlines the uncertainty in his plays.

The notion of the Other haunts Albee's characters as it bothers Beckett's characters. In both Albee's and Beckett's plays, the Other is mostly an intruder, a stranger and a mysterious being. Moreover, Albee, like Beckett, uses the notion of the Other in relation to violence. However, there is an ambiguity in the existential philosophy about the Other: on the one hand, he is a menace; on the other hand, he is needed (Cumming 190). One needs the affirmation or the evaluation of the Other in order to have a clear idea about himself, which may yet be a distorted idea. Thus, in Albee's plays, the characters cannot be sure about who they are or who the Other is and cannot trust one another. This makes life more and more incomprehensible for them.

Apart from their ambiguous identities, Beckett's characters suffer from the uncertainty of existence. Man always searches for meaning of himself and of the world he lives in; yet it is impossible to find correct answers to these questions in such an obscure universe. After the catastrophes in the world, especially the World Wars, man's belief in any value or any establishment is shattered. Man feels lost in the universe, which is governed by randomness and irrationality according to the playwright. Actually, this overall ambiguity is present in all absurdist works in differing degrees:

> What we see in…absurdist dramatists is a presentation of existence in a purely chaos-as-randomness phase of human and natural dynamics, generalizing from their momentary-and sometimes extended –sightings of randomness that all existence is random… [The absurdist writers] have concentrated on a world dominated by a chaos of actual randomness… According to them, chaos is nonrational, incoherent, and incomprehensible randomness, and so are their visions of the world. (Demastes 56)

The meaninglessness, which makes one's life insignificant, adds to Beckett's characters' sense of uncertainty about their own existence. They are not able to understand the meaning of living or being when death is the ultimate end. Furthermore, the arbitrariness in life or in the universe makes them more and more

anxious. Albert Camus examines man's absurd situation in the universe in his *The Myth of Sisyphus:*

> A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This diversity between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (13)

Thus, man is helpless about his worries, his own existence and the notion of existence in general.

At some specific times of conflicts, Beckett's characters feel deep compulsion to prove their existence. They need to be sure that there is somebody with them to convince them of their own existence. The existence of the Other, who sees or listens to them, ensures their being there; otherwise, they are reduced to nothingness.

Beckett's stages and the structure of his plays also reveal the sense of uncertainty of existence. His outdoor settings display an endless and horrifying world while there is an exhausted universe outside of his indoor settings. For the playwright, the form and content are unified:

> Beckett…has pointed out… [that] the form, the structure and mood of an artistic statement cannot be separated from its meaning, its conceptual content; simply because the work of art as a whole *is* its meaning, *what* is said in it is indissolubly linked with the *manner* in which it is said, and cannot be said in any other *way*. (qtd. Esslin 12)

So, it is not surprising that none of his plays has a conventional structure with a story which begins in a specific point and which ends in a different state. With the form of his plays, too, Beckett manages to shock the audience about their own human condition.

Albee's characters also suffer from the uncertainty of existence. In fact, this concern is closely related to the enigmatic identity of the individual. Beckett is a master showing the bizarre condition of man in his plays. Albee follows Beckett in this issue, and he is mostly concerned with the absurdity and the chaos of the modern American society. He does not analyze the enigma of existence in a metaphysical sense. His characters lead meaningless lives and live in a void. They cannot understand the meaning of their being in the world or the reason why they

exist. Albee, like Beckett, is aware that the existence of the human being is meaningless as he cannot find the answer to the question: why? In a universe, where there are no absolutes, even asking such questions is absurd. Thus, in Albee's plays, the characters feel a deep compulsion to prove that they are there, that they exist, whatever it means, no matter how insignificant their existence is.

Following Beckett's method, Albee shows the uncertainty of existence even in the structure of his plays. His plays, though generally taken as realistic, do not always have the usual structure of the realistic plays. The pattern of exposition, conflict and solution is in one sense shattered in Albee's plays. The plots of the plays do not take the characters from one obvious situation to another. There are generally no changes in the lives of his characters. So, the plays, which are indeed the characters' lives, mean *nothing* in the end. They continue hovering around in the air without a definite destination.

Moreover, Albee uses elements from both comedy and tragedy in his plays. He blends them together, in a similar way to Beckett. So, where the audience laugh at a character or a situation, they may suddenly stop, and their laughter may turn into a frown. If a play is a comedy, the audience laugh at the foolishness of follies of the characters; or if the play is a tragedy, they feel pity for the characters while experiencing a catharsis. If the play is both comedy and tragedy, what the audience will perceive is the ambiguity of the play, of the lives of the characters, indeed of the real life of themselves.

As the Absurd drama just presents human condition and does not intend to give a lesson or to criticize or improve the way of the world or people, Beckett merely shows the illusions that the characters choose to live in instead of confronting the reality of the human condition. Man is a conscious being; yet Beckett's characters cannot stand being conscious. It is easier to live a life which is like a dream as it will not cause any pain. So, they can easily be in "bad-faith" to escape responsibilities, but more than that to escape the existential anguish. They tend to be inauthentic beings. In the discussion of the theme of illusion versus reality in Beckett's plays, Heidegger's and Sartre's notions of authenticity and inauthenticity will be illuminating. For these philosophers, man exists in one of these two modes. Heidegger coins the term "Dasein", which stands for the kind of being of man in everyday use. He explains the features of the authentic Being-

towards-death as follows: “anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings him face to face with the possibility of being itself… in impassioned freedom towards death” (311). An authentic being is wholly itself, in search for itself, unlike an inauthentic being that is diverted in the everydayness of life, in causalities or in the herd. Heidegger claims that “the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any ‘less’ Being or any ‘lower’ degree of Being” (68). Sartre does not support inauthenticity. Gary Cox notes Sartre’s view as follows: “inauthenticity is the denial of the cardinal truth that we are free and responsible”, and he continues suggesting that inauthentic people avoid taking responsibility for their present situation and their past deeds (135). Most of Beckett’s characters become inauthentic beings as they yearn for non-consciousness, or as they are afraid of taking any responsibilities.

Beckett’s characters cannot help asking questions about their existence or identities; yet at the same time, they cannot stand finding themselves or others thinking. Thinking is to be avoided because it can result in disappointment and unhappiness. They are in a way that Sartre calls “bad faith”. Sartre defines it as follows: “the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth”, yet “in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth” (89). This seems to be the same as self-deception. Cox clarifies Sartre’s definition as follows: “Bad faith is self-distraction rather than self-deception” (97). Cox continues his arguments: “A person in bad faith avoids responsibility for his embodied situation by denying that it is his situation” (99). Instead of facing the consequences of what they did in the past or perceiving their present plights, Beckett’s characters, who are in bad-faith, let themselves live in illusions and become inauthentic beings. They deal with trivia in daily lives. They use language and games just to pass the time. So, language loses its meaning when these characters use it as an evasion from the harsh reality lying beneath it. Furthermore, Beckett uses the opposition of day and night possibly to emphasize the dreamy lives of his characters. The day refers to the illusions, everydayness and inauthenticity while the night brings the worries and questions that were ignored during the day or vice versa. They use several means, insignificant everyday activities to evade from thinking and confronting themselves. They are not courageous enough to be authentic beings who are in search for a meaning in their existence.

Albee's characters can be categorized as inauthentic and authentic, and the criterion will be whether they live illusory lives or choose to confront the reality of their condition. Some of them do not get lost in the society, in the conventions or in the chaos of the outer world. They continue questioning themselves and their existences. They are able to commit free actions. They try to change what is wrong for them even by sacrificing their lives. Nevertheless, some other characters cannot escape being inauthentic because they are so much immersed in the society and in the everydayness. They are mostly conformists who live like passive agents without searching for a meaning in their lives. When they are in an impasse, instead of recognizing the truth, they choose to maintain their lives as they have done until that time. Albee's characters seem to be in a "bad faith", similar to some of Beckett's characters. Albee does not suffice with portraying such lives, he also criticizes them and aims to break their illusions, and wake up firstly the audience and then the society.

Beckettian characters are alienated beings. They are alienated both from themselves and from the others. Josephson asserts that starting with the eighteenth century the Western countries have experienced great technological and social developments, which promised freedom for the individuals. However, their effect was man's sense of alienation from the world and also from himself (10). On the one hand, man is detached from the nature and lives in separate places. On the other hand, he becomes a stranger to himself as he cannot found a whole identity or find answers to his questions. Beckett's characters are alienated form themselves in the Sartrean sense as "from the instant of my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it" (Sartre 710). After Nietzsche's claim that God is dead (qtd. in Esslin 290), man feels ultimate abandonment in a hostile world. He is the one to value everything in his life, which will make him confused and anxious. God's absence or indifferent existence and people's indifference towards each other's suffering also increase one's sense of alienation according to Beckett. Eric Fromm thinks that in the modern society, alienation is total: "it pervades the relationship of man to his work, to the things he consumes, to his fellows, and to himself" (qtd. in Josephson 11). Beckett puts a few characters on the stage, and they are all the humanity; there is nobody except from them. The audience cannot know anything about the rest of the

society that these characters are supposed to live in. By this way, Beckett pictures the estrangement of the human being from the society.

There is one alternative to cease this alienation: suicide, and even that cannot be committed. Beckett reveals the characters' need of love and affection as another cure for isolation. However, love is lost long ago. It is generally reduced to sexual intercourses whereas that is unavailable, too. Beckett possibly thinks that the total alienation of the human being is inescapable as long as one lives.

Albee's characters are mostly alienated, too. He explores this theme in two different states. One is the inner or self-imposed alienation, the other is the alienation caused by the society or exclusion from the society. The characters, who yearn for non-consciousness and try to avoid taking responsibilities in their lives, become strangers to themselves. Their merging into Heideggerian "they" also isolates them from themselves. Albee analyzes this theme especially in a social perspective. He observes that in social groups such as family, friends or clubs, men are isolated from one another. In the society, there is also isolation between lower and higher classes. People of the lower-class are excluded by those of the higher-class. Furthermore, the people who live at extremes are excluded by the society. These people may be homosexuals, drug addicts or alcoholics. In the family, which mirrors the society, everybody lives in separate rooms. The parents are alienated from the children; the married couples and siblings are segregated from each other. Besides, the older people are not wanted in homes. They are treated as if they were nuisances. In Albee's plays, alienation continues from generation to generation like a curse. Everybody is indifferent towards each other. Albee prescribes a remedy for this situation, and that is love. However, it is impossible as it is in Beckett's plays.

Beckett is concerned with the impossibility of an individual's genuine communication or contact with the others. He accepts what Sartre says about this impossibility: "Attitudes, expressions, and words can only indicate to him [the Other] other attitudes, other expressions, and other words" (487). Sartre and Heidegger underline this theme in their philosophies. Sartre argues: "the 'meaning' of my expressions always escapes me. I never know exactly if I signify what I wish to signify nor even if I *am* signifying anything" (486). While Sartre believes in the insufficiency of the language as a medium for genuine communication, Heidegger seems to suggest that communication is sometimes possible among people:

"Through it [communication] a co-state-of-mind… gets 'shared', and so does the understanding of Being-with… In the language which is spoken when one expresses oneself, there lies an average intelligibility; and in accordance with this intelligibility the discourse which is communicated can be understood to a considerable extent" (205). Heidegger continues his arguments, mentioning "idle talk" in which "What is said-in-the-talk gets understood; but what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially" (212). So, total communication may not be possible. He suggests that people's everyday communication is generally in the form of idle talk in which "our talk becomes groundless" (Mulhall 107). Man can never be understood fully by the Other. Beckett develops a language as an inconvenient medium for communication. For him, language is a habit and nothing more. Junker believes that Beckett's dramatic and telegrammatic language just fosters the notion that he is aloof, obscure and extremely difficult to understand for the audience (10). The playwright emphasizes the impossibility of communication by using such an ambiguous and incomprehensible language.

In Beckett's plays, language is used as a means of illusion and to pass the time. The characters do not aim for meaningful talks or share their thoughts on any topic. Beckett uses several ways to demonstrate the devaluation of language, most of which are also utilized later by Albee. His characters generally use monologues. Their sentences are fragmented, unfinished and meaningless. There is a rapid shift of topics which are not discussed at all. Also, the sentences include fragmented grammar. The questions do not ask something; even when they do so, they remain unanswered. Language is also used for comic effect, especially at the times when their movements or petty actions contradict what they say. Thus, these characters' speech is "idle talk", not genuine communication.

Although Beckett's characters constantly attempt to fill in the time, which is a vacuum and for that reason frightening, by non-stop and nonsensical speech, there are times when everybody is silent. Beckett is famous for his use of silences and pauses. They are as important as the speeches in his plays because they help the characters to conceal their real thoughts and worries. However, the characters are deadly anxious during these pauses. So, they hastily fill up the silences by inconsequential talk.

Albee follows Beckett in the theme of lack of communication. In order to reveal the lack of communication, Albee uses several techniques most of which are borrowed from Beckett. In Albee's plays, language is devalued in repetitions, interruptions and fragmented utterances. The speeches in his plays are "idle talk" as it is in Beckett's plays. His characters speak in monologues. Even when they seem to talk to another person, they are indeed talking to themselves. They sometimes use stories to explain their situation. It is an indirect way to tell something about themselves. There is a controversy between what they say and what they do, which resembles Beckett's characters' states. They do not do what they say or they intend to do. There is an abundance of meaningless speeches and unanswered questions, which result from or lead to abrupt shifts of topics. Also, Albee uses language as an instrument for power struggle among people, especially between couples. The one who uses it well, who finds convincing utterances, wins the battle over the other. Thus, language conceals facts rather than revealing them.

Albee's use of pauses recalls Beckett's obsession with them even though they are not used often, as they are in Beckett's plays. These pauses are significant with both writers when they are regarded within the context of the characters' feeling the compulsion to talk non-stop. They may reveal the anxiety of the character about his situation, about what he said or what he will say next. Besides, they may be the break times given to the audience to review what is going on the stage.

Beckett believes that the human being is entrapped in his little *cell*. His stage reveals a sense of constraint. It is bare with minimum props whether it is indoors or outdoors. The playwright aims at the "maximum of simplicity" in his plays. The simplicity of the stage also demonstrates the nothingness and void in the real life. Beckett insists on the proscenium stage. He prefers it "as closed a box as possible" (Albright 78). If the stage is a *box,* then the characters are possibly the puppets. This kind of a *box stage* symbolizes the entrapment of the human beings.

Imprisonment of the human being is also portrayed with the use of maximum repetition in Beckett's plays, which is followed by Albee to a considerable degree. In Beckett's plays, the sentences, the gestures and even the petty actions, if they can be called so, are repeated. There is not a conventional plot

in any of his plays. What is at stake is that the characters are in the trap of a vicious circle, which stands for their lives.

Besides, Beckett is obsessed with the flow of time which both changes everything and does not change anything. His characters are also imprisoned in the *present time*, in an attempt not to recall their past. They also do not have any hope for the future. Time brings no innovation, no change for good. Therefore, the characters, who cannot step back or forth in time, are in the cage of the present time.

Albee's characters are trapped in their micro-worlds. First of all, his settings reveal the sense of imprisonment whether indoors or outdoors. Moreover, "visually and metaphysically, Albee's plays are full of frames, boxes, confining rooms-coffins" (Bottoms 14). Secondly, in Albee's plays, the characters are entrapped in repetitions and in daily routines which are meaningless, like the characters in Beckett's plays. Lastly, the characters are arrested in the *present* time. The past is by-gone for them, and the future is just a possibility, not a certainty. So, they have to live with their limited consciousness and limited perceptions. While generally regarded as negative, the entrapment in Albee's plays may also have a positive sense at the times when the characters take their cages as a shelter. They need to live in that cage to protect themselves from the threats of other people and the outer world which is threatening.

The existential theme of freedom, responsibility and anguish is another existential preoccupation in Beckett's works. Mary Warnock asserts that human freedom is the common interest for the existentialist philosophers; but what differs them from many other philosophers who have been concerned with human freedom is that the existentialists take the issue of freedom as a practical problem. She remarks that the aims of the existentialists are:

> to show people *that they are free*, to open their eyes to something which has always been true, but which for one reason or another may not always have been recognised, namely that men are free to choose, not only what to do on a specific occasion, but what to value and how to live. (1, 2)

They want people to become active agents in their own lives. Sartre thinks that "Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom… Man does not exist *first* in order to be

free *subsequently*; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free" (60). According to him, each man is born free:

> For Sartre, as for Heidegger, a human being is a being with unrealized potential… A human being has no essence…he is therefore not wholly determined, but is free to fill the internal gap in his nature in whatever he chooses. (Macquarrie 94)

Sartre maintains that it is impossible for the human being to stop being free (567). However, Beckett's characters do not seem to be totally free. For instance, their physical disabilities limit their freedom. They seem to have no choices. Beckett's characters are semi-conscious of their situation, and they generally do not apply their freedom to shape their lives or the situations that they are not satisfied with. Thus, their freedom is continuously questioned by them. It is possibly due to the fact that in an absurd and irrational universe, there are no clear criteria to judge whether their choices are good or bad. Sartre states that "to be sure, each one of my acts, even the most trivial is entirely free" (584). So, it can be deduced that Beckett's characters, who seem to have limited freedom, have actually chosen to be in this state as well. Even the action or non-action in Beckett's plays are willingly decided and acted on.

Freedom brings forth responsibilities for the human being according to the existentialists, which frightens Beckett's characters. Thus, they experience what Martin Esslin calls "deep existential anguish" when they have to make a decision (1). Macquarrie clarifies this point, referring to Sartre: "the anguish of a choice arises from the fact that, in making my choice, I am committing not only myself but, in a certain matter, all mankind" (162). So, according to Sartre, man is not responsible just for himself; he has to think of the other people's welfare as well (Macquarrie 162-163). It needs courage to make a free choice and accept all of the consequences that choice will bring. Sartre believes that freedom must lead man to action (563). However, Beckett's characters remain passive as they escape from responsibilities. They cannot stand being subject to the existential anguish that is experienced when one is faced with his limitless freedom. The consequence may be a relief from their plights; yet their free wills may bring forth catastrophes, too. This ambiguity is what makes them hesitant to act. Although they always have a chance to change their lives or to cease their passive state, they halt. Beckett shows that

there are always other possibilities for an individual; yet his characters do not utilize these possibilities.

Albee, too, is concerned with the question of freedom, responsibility and anguish. Albee supports Sartre's claim that an individual should decide for himself freely. He sometimes puts the characters in the moments of crisis about making a decision. Some of Albee's characters are willing to make a decision. They realize their condition and try to act accordingly. However, like Beckett's characters, most of his characters hold back from making a decision as they are afraid of what will come afterwards. They choose withdrawal, which is another choice. Some of them are dependent upon the others. For instance, wife lets husband decide for herself, or child needs parents' authority in substitution for his own choices and responsibilities. This is an easier way, indeed an escape.

Albee also portrays the rights and responsibilities of people towards each other in social groups, like among friends or in the family. He mocks the way people abuse their rights and responsibilities. He displays "rights to be demanded. At crucial moments such rights are transformed into primitive violent demands" (McCarthy 92). In the materialist society, by belonging to a social group, one can win himself some rights. For example, friends can have a right to intrude in each other's lives just because they are friends. For Albee, the individuals have to be conscious of their freedom. They should not try to escape the responsibilities of their actions even though it causes them to experience anguish. Because that is the only way one can lead a whole or a complete life.

For Sartre, man is free to shape his life and change the way things happen in his life and in the world whereas for Beckett, whatever man does, he cannot change anything, and each and every action of man is futile. Beckett's characters lack the motivation for action as they perceive their situation to be hopeless. It is the end, *death*, which makes each action doomed to failure for Beckett. If one is to die, there is no point in changing one's attitudes or taking a chance even if there is any. This is the idea which renders the daily activities meaningless and futile. In Beckett's works the more the characters become conscious, the more they suffer. Knowing that their efforts to free themselves of their despairing condition are futile, they remain passive agents.

Albee acknowledges the futility of action in his plays though he favors man of action. In the existentialist philosophy, "Action… entails a motive. A human action therefore arises from a thought about the world, a desire to change some feature in the agent's situation", and "Only the *awareness* of a state of affairs as something to be changed can motivate an action" (Warnock 118, 119). However, most of Albee's characters lack the desire to change their lives for good. Even if some courageous characters try to shape their lives, their attempts are mostly doomed to failure.

The reason for the reluctance of Albee and Beckett's characters to act is that human life is finite, that *death* is the ultimate end which renders each and every action of the individual meaningless and insignificant. Whatever they do, they cannot change the fact that they will die one day. Also, it is impossible to establish an order in such an illogical universe for the individual by himself. Thus, all of their actions, if they can be called so, will remain petty movements which will not prevent their static situations.

Although he is called an absurdist playwright, Albee extends Beckett's ideas and deals with social issues. According to Albee, a playwright must be a social critic, too. First of all, he must be aware of what is going on around him. Then he must try to make the audience think and react to the events or situations more carefully. Albee forces the audience intellectually and morally. He thinks that a playwright must not give solutions to problems. What he should do is just to present his point of view (McCarthy 16). Rather than using ready made formulas to the problems encountered, the audience must gain more consciousness of their own problems. Albee wants to wake up the audience to confront what is not working in their lives. He has some targets while criticizing the society. These are materialism together with consumerism, loss of values, and the broken human relationships.

The Americans have become a consumerist society. The mass media and the capitalist system continually impose consumerism and materialism, which makes people more and more materialistic. As they lose their power against the machines, they are depersonalized. In the dream of progress, the society gives up its traditions. The United States is one of the countries where the process of consumption has reached its highest level. People are surrounded by a variety of goods. The advertising industry is growing day by day making these goods wear out quickly so

that they can be replaced by other new ones. Josephson summarizes this issue as follows: “working chiefly to consume, consuming to achieve status, accumulating things that have no meaning wasting on a gigantic scale” are the conditions in which people live. The result is a “wasteland of junk and of human aspirations” (29). With the help of the press, women are brainwashed that going shopping is the cure for every problem in their lives. On the one hand, this creates alienation and indifference to others. On the other hand, it adds to the illusions in one’s life. It is generally accepted that the more a person consumes, the happier he will be.

As they get more materialistic, people lose values like love, respect, loyalty and create artificial values. For instance, marriage, which is one of the most important institutions of the society, is generally sought for with pragmatic intentions. People, especially women, want to marry into wealth hoping for a higher status and security. This attitude also causes the breakdown of the relationship of couples. Divorce becomes a ready solution to marital problems. Albee displays that the marriage institution is built on such artificial values. Albee also analyzes the nature of the human relationships that are established upon other artificialities. In his plays, characters attend to various clubs, services and organizations. They volunteer to help the needy; yet they do so in order to feel better. Moreover, as actions are futile, these organizations cannot help the human suffering. The qualities such as kindness, pity and charity are adopted for pragmatical reasons. The friends gather in clubs or other public places. However, the relationships are superficial. The best friend can be called an intruder when he pays a home visit. Albee is against these artificialities in the society.

Becoming more materialistic and having artificial values that are imposed by the modern life style, human relationships are shattered. Sartre and most existentialists believe that human relationships are distorted and distorting (Macquarrie 89). Industrialism is one reason for the breakdown of relationships. Young people leave their homes to find jobs, and divorce rates become higher. People cannot feel sympathy or love for each other. As a result, the disintegration and indifference of people towards each other lead to problems in relationships. An outsider is considered to be a nuisance, or a threat. Albee portrays the alienation of the old people, too. The older family members are not wanted at home. They are wished to go to nursing homes or die. Albee deals with the problems of

disintegrated relationships mostly in the dysfunctional families, in the power struggle among the family members, especially between the man and the woman.

1.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of this work is to study Edward Albee's affinities with Absurd drama while following his own agenda. Albee is greatly influenced by Samuel Beckett's Absurd drama. However, he evolves a different approach by a realist representation of the middle class American society in his plays. He aims to bring forth a social criticism to display the suffering of lost and lonely characters of that society.

In this study the following plays will be analyzed: Beckett's *Waiting for Godot,* which will be referred as *Godot* when in brackets; Albee's *The Zoo Story*, *The American Dream* and *A Delicate Balance*, which will be referred as *Zoo*, *American* and *Delicate* when in brackets.

CHAPTER 2

BECKETT'S INFLUENCE ON ALBEE'S EXISTENTIAL CONCERNS

In forming his views of the world, Beckett could not escape the impact of existentialism. What Beckett does is to portray the human condition as it is with all its ambiguity, absurdity and intolerability. He states: "that's the value of theatre for me. You place on stage a little world with its own laws" (qtd. in Cohn, *Back* 129). Beckett's stage world symbolizes the real world (Cohn 129). In this little world, Beckett deals with existential themes. As Junker points out, "Beckett and Sartre had much in common and Heidegger influenced both of them" (21). In his plays everything, varying from the identity to the other people and the world, are ambiguous. He himself admits that the key word in his plays is "perhaps" (Worton, qtd. in Pilling 67). James Acheson examines this state as follows: "He creates a sense of uncertainty rather than of reality in *Godot* for the sake of implying that the conclusions we reach about the play can be no more certain than those we form about the infinitely complex world around us" (144). The meaning of life, which is equal to suffering according to him, represents a great riddle for his characters. They live in illusions. Besides, they are alienated and entrapped human beings. There is an overall communication problem among them, which contributes to the feeling of estrangement in his plays. Freedom becomes an unanswerable question in their condition. Beckett's work resembles Lucky's seemingly nonsensical and incomprehensible speech in *Waiting For Godot*; yet beneath that lies the true sense of being a human in an absurd universe.

Beckett's stance, which is taken to be pessimistic by many critics, has been an example for many young writers. Albee is one of them among his American followers. In an interview, Albee confirms Beckett's influence:

> Sam Beckett invented twentieth-century drama and made all sorts of amazing things both possible and impossible for the rest of us. Possible because he opened up so many doors and windows for what could be done, and impossible because we all realized we couldn't do it as well as he did. (qtd. in Bryer 7)

His definition of the Absurd drama highlights the same grounds he shares with Beckett:

> The Theatre of the Absurd is an absorption-in-art of certain existentialist and post-existentialist philosophical concepts having to do, in the main, with man's attempt to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense- which makes no sense because the moral, religious, political and social structures man has erected to 'illusion' himself have collapsed. (qtd. in Amacher 32)

While following Beckett's existential themes, Albee also handles specific issues in connection with the society, and he believes that they are inseparable. So, he manages to create a "new dramatic balance of public issues and private tensions" (Paolucci, *Hegelian* 314). While criticizing an individual or portraying a character, he presents the American society from his own absurdist view.

2.1 Uncertainty

Beckett raises various questions in his plays, which are left unanswered. Thus, there is an overall ambiguity in his works. Albee follows Beckett in dramatizing the theme of uncertainty. However, he does not analyze ambiguities in such philosophical or metaphysical depths like Beckett. These ambiguities that pervade the works of both writers stem from the following points: uncertainty of identity, uncertainty of existence and illusion versus reality. These are what make their characters suffer from being a human, having been born, being thrown on the earth.

2.1.1 Uncertainty of Identity: Self and the Other

Beckett believes in Sartre's theories of being, the continuous changing of the identity. The issue of identity is an existential situation from which proceeding is difficult for his characters. Thus, "doubt and uncertainty... are general over Beckett's theatrical universe" (Gluck 153). This theme includes both the uncertainty of the self and of the Other. To start with the former, the consciousness is to be explained. At the beginning of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre puts forth: " Every

conscious existence exists as consciousness of existing" (13) and defines it as follows: *" a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself "* (24). Actually, these views are drawn from Heidegger, who discusses Dasein as follows: "in its very Being that Being is an *issue* for it" (32). Conscious being, who is the human being, always searches for the meaning of his own being and fulfillment of his selfhood; yet it is an impossible task to complete as "the being of consciousness does not coincide with itself in a full equivalence" (Sartre 120). This impossibility, which haunts the human being, is what creates the uncertainty about one's identity in Beckett's work. Beckett asks basic questions such as "who am I?" or "what does it mean when I say I?" in his exploration of being (Esslin 11). The ways that Beckett reveals the enigmatic identity of his characters, which is followed later by Albee, include portraying unhappy and suffering selves due to being conscious, the problematic naming of the characters, and their fragmented and contradictory backgrounds. Besides, the minimal possessions of these characters give some clues about their obscure identities. Thus, the characters have some identity problems like failure of memory, not knowing the motives about their actions, or being unsure about everything they think or say. In order to make up for the lack of identities, these characters play roles, becoming just a function or merging in a larger group, and thus, losing their uniqueness. The ambiguity about oneself is enhanced by the untrustworthiness of the other people who are mysterious and threatening, yet needed by the human being.

In Beckett's plays, the characters portrayed are unhappy because of their consciousness. They pretend to be happy or try to conceal their uneasiness. In one way or another, they suffer throughout their lives. The reason is that:

> it [human reality] rises in being as perpetually haunted by totality which it is without being able to be it, precisely because it could not attain the in-itself without losing itself as the for-itself. Human reality therefore is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state. (Sartre 140)

Human being is by nature a conscious being, and even if he cannot bear the burden that his questionings or thoughts put on his shoulders, he cannot cease being conscious. This unhappy consciousness can be traced with Beckett's characters in *Waiting For Godot*. Vladimir and Estragon are sure to have been subject to agony

throughout their lives. Since suffering is "a distinguishing mark which separates existence from non-existence" (Smith 900), they continue suffering on the stage. They suffer from physical deterioration, which symbolizes their mental agonies. Estragon's feet hurt when he takes his boats off. When Vladimir asks: "How's your foot", Estragon replies: "Swelling visibly" (14). He also coughs and says: "My left lung is very weak!" (40). He cannot go further with swollen feet, and he must put on his boots. That is why his agony will continue as long as he walks. However, life is like a road on which man has to go on till death stops him. So, Estragon will always endure this agony. Breathing is vital for life, and as half of his lung is weak, he is not tied to life completely. Likewise, Vladimir has problems with prostate. He compares his suffering to Estragon's: "I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I had", and meanwhile his zip is open (12). Urination will give him some relief; but it is very difficult for him.

Pozzo has bad sight. In the first act, he puts on his glasses in order to see what Estragon points at (35). In the second act, he is blind (71). When Vladimir questions him about his sight, he says that he used to have "Wonderful! Wonderful, wonderful sight!" (80). However, time works as an enemy deteriorating the physical abilities of the human being. So, the longer man lives, the more he suffers.

Lucky is not lucky when his ailments are considered. The tramps observe Lucky's suffering:

> Vladimir: [Pointing.] His neck!
> […]
> Estragon: Oh I say.
> Vladimir: A running sore! (26)

Moreover, Vladimir states that Lucky has "a goitre", and that this eyes are "goggling out of his head" (26, 27). As Lucky has more problems than the others, he must be the most self-aware character. The more one is aware of his being or his life, the more he suffers.

Albee's characters also have physical sufferings. In *The American Dream*, Daddy mentions Grandma's whimpering in the toilet "for hours" (103). Grandma also notes that "My sacks are empty, the fluid in my eyeballs is all caked on the inside edges, my spine is made of sugar candy, I breathe ice" (117). Like Lucky, who is the eldest character in *Waiting For Godot*, Grandma is the eldest one in this

play. Both of them suffer most compared to the others, which emphasizes that as man gets older and as he experiences more absurdity, he is racked with more pain.

Mommy also has a physical defect. Talking to Mrs. Barker, Grandma refers to this problem:

> Grandma: Mommy comes from extremely bad stock. And besides, when Mommy was born… well, it was a difficult delivery, and she had a head shaped like a banana. (120)

The defect is a sign of Mommy's problematic identity even from the start of her life, which implies that man's existentialist agonies start at the moment he is born. Daddy, Mommy's husband, claims that he has "definite qualms" due to an operation he went through (116). This operation interferes with his sexual organs, and as Mommy explains: "Daddy has *tubes* now, where he used to have tracts" (121). Hence, he has lost his masculinity, which is a part of his identity, and he suffers due to this loss.

In *A Delicate Balance,* Harry tells his friends that he has shortness of breath. He utters: "I can't breathe sometimes…for just a bit" (42). This reminds one of Pozzo's using a vaporizer to breathe better. Breathing is vital in life, and Harry's problem reflects the emergency of his state. Man can lead a conscious life, which is as essential as breathing, only if he continues questioning his being and starts actions that denote his free will.

These physical sufferings mirror the mental sufferings of human being because of his consciousness. As a result, Beckett's characters yearn to be unconscious or non-conscious by means of death. Cornwell explores this case in Beckett's characters as follows:

> The Beckett hero is crushed by the burden of consciousness, out of which comes that self-responsibility he would like to escape but cannot. He has neither a god to assume for him, nor the courage to escape through self-destruction-which he yearns for perpetually. His life is one long ambivalence between the desire for and fear of its termination, one long attempt to reverse to the process of birth and speed his return to the state of pre-conscious nonbeing from which he came; *that* is his lost Eden. The Beckett hero does not seek his identity, he flees from it; his quest is for anonymity, for *self*-annihilation. (41)

According to the Cornwell, Beckett's characters have "an obsessive sense of guilt" probably for having been born yet not establishing a whole identity (46-48). In

Waiting For Godot, Vladimir and Estragon are prone to suicide in order to get rid of their beings. Estragon is the one who is more willing to commit suicide:

> Vladimir: [Silence. Estragon looks attentively at the tree.] What do we do now?
> Estragon: Wait.
> Vladimir: Yes, but while waiting.
> Estragon: What about hanging ourselves?
> Vladimir: Hmm. It'd give us an erection!
> Estragon: [Highly excited.] An erection!
> Vladimir: With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. (18)

Although they cannot act their intention out, Estragon does not give up his obsession with suicide. Towards the end of the first act, when their hopes for meeting with Godot fails, Estragon says to Vladimir: "Remind me to bring a bit of rope tomorrow" (51). He will try to cease his being by hanging from a weak bough, which is the only means for him to achieve his ambition. He acknowledges that he attempted suicide in the past, too. He asks Vladimir: "Do you remember the day I threw myself into the Rhone?", and continues: "You fished me out" (51). Perhaps, he did not want to be rescued. He knows that being is equal with agony. His being will disturb him like his boots as long as he lives. So, he desires death, the eternal peace.

Pozzo shares Estragon's abhorrence of the human condition. Pozzo cannot leave the pair instantly, and he repeats the word "Adieu" for several times. He states: "I don't seem to be able … [Long hesitation]… to depart", and Estragon's response is: "Such is life" (46). Perhaps, departure means death for Estragon. He points out the agony of being when a departure is a kind of non existence. His attempts for suicide fail; so, departing from life becomes impossible. Man has to endure his condition in the absurd universe. Neither their physical pains nor their metaphysical sufferings cease at the end of the play.

Echoing Beckett's existential ideas, Albee focuses on consciousness in his plays. He states:

> A single journey through consciousness should be participated in as fully as possible by the individual, no matter how dangerous or cruel or terror-filled that experience may be. We go through it once…so we must do it fully conscious… many people prefer to go through their lives semiconscious and they end up in terrible panic because they've wasted so much. (qtd. in Roudané 19-20)

Although the playwright stresses the importance of self-awareness, his characters do not seem to do what he desires. Some of Albee's characters are obsessed with madness, which is parallel with the obsession of Beckett's tramps with suicide. Jerry, in *The Zoo Story,* starts a fight with Peter upon such an unimportant issue as possessing the park bench. When he gradually becomes more aggressive, Peter asks: "What's the matter with you?", and Jerry replies: "I'm crazy, you bastard" (35). He also calls Peter "mad" since Peter wants him to get off the bench (36). Jerry is on the brink of losing his mind due to perceiving his absurd condition in the meaningless universe.

In *A Delicate Balance*, Agnes is obsessed with losing her mind:

> Agnes: What I find most astonishing –aside from that belief of mine, which never ceases to surprise me by the very fact of its surprising lack of unpleasantness, the belief that I might very easily –as they say—lose my mind one day, not that I suspect I am about to, or am even… nearby.(19)

She also talks about becoming paranoid, schizophrenic, or committing suicide:

> Agnes: So, it will be simple paranoia. Schizophrenia, on the other hand, is far more likely-even given the unlikelihood. I believe that it can be chemically induced… (Smiles) If all else should fail; if sanity, such as it is, should become too much. There are times when I think it would be so… proper, if one could take a pill- or even inject- just… remove.
> Tobias: You should take drugs, my dear.
> Agnes: Ah, but those are temporary […] I am concerned with peace…not mere relief. (23)

These ideas are appealing for her as she will not have to think about her deeper worries and problems. While she cannot stand the suffering of consciousness, she has roles such as being a mother, a wife and a sister. These roles burden her with lots of responsibilities. She desires to escape from all her burdens by becoming a mad woman or by killing herself.

Claire, Agnes' sister, has another strategy to lose consciousness: she is an alcoholic. Agnes complains about Claire's alcoholism: "Those of you who want to die…and take your whole lives doing it" (35). Claire "teeters on the brink of destruction" (Paolucci, *Tension* 109). Her self-destruction is an attempt to be non-conscious. If she is drunk or if she dies from alcoholism, all of her pains will be over. However, Albee's characters can neither end their agonies nor continue living content in their plights. That is why they are doomed to suffer from their unhappy consciousness.

Beckett presents characters with uncertain identities. According to Heidegger and Sartre, it is wrong to talk about human nature because the human being has no fixed identity. He is always in a state of becoming or making himself. For Sartre, existence precedes essence (725), which he draws from Heidegger's following statement: "*The essence of Dasein lies in its existence"(67).* This signifies the identity of the human being as a continuous process. Moreover, for Sartre, the desire of the human being is to be God, to be the foundation of its own being, or to be both a conscious being and a being-in-itself (723-724). This is an impossible state of being for the human being to achieve. Thus, the pursuit of the human being to be its own foundation, being both conscious of its consciousness and a being-in-itself, which cannot be coincided, is futile. It will be left unfulfilled in the end. This futile attempt is what makes it impossible for a human being to have a fixed identity or character. Beckett confirms Sartre's concept of becoming as he states: "we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday" (in Esslin 17). Man is exposed to change by time, which makes the identity of Beckett's characters ambiguous.

In Beckett's play, the characters, who experience the Sartrean paradox about the pursuit of one's self, have enigmatic identities, which is an inner conflict for them. Discussing the relation of time and identity, Martin Esslin claims: " The flow of time confronts us with the basic problem of being- the problem of the nature of the self, which being subject to constant change in time, is in constant flux and therefore outside our grasp" (17). Beckett uses the naming of his characters as a way to point out their blurred identities. Naming of a character means giving him a static identity. However, Beckett's characters do not have recognizable names. Characters give their names when they are asked who they are; yet these characters change names during the play. When Pozzo asks Estragon his name, he answers: "Adam" (*Godot* 37). A boy messenger comes with news from Godot, for whom Estragon and Vladimir wait throughout the play, and when he addresses Vladimir as: "Mister Albert", Vladimir answers: "Yes" (47). Moreover, when all the characters fall down on the ground, Pozzo is called "Abel" and "Cain" (78). This refers to their being the symbols for the whole mankind. Besides, it shows that it is not possible for these characters to be the same person they were a moment ago.

Albee uses Beckett's technique in his plays to emphasize the fact that he "does not employ characters with fixed identities" (Tekinay 12). The changing of the names, which are the signifiers of one's identity, is a strategy to reveal the uncertainty of the identity. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter calls his wife and daughters with animal names when Jerry tickles him in order to make him stay longer in the park:

> Peter: Hee, hee, hee. After all, stop, stop… the parakeets will be setting dinner ready soon. Hee, hee. And the cats are setting the table…(33)

In fact, Albee reduces the human being to an animal this way.

Albee adapts a different naming technique in *The American Dream*. Discussing the naming of the characters, Alan Lewis notes: "In a mechanical, standardized existence, individuality ceases to exist; therefore, characters either do not have names, or do not remember their names, or interchange names" (87). Albee calls his characters with genderic names. The characters are named Mommy, Daddy, and Grandma. Albee skips naming another character and calls him Young Man. They are indeed close to caricatures. "All personality is stripped away from them to reveal their worst absurdities and excesses" (Paolucci, *Hegelian* 318). Mommy and Daddy adopt a child, and they refer to him as a "bumble of joy". They do not name him and forget about it:

> Mommy: Daddy? What did we call the other one [their first adopted child]?
> Daddy: (Puzzles) Why..(147)

Albee erases the individuality of these characters this way. Grandma tells Mrs. Barker a memory about Mommy and Daddy and says: "Once upon time… there was a man much like Daddy, and a woman very much like Mommy…they lived there[in their apartment] with an old woman who was very much like yours truly"(125). She reminds the audience of Beckett's existential idea upon the fluidity of the identity which reveals the individual as "the seat of a constant process of decantation" (Esslin 17). At this point, the dramatist shares Sartre's ideas upon the pursuit of the self, and the state of his characters echoes the plight of Beckett's characters. The changes of the names of these characters reflect the change of the identity, which becomes blurred.

Beckett's characters mostly have fragmented backgrounds. Beckett gives almost no data about his characters. The audience do not learn about the past lives, the occupations, the familial history or the relationships of the characters with one

another even when the play ends. Nothing is clear about the characters in *Waiting for Godot*. As Lyons indicates, "The history that has brought them to this place is equivocal, unverifiable and … irrelevant" (32). What a character tells about his background is not always confirmed by the other though they experienced the same events at the same time. On the contrary, the characters generally contradict each other about their common histories.

Vladimir tries to help Estragon to recognize the place where they are. He likens it to the Macon country, where they have been; yet Estragon contradicts Vladimir:

> Vladimir: All the same, you can't tell me that this [Gesture] bears any resemblance to… [He hesitates]… to the Macon country, for example. You can't deny there is a big difference.
> Estragon: The Macon country! Who's talking to you about the Macon country?
> Vladimir: But you were there yourself, in the Macon country.
> Estragon: No, I was never in the Macon country. I've pucked my puke of a l ife away here, I tell you! In the Cackon country! (57)

So, no information can be gained from their contradictory statements. How can Estragon deny being in the Macon country while Vladimir says that he can swear to it? It seems that Estragon denies his past self denying his past life.

They have an "epistemological problem, the uncertainty of their knowledge" (Lyons 26). Vladimir tries to quote from a proverb. He meditates and says: "Hope deferred maketh the something sick, who said that?"(12). He cannot remember the "source of his quotation" and forgets the word "heart". Moreover, as Lamont assumes, he "omits the rest of it which is to be 'but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life'" (in Friedman 207).

Furthermore, the characters cannot formulate an event that they experienced a short time ago in a coherent or chronological order. "The differing elements of their experience do not cohere so that they cannot formulate a larger structure which would make their lives comprehensible to them", and "the fictional structure is all that can be known" (Lyons 47). Didi and Gogo have possibly met Pozzo and Lucky before. However, while Didi recognizes them, Gogo does not:

> Vladimir: Didn't you see them?
> Estragon: I suppose I did. But I don't know them.
> Vladimir: Yes you do know them.
> Estragon: No, I don't know them.

> Vladimir: We know them, I tell you. You forget everything. [Pause. To himself.] Unless they're not the same…(47)

Their contradictory perceptions add up more uncertainty to their experiences.

These characters do not have a coherent history. Vladimir and Estragon do not know how long they have been together. When Estragon asks Vladimir: "How long have we been together?", Estragon answers: "I don't know. Fifty years perhaps" (51). Therefore, their past lives are under the risk of turning into fiction any time. It is very difficult to combine the fragments of the data together as even the bit of information that is mentioned is not trustworthy.

Albee tends to give recognizable data about his characters; still, he applies Beckettian ambiguities while portraying them. Some of his characters have realistic histories, relationships or occupations; but there are unclear parts in the data about their identities. Their past lives are sometimes revealed with fractions. Like Beckett's characters, these characters may refute what they say about their lives. Besides, the contradictory statements of the other characters, who may be their parents, friends or spouses, blur their identities. In *The American Dream,* Mommy claims remembering Mrs. Barker visiting them: "You do remember us, don't you? You were here once before" (12). However, neither Mommy nor Daddy recalls her job. Daddy asks: "Exactly what do you do?", and Mommy repeats: "Yes, what is your work?" (113). The past is problematic, and being vague about a past experience, Mommy and Daddy blur their past life, which highlights their problematic identities.

Mrs. Barker has a confusing background which also affects her present state. At first, she seems to know the family, and she introduces herself to Grandma: "I'm Mrs. Barker. I remember you; don't you remember me?", but Grandma does not remember her: "I don't recall. Maybe you were younger, or something." (112). Grandma refers to the constant change of identity in time. Besides, Mrs. Barker contradicts herself: "But… I feel so lost…not knowing why I'm here…and, on top of it, they say I was here before" (125). Her feeling "lost" signifies man's state when he does not have a chronological background or when he remembers just a few fragments of his past life.

Although they are supposed to have been living together for a long time, the family members contradict each other when they discuss their habits:

> Daddy: Grandma drinks AND smokes; don't you, Grandma?
> Grandma: No. (115)

Besides, when Grandma states her past chance of becoming a singer, Daddy claims that "She never mentioned, he wanted to be a singer", and Mommy tells him that she forgot to tell him (109). The characters do not know each other due to their fragmented and contradictory past lives.

When she tells Mrs. Barker about Mommy and Daddy adopting a child, Grandma points out the couples' refuting the statements of each other about the reason why they could not have a child of their own:

> Grandma: The woman [Mommy]… said that they wanted a bumble of their own, but that the man [Daddy] … couldn't have a bumble; and the man… said yes, they had wanted a bumble of their own, but that the woman … couldn't have one. (126)

It is not clear whether the sterility stems from Daddy or Mommy. Albee's characters are not to be trusted due to these contradictions.

The *possessions* that Beckettian characters have reflect their enigmatic selves. Sartre says that the possession of an individual signals his identity because "the totality of my possessions reflects the totality of my being. I *am* what I have. It is I myself which I touch in its cup". He includes "the pen and the pipe, the clothing, the desk, the house" among these possessions (754). The belongings of the Beckettian characters reflect their ambivalent selves. Ethel F. Cornwell touches on Beckettian concern for possessions and confirms Sartre's view as follows: "one's goods and possessions help define one's personality" (45). The critic stresses the importance of the clothing of Beckett's characters. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon wear shabby clothes (14), which may signal that they do not respect themselves. Estragon's shoes may fit him today; but they may be too tight the next day. Other than their size, their color may be changed from one day to another like their identity, which is elusive and which changes constantly. In the first act, Estragon leaves his boots on the stage, and in the second act, he does not recognize them. He claims that they are not his:

> Estragon: Mine were black. These are brown.
> Vladimir: You're sure yours were black?
> Estragon: Well, they were a kind of grey.
> […]
> Estragon: Well, they're kind of green. (63)

He denies his belongings as man denies his identity due to his inability to grasp it. Besides, the shoes do not fit properly, and his feet swell, which parallels man's lacking a whole identity that is either too big or too small to put on, not a proper fit for all times.

The goods that Beckett's characters own in this play are unusual things such as a vaporizer, a bag that is full of sand, and turnips to feed on. These belongings do not relate to their situations on the stage. Furthermore, they get confused about naming these belongings. They refer to the same thing with several different names. Pozzo calls his pipe a "briar", a "dudeen" and "Kapp and Peterson" (35). He calls his vaporizer a "spray" and a "pulverizer" (40). He always loses one of his possessions such as his briar, his spray and his watch. For example, while talking about Lucky, his servant, Pozzo rummages his pockets and asks: "What have I done with my pipe?" (34). He repeats his question: "What can I have done with that briar?". Estragon mocks Pozzo: "He's a scream. He's lost his dudeen", and Pozzo asserts once more that he has lost his "Kapp and Patterson" (35). This reflects man's feeling of loss due to his enigmatic identity which never remains static and which makes the human being fumble for his own identity throughout his life.

Similar to Beckett's characters, some of Albee's characters cannot be sure about the specific features of their belongings. For example, when Mommy goes to a shop to buy a hat, its color becomes a problem for her although she claims that she liked it:

> Mommy: And then they showed me one that I did like. It was a lovely hat, and I said […] 'I'll take this hat, oh my, it's lovely. What color is it?' And they said, 'Why, this is beige, isn't it a lovely little beige hat?' […] And so, I bought it. (*American* 100)

However, when she meets the chairman of her woman's club, they do not agree with each other on the color of the hat. The woman insists that it is "wheat-colored" while Mommy insists that it is "beige" (101). Although she does not yield in at the time, she returns to the shop to exchange it. The next hat she buys is the same color as the previous one, which confuses her:

> Mommy: They took my hat into the back, and then they came out again with a hat that looked exactly like it. I took one look at it, and I said, 'This hat is wheat-colored; wheat.' Well, of course, they said, 'Oh no, madam, this hat is beige; you go outside and see'. So, I bought it. (101)

She depends on the ideas of other people even at a simple shopping experience. Thus, she becomes a being-for-others who needs the confirmation of other people about what she does, and about who she is.

The identity problems of Beckettian characters underscore their blurred identities and their inner conflicts. They experience lapses of memory. Vladimir and Estragon do not recall what they did even the previous day:

> Estragon: We came here yesterday.
> Vladimir: Ah no, there you're mistaken.
> Estragon: What did we do yesterday?
> Vladimir: What did we do yesterday?
> Estragon: Yes.
> Vladimir: Why….[Angrily.] Nothing is certain when you're about. (*Godot* 16)

When Vladimir tries to remind Estragon that they were there the previous day, Estragon denies it and says: "You dreamt it". Vladimir cannot believe that Estragon forgets everything in such a short time. Estragon explains his state as follows: "That's the way I'm. Either I forget immediately or I never forget" (56). So, their memory is not dependable.

Although they wait for Godot stubbornly, they do not know or remember what they asked Godot for:

> Estragon: What exactly did we ask him for?
> Vladimir: Were you not there?
> Estragon: I can't have been listening.
> Vladimir: Oh…nothing very definite.
> Estragon: A kind of prayer.
> Vladimir: Precisely.
> Estragon: A vague supplication.
> Vladimir: Exactly. (19)

Their doubtful memories imply that they do not remember either who they were the day before. There is only one thing that is certain and it is *uncertainty*, which undermines their trust in their memories.

The characters in *Waiting For Godot* forget what they said or asked a few minutes ago. When Vladimir and Estragon question Pozzo about his mistreatment of Lucky, Pozzo starts explaining: "The answer is this"; but he changes the topic and forgets what he was going to say:

> Pozzo: What was it exactly you wanted to know?

> Vladimir: Why he-
> Pozzo: [Angrily.] Don't interrupt me! [Pause. Calmer.] If we all speak at once we'll never get anywhere. [Pause.] What was I saying? [Pause. Louder.] What was I saying?
> […]
> Estragon: [Forcibly.] Bags. [He points at Lucky.] Why? Always hold. [He sags, panting.] Never put down. [He opens his hands, straightens up with relief.] Why?
> Pozzo: Ah! Why couldn't you say so before? (31)

Memory failure is a sign of their dim identities. They become more and more uneasy as they experience this failure.

The problem of memory is also present in Albee's plays. Although Jerry tells Peter about his past, he has minimal memory of his time at his aunt's home:

> Jerry: Then there was Mom's sister, who was given neither to sin nor the consolations of the bottle. I moved in on her, and my memory of her is slight excepting I remember still that she did all things dourly: sleeping, eating, working, praying. (*Zoo* 23)

He stayed with her for some time when he was a teenager; but he is not sure what happened in that time. It is likely that he tries to forget that period of his life. However, the past also forms one's identity. While trying not to recall that period, he may be trying to forget his past self.

In *The American Dream*, Grandma claims that she does not remember being Mommy's mother (108). Grandma's failure of memory mostly stems from her old age. She does not recall the news she watched on TV:

> Grandma: The Department of Agriculture, or maybe it wasn't the Department of Agriculture[…] put out figures showing that ninety per cent of the adult population of the country is over eighty years old… or eighty per cent is over ninety years old.(122)

Despite being the symbol of wisdom in the play, she suffers from a lapse of memory.

None of the characters remember Mrs. Barker though they have probably met her before:

> Mrs. Barker: Well ,my dear, […] I'm chairman of your woman's club.
> Mommy: Don't be ridiculous. I was talking to the chairman of my woman's club just yester- Why, so you are. You remember, Daddy, the lady I was telling you about? […] Don't you remember?
> Daddy: No…no…(113-114)

Although she introduces herself when she comes in, Daddy forgets her name and refers to her as "what is-her-name" (145). As their memory fails them, they will not remember who they were before, either. They will become strangers to themselves.

In *A Delicate Balance,* Agnes asserts that she never recalls the time difference between where they live and where their daughter, Julia, lives. She needs Tobias' help: "Tobias, I'm going to call Julia, I think. Is it one or two hours' difference?... I can never recall" (25). She forgets the name of one of Julia's ex-husbands, Phil. She cannot recall it without Claire's help (37). The past fades away, and time becomes the enemy of Albee's characters, too.

One other problem with these characters is their uncertainty of the motives for their actions and utterances. In Absurd drama, the motives of the characters are hidden, and their actions cannot be understood (Hincliffe 5). Beckett's characters do not know why they do what they do, or why they say what they say. Motive and cause of an action is differentiated in Sartre's philosophy. Motive is "the ensemble of the desires, emotions, and passions which urge me to accomplish certain act" while cause is "the ensemble of rational considerations" (Sartre 575-576). However, Beckett's characters know neither the motives nor the causes of what they do or say. The question *why* is answered mostly as: "I do not know" . In *Waiting For Godot*, while discussing the possibility of parting from each other, Vladimir asks Estragon why he comes back to Vladimir, and the latter answers: "I don't know" (55). When Vladimir questions Estragon about the place and the reason that he has left his boots, Estragon responds: "I don't know why I don't know" (62).It seems as if Beckett's characters were driven to a state or to an act by some unknown forces.

Albee's characters do not know the motives for their feelings or actions, either. For instance, Jerry does not know why he dislikes the west side of the park:

> Jerry: I don't like the west side of the park.
> Peter: Oh? Why?
> Jerry: (Offhand) I don't know. (*Zoo* 16)

He does not know even why he lives in that rooming- house. When he mentions his strange neighbors, Peter asks: "Why do you live there?", and Jerry replies: "I don't know" (22). Although he is the questioning man in the play, he is not sure about the

reasons for his choices. Jerry's ambiguity about his motives reflects his enigmatic identity.

Mrs. Barker's situation in *The American Dream,* is worse than Jerry's since she feels uneasy, not knowing why she is there. When everybody is confused about why she came, Grandma says: "I know why this dear lady is here", and Mrs. Barker turns to Grandma for help: "Oh, I do wish you'd tell me" (121). She might be there for a charity; or she might have come as the chairman of the woman's club. However, why she is there is never settled in the play, and she herself remains confused about this issue.

Beckett's characters are not sure about what to do. The tramps constantly ask this question to each other:

> Estragon: What do we do now?
> Vladimir: I don't know. (*Godot* 46)

They do not know how to deal with the situation they are in. They need confirmation from each other.

The tramps are uncertain about how they feel as if they were strangers to themselves. When a boy messenger comes to give some news about Godot, Vladimir questions the boy about Godot's treatment of the boy:

> Vladimir: You're not unhappy: [The boy hesitates.] Do you hear me?
> Boy: Yes, sir.
> Vladimir: Well?
> Boy: I don't know, sir.
> Vladimir: You don't know if you are unhappy or not?
> Boy: No, sir.
> Vladimir: You're as bad as myself. [Silence.] (50)

Vladimir comments on the uncertainty of one's feelings: "One isn't master of one's moods" (55). If one is not master of his own moods, he is at a loss about his identity.

Similar to Beckett's characters, Albee's characters do not have their own ideas upon a subject, or they do not know whether they have any. Mrs. Barker in *The American Dream* is never sure about her ideas. She mostly starts her sentences as: "I don't mind if I". She changes her ideas rapidly. For example, at first she reproaches the Young Man whom she thinks is the van man who came to take Grandma away. However, she quickly changes her mind:

> Mrs. Barker: (To Young Man) How dare you cart this poor old woman away?
> Young Man: (After a quick look at Grandma, who nods) I do what I'm paid to do. I don't ask any questions.
> Mrs. Barker: (After a brief pause) Oh (Pause) Well, you're right of course, and I shouldn't meddle. (140)

She is not able to assert her own ideas upon Grandma's being taken away though she may pity Grandma. As a result, she consults Grandma to have fixed ideas about herself. She asks Grandma: "I really do feel that I can trust you. Please tell me why they called and asked us to come" (125). Albee's characters, like Mrs. Barker, become Sartrean being-for-others who need the confirmation of the other people to shape their own ideas.

Beckett's characters play, act and assume roles to have some sense of an identity. Sartre discusses "play" as a form of bad-faith, a way of self-deception. They play roles in substitution for their vague identities. In *Waiting For Godot*, these roles may differ from being a mother, a master to a slave. Vladimir plays being Estragon's mother. He feeds Estragon with carrots and radishes. When Estragon falls asleep, he "takes off his coat and lays it across Estragon's shoulders" (65). When Lucky kicks Estragon violently in the shins, and Estragon complains that he will never walk again, Vladimir says: "I'll carry you. If necessary" in a tender way like a mother (32-33). He tries to build an identity according to the role he plays.

Other than playing the mother, Vladimir is willing to play the bodyguard to Estragon. Vladimir complains about not being with Estragon when he was beaten:

> Vladimir: It's because you don't know how to defend yourself. I wouldn't have let them beat you.
> Estragon: You couldn't have stopped them.
> Vladimir: Why not?
> Estragon: There were ten of them. (55)

He is upset when Estragon shatters his built- up identity as a bodyguard, which is another role, not his real self.

Pozzo plays the tyrant and expects the tramps to acknowledge his tyranny even when he introduces himself:

> Pozzo: [Terrifying voice.] I am Pozzo! [Silence.] Pozzo! [Silence.] Does that name mean nothing to you? [Silence.] I say does that name mean nothing to you? (23)

He is surprised that the tramps do not recognize such a strong tyrant. He gives one-word orders to Lucky as a master should, and he also treats him violently. He jerks the rope that passes round Lucky's neck and says: "Closer!". When Lucky advances, he bids: "Stop!", and Lucky stops (25). He also expects to be respected like a king. When he stands up to set off, he makes Estragon beg him in order to sit down again.

> Pozzo: I'd like very much to sit down, but I don't quite know how to go about it.
> Estragon: Could I be of any help?
> […]
> Pozzo: If you asked me to sit down.
> Estragon: Would that be a help?
> Pozzo: I fancy so.
> Estragon: Here we go. Be seated, sir, I beg of you.
> Pozzo: No, no, I wouldn't think of it! [Pause. Aside.] Ask me again. (36)

He believes that he should act like a tyrant. As his tyranny is the substitution for his identity, he cannot bear being questioned. When Estragon asks him why Lucky does not put down his bags, Pozzo ignores this question. When Vladimir reminds him of the question: "You're being asked a question", Pozzo replies: "A question! Who! What! A moment ago you were calling me sir, in fear and trembling. Now you're asking me questions. No good will come of this!" (30). A master cannot be questioned, and he does whatever he wants to do. However, he knows it is just a role that he plays, and he loses his real self in this way.

The master-slave relationship in Beckett's plays, which resembles Hegel's master-slave theory, reveals the loss of identity of both sides. This suggestion is highlighted in the Sartrean view as: "Violent man... affirms identity with himself... he objectifies himself as well as the Other; 'he is a *thing* when he destroys man'"(Santoni 64). While playing in order to have a definite identity, that of a master, Pozzo makes himself and the oppressed one, Lucky, a being-in-itself, denying other possibilities to make himself be. T. Storm Heter handles this issue in a different way:

> The master attempts to force others to recognize him, yet he does not recognize others. The attitude of mastery is a poor and ultimately self-defeating attempt to establish one's self identity... The more I dominate others, the less genuine recognition I receive from them. (29)

The critic refers to the affirmation of other people which is needed to evaluate one's self-hood. In either case, the loss of identity is present in both sides of a master-slave relationship. Beckett's characters' need to play being someone shows their attempt to be someone who they are not, which is another identity problem.

Albee's characters "play" at being someone who they are not and cannot be. The parents try to have parental attitudes, and the wives identify themselves with their roles as a wife. Some of his male characters play at being a family man, a father or a good husband. In *The Zoo Story,* Peter plays the role of a family man and a businessman who is supposed to have clear ideas upon several subjects. When Jerry discusses the results of Peter's smoking a pipe, which also signals his social position, Peter's statements show that he is an educated man:

> Jerry: What you'll probably get is cancer of the mouth, and then you'll have to wear one of those things Freud wore after they took one whole side of his jaw away. What do they call those things?
> Peter: A prosthesis?
> Jerry: The every thing! A prosthesis. You're an educated man, aren't you? Are you a doctor?
> Peter: Oh, no; no. I read about it somewhere, *Time* magazine, I think. (He turns to his book).
> Jerry: Well, *Time* magazine isn't for blockheads. (16)

He seems to have the identity of a literate man. Nevertheless, it is just a false identity which is knocked down at the moment Jerry asks him his favorite writers. Peter cannot clarify his ideas:

> Peter: Well, I like a great many writes; I have a considerably catholicity of taste, if I may say so. Those two men [Baudelaire and Stephen King] are fine, each in his way. Baudelaire, of course … uh… is by far the finer of the two, but Stephen King has a place… in our… uh… national…(21)

He does not even know which one he likes or whether he likes them at all. He cannot express himself. He does not have any definite ideas even though he plays the role of an educated man. So, his own identity is lost under this role.

Mommy is another role-player. She plays the role of a dominating woman. She dominates her husband with aggression. When Daddy is hesitant to open the door, Mommy orders him to do it: "Open the door" (*American* 110). Her authoritative behavior shows that she wants to rule the people around her. When Mrs. Barker likens Daddy to "an old house", Mommy utters: "Why Daddy, thank Mrs. Barker", and Daddy thanks her as if he were a child (117). In fact, Mommy's

"pathological obsession with authority", which is a "hysterical quality", indicates the lack in her selfhood (Paolucci, *Tension* 28). She tries to fill the lack in her selfhood by dominating other people.

Albee's portrayal of Young Man also illustrates the role-playing of the individuals instead of searching for their true identity. When Grandma admires his appearance, he reveals his desire to be a movie star, who is also a performer:

> Grandma: You ought to be in the movies, boy.
> Young Man: I know.
> […]
> Grandma: You ought to try out for them… the movies.
> Young Man: Well, actually, I may have a career there yet. I've lived out on the West Coast almost all my life…and I've met a few people who…might be able to help me. (133)

Moreover, he claims that he has done some modeling (137). Grandma gives him the role of a van man: "You'll have to play it by ear, my dear…unless I get a chance to talk to you again" (139). Grandma introduces him to Mrs. Barker as follows: "this is the…uh…the van man" (140). Hence, Young Man can never own up his true selfhood as he is lost among various roles. He will always pretend to be someone else, but not himself.

Albee criticizes the use of the social roles as a substitute for one's own identity. Mrs. Barker talks about her brother, who identifies himself through his marriage as follows: "He wants everybody to know he's married. He is really a stickler on that point, he can't be introduced to anybody and say hello without adding, 'Of course, I'm married.'" (118). This man is so much obsessed with his social role as a husband that ironically "he's even been written up in psychiatric journals because of it" as Mrs. Barker adds (118). He is a man who tries to establish a selfhood by means of marriage.

In *A Delicate Balance,* the identities of the characters are reduced to their functions. Agnes hates the roles that the society has given to her and complains about them: " If they knew what it was like…to be a wife; a mother; a lover; a homemaker; a nurse; a hostess; an agitator, a pacifier, a truth-teller, a deceiver…" (51). Perhaps, she knows that these functions make her own identity more and more obscure and that none of them is her true self.

In this play, there are several reversals of roles. For instance, Edna, who is a guest in Agnes' house, presumes the role of Agnes when she reproaches Julia for

her divorces, pointing out that Julia as a grown up should deal with her marriage problems herself. Julia reminds her that she is a guest in that house; yet Edna does not give up her role and warns her in a strict tone: "Manners, young lady" (76). Edna wants to ensure her place in that house with this role. After Julia is sent upstairs for her embarrassing behavior of yelling at Edna and Harry, the roles of Edna and Agnes, Harry and Tobias are reversed once more. Edna says: "Poor Julia" as if she were her mother. Agnes shrugs and utters: "Julia is a fool" as if she were not Julia's mother and continues: "Will you make me a drink, Harry, since you're being Tobias?" (81). Thus, the playwright "merges the couples and blurs their identities" (McCarthy 91). These reversals create more confusion for them and also for the others about their identities.

Albee deals with this problem of assuming roles by creating some characters who run from one organization to another, or from one club to another in a frantic mood. Thomas Nagel clarifies their identity problems as follows:

> Those seeking to supply their lives with meaning usually envision a role or function in something larger than themselves. They therefore seek fulfillment in service to society, the state, ... , the advance of science or religion and the glory of God... People can come to feel, when they are part of something bigger, that it is part of them too. They worry less about what it is peculiar to themselves, but identify enough with longer enterprise to find their role in it fulfilling. (16)

Mrs. Barker, in *The American Dream*, is engaged with charities and organizations. She claims to be "a professional" woman who has got her fingers "in so many little pies" (116). She addresses herself as "we":

> Daddy: Now that you're here, I don't suppose you could go away and maybe come back some other time.
> Mrs. Barker: Oh no; we're much too efficient for that. (112)

However, when she uses "I", she is not a confident character. She hesitates even when she tries to state that she is thirsty: "I'm not sure that I…" (124). When Grandma tells Mommy and Daddy's dismembering their adopted child, Mrs. Barker is confused again. She utters: "I'll have to…what is the word I want?... I have to relate it…that's it…I'll have to relate it to certain things that I know, and… draw…conclusions" (131). She experiences a loss of identity unless she identifies herself with the organizations she is in.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance,* run form one club and party to another as a hobby or for social gatherings. When Harry and Edna drop by, Agnes assumes that they have been to the club (41). Tobias also says that he went to the golf club when Agnes questions him about what he did that day (54). The characters accept their social status in these clubs as their identities. At this point, they are threatened by merging into Heideggerian "they" (165). "They" are not definite people, but the society in general. It gives everybody a specific, yet a false sense of identity. If they adapt to their roles or status in these social groups, they become being-for-others. In other words, they become anybody, losing their uniqueness.

Albee steps further than Beckett on the theme of the uncertainty of one's identity, and handles the outer pressures which present a great obstacle to an individual to achieve a complete selfhood. These outer forces are social pressures. They are the familial pressures or the laws and conventions of the society. The parents try to shape the identity of their children. It shows the materialistic approach of parents who perceive their children as their property as a being-in-itself. In *The American Dream,* Mommy and Daddy perceive the child they adopted as a being-in-itself, and they use physical violence to form it according to their tastes. Grandma tells Mrs. Barker about this process of dismemberment. She says that they took out its eyes, cut its hands and also his penis. She asserts that "as it got bigger, they found out all sorts of terrible things about it, like: it didn't have a head on its shoulders, it had no guts, it was spineless, its feet were made of clay…just dreadful things" (128). Parents can present an obstacle to a child in forming his own identity.

The society has some conventions and norms, and it expects the individual to lead his life in accordance with them. The individual who is unusual or who has radical choices is unacceptable. For instance, homosexuality is unacceptable in the society Albee depicts. People in this society dislike the ones who are not like themselves. What is left to Jerry, who has been a homosexual, is either to suppress it or accept to be excluded from the majority. Jerry tells Peter that he discovered that he was "h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l" when he was a teenager (*Zoo* 24). He refers to his homosexual experiences with a Greek boy and adds: "And now; do I love the little ladies; really, I love them. For about an hour" (24). He has to suppress his homosexuality in order not to be dismissed from the society; but it results in his

becoming a stranger to his own self. Hence, the identity of an individual is also under the pressure of the outer forces.

Apart from being unsure about his own self, man cannot and should not trust in the Other in Beckett's drama. Sartre states: "My original fall is the existence of the Other" (352). The presence or existence of the Other is mostly scandalous or threatening for the human being. Sartre's views about the Other are reflected in Beckett's play and are followed in Albee's plays. The characters of both writers talk about some off-stage people who are called "they"; yet who they are is never clarified. In *Waiting For Godot,* Estragon is beaten by some people; but he does not know who they were. Nothing is sure about "they", the others:

> Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?
> Estragon: Beat me? They certainly beat me.
> Vladimir: The same lot as usual?
> Estragon: The same? I don't know. (11)

One cannot be sure about the identity of the Other even though he interacts with the Other.

Throughout *Waiting For Godot,* Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot though they are not sure about his identity. When Pozzo stops by them, the tramps take him for Godot:

> Estragon: [Undertone.] Is that him?
> Vladimir: Who?
> Estragon: [Trying to remember his name.] Er…
> Vladimir: Godot?
> Estragon: Yes.
> Pozzo: I present myself: Pozzo.
> Vladimir: [To Estragon.] Not at all! (23)

Estragon does not even recall the name of Godot, and Vladimir can answer Estragon's question only after Pozzo introduces himself. Moreover, when Pozzo asks them who Godot is, they are confused once more:

> Estragon: Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him.
> Vladimir: True… we don't know him very well…but all the same…
> Estragon: Personally I wouldn't even know him if I saw him. (24)

They give a personality to Godot and presume to have a relationship to that personality which means "an identity can be established in a dream world" (Junker 55). Godot may be a *him* or *it.* Nothing is certain about this other being.

Jerry does not know the others who live in the same rooming house. He says that there is a Puerto Rican family in one of the rooms, and he adds that he does not know how many children they have. There is "somebody" living in another room; yet his or her identity is again uncertain (*Zoo* 22).

The unknown "they" are present in *The American Dream*, too. Mommy and Daddy wait for some people whose identities are not clarified:

> Mommy: I don't know what can be keeping them.
> Daddy: They're late, naturally.
> Mommy: Of course, they're late; it never fails.
> […]
> Daddy: When we took this apartment, they were quick enough to have me sign the lease; they were quick enough to take my check for two months' rent in advance…
> […]
> Daddy: But now, try to get the icebox fixed, try to get the doorbell fixed, try to get the leak in johnny fixed! Just try it…they aren't quick about that. (99)

These people may be the plumbers, the landlords, the van men or someone else. However, Mrs. Barker is the character who drops in. She is definitely not a plumber or a van man; so, the Other remains as a mysterious being in this play.

The Other represents a threat for the characters in *Waiting For Godot.* Since the characters regard the Other as a threat, they revert to violence. Pozzo's attitude towards Lucky is cruel. When he sees that Lucky is asleep, he jerks the rope, and orders him: "Up pig!....Up hog!"(24). Vladimir and Estragon also attack Lucky because he kicked Estragon the day before. When Pozzo wants them to go and check whether Lucky is still alive, Estragon takes this chance to take revenge, and "With a sudden fury Estragon starts kicking Lucky, hurling abuse at him as he does so" (81-82). As each one of them is the Other, everyone is under the threat of some kind of violence.

Albee also portrays the Other as a threat to the characters. So, physical, psychological and metaphysical violence is always present in Albee's plays (Roudané 13). Some critics emphasize Antonin Artaud's influence on Albee about this issue. For Artaud, "cruelty... was the primary ingredient that could generate on apocalyptic revolt within the audience" (Roudané 12). Albee uses cruelty to have access to the subconscious of the audience, to shake the audience for some recognition. Humiliation and mockery from the Other can be included among the psychological violence he applies. In *The Zoo Story,* Jerry violates Peter's isolation

and peace on the park bench by forcing Peter to listen to his private life (Tekinay 18). Furthermore, he pokes and punches Peter to have more space on the bench, and then to make Peter leave the bench. He goes on with his zoo story while poking Peter hard and ordering: "More over!". Peter is annoyed by this treatment; but Jerry goes on. He punches Peter on the arm, hard, and shouts out loud: "MORE OVER!" (34). Urging Peter for a fight, Jerry "slaps Peter", and "spits in Peter's face" (38). He uses verbal violence, too. During his fight, he humiliates Peter: "Imbecile! You're slow-witted!" (35). Jerry represents the Other who is threatening to Peter's being.

Mommy threatens Grandma throughout the play. When Grandma does not obey her, she says: "Now, you be a good Grandma, or you know what will happen to you. You'll be taken in a van" (*American* 124). Although Mommy is her daughter, she is still an Other. Grandma is threatened by this menacing position of the Other. When Mrs. Barker tells her that she can trust Grandma to help her about the reason why she was called there, Grandma says: "Don't be sure; it's every man for himself around this place" (125). Man is on his own in a world of threatening others.

One's best friend can present a danger for him as it is the case in *A Delicate Balance*. When Harry and Edna move to Tobias' house, they become the cause of constant quarrels among the family members:

> Tobias: (Frustration and rage) HARRY AND EDNA ARE OUR FRIENDS!!
> Julia: (Equal) THEY ARE INTRUDERS!! (128)

The presence of the guests becomes unbearable for Julia. Agnes is also uneasy with their visit. She expresses her uneasiness as follows:

> Agnes: They've brought the plague with them, and that's another matter. Let me tell you something about disease…mortal illness; you are either immune to it…or you fight it. If you are immune, you wade right in, you treat the patient until he either lives, or dies of it. But if you are not immune, you risk infection […] it is not Edna and Harry who have come to us-our friends- it is a disease. (109)

"Plague and death arrive invasively from the outside" (Krasner 83). The outsiders are Harry and Edna who become dangerous beings at the moment they appear.

Beckett's characters are generally indifferent towards each other's agonies. James Acheson emphasizes that Vladimir, Estragon and Lucky are "no more

human" than the tyrant, Pozzo (145). For example, when Pozzo falls down on the ground and cries for help, Vladimir and Estragon see that he is helpless; yet they talk about helping him rather than giving him a helping hand:

> Vladimir: Perhaps we should help him first.
> Estragon: To do what?
> Vladimir: To get up.
> Estragon: He can't get up?
> Vladimir: He wants to get up.
> Estragon: Then let him get up.
> Vladimir: He can't.
> Estragon: Why not?
> Vladimir: I don't know. (*Godot* 73)

They remain indifferent to Pozzo's groans and cries.

They also ignore one another's call for help. When Estragon is not able to take off his boot, he needs Vladimir's help:

> Estragon: Help me!
> Vladimir: It hurts?
> Estragon: Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!
> Vladimir: No one suffers but you. I don't count.
> […]
> Estragon: Why don't you help me? (12)

Although the tramps live together, each as the Other is indifferent to his mate.

Albee's characters do not care for the Other's agonies. They keep at a distance from the other characters. Peter does not want to deal with Jerry, who is a stranger. When Jerry approaches to him in agony, with an attempt to communicate or perhaps to share his stories with him, Peter avoids him:

> Jerry: The zoo is around Sixty-fifth Street; so, I've been walking north.
> Peter: (Anxious to get back to his reading) Yes, it would seem so. (*Zoo* 15)

Peter uses his book and his pipe as a shelter to avoid the Other. He is uncomfortable in Jerry's presence. He addresses Jerry as "sir" while the latter addresses him as "boy" to make a closer contact:

> Jerry: (Watches as Peter, anxious to dismiss him, prepares his pipe) Well, boy; you're not going to get lung cancer, are you?
> Peter: (Looks up, a little annoyed, then smiles) No, sir. Not from this. (16)

Peter means that he will get cancer from the presence of Jerry. Possibly, he assumes that there is no point in talking to a stranger. He may also be thinking that in a chaotic city, such as New York, this man might be a thief or a lunatic.

The characters sometimes mock the others' agonies. Grandma suffers from constipation, which is quite common with old people. Daddy mocks the way Grandma suffers in the toilet: "We hear you… for hours… whimpering away" (*American* 103). There is also something wrong with the plumbing of the toilet, which adds to Grandma's discomfort; but Mommy and Daddy do nothing to have it repaired. Thus, even relatives are Others to one another.

When Harry and Edna come to stay at Tobias and Agnes' home, the former couple is the Other. However, during their visit, the household becomes the Others for Harry and Edna. They sometimes treat the visitors in a humiliating and unconcerned way. For example, Agnes asks Harry what they want insolently. When Edna is offended by this mistreatment, Agnes mocks them:

> Agnes: (About to attack, thinks better of it) I… I'm sorry, Edna. I forgot that you're… very frightened people.
> Edna: DON'T YOU MAKE FUN OF US!
> Agnes: My dear Edna, I am not mak-
> Edna: YES YOU ARE! YOU'RE MAKING FUN OF US. (*Delicate* 82)

The Other can be uncaring, insensitive and crude.

Beckett reflects Sartre's idea that man needs other people around although they present a danger. He puts pairs of characters on the stage like Didi and Gogo in *Waiting For Godot*. Vladimir and Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky are both interdependent and complementary characters. Esslin states:

> Pozzo and Lucky; Vladimir and Estragon [are]… linked by a relationship of mutual interdependence, wanting to leave each other, at war with each other, and yet dependent on each other… This is a frequent situation among people-married couples, for example- but it is also an image of the interrelatedness of the elements within a single personality, particularly if the personality is in conflict with itself. (31-32)

The interdependence of these characters may show that they are not self-sufficient beings. They need each other to be sure about their own selfhood or to validate their identity. Knowledge of one's own presence is to be justified by the others. This reaffirmation is achieved by "the look" according to Sartre. Thus, Beckett's pairs do not want to lose this opportunity of justification by staying together though they discuss the possibility of separating throughout the play. Vladimir is pleased to see Estragon when he appears at the beginning of the second act. He goes towards Estragon and says: "You again! Come here till I embrace you" (54). The reason is

possibly that Vladimir will forget his loneliness at the presence of Estragon. Likewise, Pozzo needs Lucky to carry his baggage if not for anything else. According to the existentialist view, everybody is the Other for the individual. Beckett's tramps need each other to find some reassurance that will affirm their identities and existence.

Akin to Beckett, Albee portrays the Other as a character who is needed. His characters, who are mostly being-for-others, ask the Other for confirmation of their identities or existences. Jerry remarks that he needs to talk to somebody since he is a lonely man. He explains to Peter that he does not have much contact with the other people in his daily life; but he adds: "Every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really *talk*; like to get to know somebody, know all about him" (*Zoo* 18-19). No matter how much loss man endures due to the others, he needs the Other, even those whom he knows nothing about.

Mommy consults Daddy occasionally although she seems to be a bossy wife. She wants Daddy to support her when she has quarrels with Grandma. For instance, when Grandma mocks her as she had a head that looked like a banana, Mommy turns to Daddy for reinforcement:

> Mommy: Daddy? Daddy, you see how ungrateful she is after all these years, after all these things we've done for her? (*American* 120)

In this case, Daddy is the Other, and Mommy is in need of him for protection.

Even Grandma is the Other according to Mommy. When Grandma disappears with her boxes, Mommy suspects that she stole something from her house. She utters: "Why… where's Grandma? Grandma's not here! Where's Grandma? And look! The boxes are gone, too. […] She's taken off and she's stolen something! Daddy!" (144). She does not trust her mother, and regards her as an outsider. However, when she is told that Grandma was taken away by the van man, Mommy is almost in turmoil:

> Mommy: (Near tears) No, no, that's impossible. No. There's no such thing as the van man. There is no van man. We… we made him up. Grandma? Grandma? (144)

Mommy knows that she will miss her if Grandma is taken away. Even though Mommy regards her as a nuisance, she depends on her mother.

In *A Delicate Balance,* Julia, the daughter of Tobias and Agnes, could not establish any selfhood and this breeds childish behaviors. "Julia remains the thirty-six-year-old confused child", and her "troubled past emotionally cripples her present world" (Roudané 107). She probably envied her brother, Teddy, who died when he was an infant. She had a problematic childhood even when she was a student coming home with bleeding knees (80). She wants to draw attention to herself, which she could get neither from her parents nor from her four husbands. Therefore, she is mostly in "self-pity" (49) or in "hysteria" (50). She could not overcome the Electra complex successfully. She admits it when she talks to her father: "when I was a little girl… I thought you were a marvel- saint, sage, daddy, everything" (56). These failures make her immature. Hence, she seeks parental protection, some help from the Other, who are in her case her father and mother. She calls to them for help at one point when she cannot stand the presence of Harry and Edna: "MOTHER! FATHER! HELP ME!" (78). She is worried that they will replace her, and get her parents' love and care, which she desperately needs. Beside Julia, all the family members need Agnes. "Agnes is a refuge for the others" (Paolucci, *Tension* 109). Other people's ideas play an important role in shaping their identities. Moreover, in Albee's scenarios the recognition, if there is any, is triggered by the others. The Other is required by the individual for gaining self-awareness.

Albee follows Beckett in the theme of uncertainty of identity with his characters who have blurred identities. They also experience identity problems that add up to their confusion. The Other is a menace or of no help for the human being. However, the characters need the others to confirm their beings. Albee moves a step further than Beckett in this theme and explores the outer pressures that form an obstacle to the human being to achieve a whole identity. Like Beckett's characters, Albee's characters suffer from the uncertainty of their identities.

2.1.2 Uncertainty of Existence

Uncertainty of existence is closely related to the uncertainty of identity in Beckett's works. In the existential philosophy, the human being always confronts

nothingness in his own identity and his existence. While he is making himself be, the human being is always faced with nothingness. In fact, what he will make of himself will become nothingness in the end. Sartre explains this point as follows:

> We run toward ourselves and we are-due to this very fact- the being which cannot be reunited with itself. In one sense the running is void of meaning since the goal is never given but invented and projected proportionately as we run toward it. In another sense we cannot refuse to it that meaning which it rejects since in spite of everything possibility is the meaning of the for-itself. Thus there is and there is not a meaning in the flight. (278)

Like Sartre, Heidegger uses the terms such as "nothingness" or "nullity" discussing the existence of Dasein, the human being. He states: "The 'nothing' with which anxiety brings us face to face, unveils the nullity by which Dasein, in its very *basis*, is defined, and this basis itself is as thrownness into death" (356). Man is subject to anxiety due to this ambiguity about his existence.

Besides, every human being will die one day. This inescapable fact makes the meaning of one's life and existence insignificant. Mulhall asserts:

> The hardest lesson of our mortality is its demands that we recognize the complete superfluity of existence. Our birth was not necessary; the course of our life could have been otherwise; its continuation from moment to moment is no more than a fact; and it will come to an end at some point. To acknowledge this about our lives is simply to acknowledge… that our existence has conditions or limits, that is neither self-originated nor…self-sufficient, that it is contingent from top to bottom. (129)

When one dies, it will change nothing for the rest of the human kind. This ambiguity haunts Beckett's and later Albee's characters. They cannot be sure about the place and time that they exist in. Nothingness and death pervade their plays making the lives of the characters trivial. The characters, who are subject to agony because of this uncertainty, are always in an attempt to prove that they exist by several means. Furthermore, the structure of their plays and their technique of mixing comedy and tragedy reveal the overall enigma in the characters' existence and in their lives.

Beckett's characters are put on a stage at an indefinite time. They do not know where they are or what time it is. In *Waiting For Godot,* Beckett uses "boundless space" and "endless time" which articulate the uncertainty of existence as Esslin asserts (qtd. in Brater 111). Vladimir and Estragon cannot recognize the place that they are to wait for Godot.

> Estragon: You're sure it was here?
> Vladimir: What?
> Estragon: That we were to wait.
> Vladimir: He said by the tree. [They look at the tree.] Do you see any others? (15)

They are not sure whether they are at the right location to meet Godot. Besides, the tree is a weak bough, and they doubt whether it is a tree.

> Estragon: What is it?
> Vladimir: I don't know. A willow.
> Estragon: Where are the leaves?
> Vladimir: It must be dead. (15)

Estragon remains ambiguous about the tree despite Vladimir's explanation. According to him, it is a "bush" (16) , not a tree. So, "There is an unbridgeable gap between their consciousness and the scene they inhabit" (Lyons 19). Grey is the color in this play, which makes everything blurred and which possibly causes Estragon to assert: "nothing is certain" (52). The place they inhabit seems to have no connection to anywhere else. They may be somewhere in France because Vladimir says that they could have jumped down " from the top of the Eiffel Tower" (12), and Estragon recalls the time when he threw himself into the Rhône (51). On the other hand, "Lucky's allusions to Fulham, Clapham and Connemara… imply that the setting is either England or Ireland" (Acheson 144). This confusion is not clarified by any of the characters as the play goes on.

Moreover, the offstage presents some obscurity, like the ditch Estragon is beaten up. Shimon Levy argues that the offstage in *Waiting For Godot* is an "identity eraser", and the tramps have to place themselves in space and time when they return onstage (qtd. in Buning, Engelberts & Kosters 24-25). At the beginning of the second act, Estragon comes back to where Vladimir is. The location they meet is the "same place" (53), which Estragon does not remember. Vladimir shows him the tree to prove that it is the same place: "The tree, look at the tree", and he adds: "We nearly hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you not remember?". However, Estragon states that Vladimir "dreamt it" (56). Thus, where they are, whether it is the same place they inhibited the day before or whether it is the right place to meet Godot all remain obscure. It may imply that in the void of existence, man can never be sure about the place he is in.

The outer world presents a danger for Beckett's characters. The world is a dangerous and irrational place for Gogo who was beaten twice when he left the place where they were waiting for Godot (*Godot* 11, 55). He feels more secure when he comes back to the road where Didi is.

The definite time is not known, or it has stopped emphasizing the uncertainty. Whereas Pozzo says: "Touch of autumn in the air this evening" (25) in the first act, Estragon thinks: "It must be spring" (61) in the second act, observing the leaves on the tree. The stage directions state it is the "Next day. Same time" (53); but there is no indication of the exact "time". When Pozzo asks what time it is, Vladimir and Estragon are confused:

> Vladimir: [Inspecting the sky.] Seven o'clock… eight o'clock…
> Estragon: That depends what time of year it is.
> Pozzo: Is it evening?
> [Silence. Vladimir and Estragon scrutinize the sunset.]
> Estragon: It's rising.
> Vladimir: Impossible.
> Estragon: Perhaps it is the dawn. (79-80)

Although Vladimir and Estragon seek to reach an end " where time is no more and where their present unreality is changed into the certainty of their own identity or existence"(Gluck 148), they fail. They have no connection with the time they exist in. Man exists in space and in temporality. The tramps' ambiguity about the space and time reflects the dilemma they experience of whether they exist at all.

The uncertainty about place and time is present in Albee's plays, too. Jerry cannot be sure whether he has walked north to come to the park that he meets Peter:

> Jerry: I went to the zoo, and then I walked until I came here. Have I been walking north?
> Peter: North? Why…I…I think so. Let me see.
> Jerry: Is that Fifth Avenue?
> Peter: Why yes; yes, it is.
> Jerry: And what is that cross street there, that one, to the right?
> Peter: That? Oh, that's Seventy-fourth Street.
> Jerry: And the zoo is around Sixty-fifth Street; so, I've been walking north. (*Zoo* 15)

In the chaos of a crowded city like New York, Jerry is almost lost. The chaos of the city is equal to the disorderly universe where everything takes place by coincidence.

As it does in Beckett's play, the offstage presents a void in *The American Dream*. Daddy leaves the living room, the stage, to go and break down Grandma's

television, and Mommy leaves there to fetch water for Mrs. Barker. However, they cannot find what they look for:

> Daddy: (Offstage) Mommy! I can't find Grandma's television, and I can't find the Pekinese, either.
> Mommy: (Offstage) Isn't that funny! And I can't find the water. (129)

Not only the objects but also the characters who go offstage are lost. When Mrs. Barker goes to the kitchen to find some water, she is also lost:

> Mommy: (Offstage) Did you find Grandma's room?
> Daddy: (Offstage) No. I can't even find Mrs. Barker. (134)

The offstage reflects the existential obscurity and the nothingness that haunts man's existence.

Albee's treatment of the offstage space mirrors the outer world as a menace to one's existence. However, in his plays, the menace is realistic, not a metaphysic one. For instance, Mrs. Barker asks Mommy and Daddy what they think about the "air raids", and she states: "There's too much hostility in the world these days as it is" (*American* 122). The outside presents danger to their existence. They may become victims of the "air raids" once they step into the outer world.

The outside is insecure for the characters in *A Delicate Balance*, too. When Tobias reads the newspaper, Julia asks him if there is anything happy; yet there is not. Tobias sighs and says: "No; small wars, large anxieties, our dear Republicans as brutal as ever, a teen-age marijuana nest not far from here" (53-54). So, in the modern world, the outside is not a safe place. Albee's characters think and hope that they are safe in their homes. They are content with the superficial calm of the indoor spaces.

In *Waiting For Godot,* the characters feel the void which surrounds their existence from inside and outside. They are aware that they will die one day and be lost in the conundrum of existence. Christopher Innes emphasizes the overall uncertainty in Beckett's plays as follows:

> Nature is indifferent in Beckett's work; God absent, or at best unknowable. … So life has no transcendental meaning… On a universal scale, civilization is reduced to debris, while material circumstances are irrelevant to the human condition. Birth and death are the defining facts of existence, diminishing the variables of individual experience to insignificance. (431)

The existence of Beckett's characters seems pointless, trivial and extremely short as Pozzo states: "one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you?" (83). Man is already dead the moment he is born: "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (83). Thus, "For him [Pozzo] time has reached its stop, one day is identical with another, a lifetime has become an instant" (Barnard 99). Besides, according to the existentialists, as the death of man does not depend on him or as man does not choose the way he will die, death escapes man's free will. Sartre assumes that " If death is not the free determination of our being, it cannot complete our life. If one minute more or less may perhaps change everything… then even admitting that I am free to use my life, the meaning of my life escapes me" (689). As Pozzo emphasizes, man's life is not always controlled by him, and this makes it devoid of importance for the characters.

Lucky's speech also reflects the death imagery and the imminent nothingness that comes with death, which is also present in the existentialist philosophy:

> Lucky: man in short that man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation is seen to *waste and pine waste and pine* […] I resume and concurrently simultaneously for reasons unknown *to shrink and dwindle* […] I resume *the skull to shrink and waste*(42- 43)

Lucky points out that man's life is in a process of dying as he diminishes through it. Ruby Cohn also focuses on the images of an "indifferent heaven, dwindling man, and earth a wilderness" in this speech, and notes that it is important that they are put in a single speech (qtd. in Brater 14). Lucky does not or cannot explain the reasons for man to shrink in life. Perhaps, he believes that there is no reason for man to die as there is no reason to exist.

Albee confirms the meaninglessness of life portrayed by Beckett. In Albee's works the ambiguity of identity is related to the obscurity of the existence of the individual and his hollow life. "His figures are incomplete; their sexuality is compromised, their values betrayed, their hopes abandoned, their relationships attenuated. As a result, they become hollow men and women, evidence of their own spiritual emptiness" (Bigsby, *Modern* 147). Jerry mentions a film that he saw and likens it to other films he watched. He utters: "I came home from a movie that was playing on Forty-second Street, a movie I'd seen, or one that was very much like

one or several I'd seen" (*Zoo* 29). What happens in the life of the characters in this film is repeated in the deeds that happen in other films. So, according to him, man's life is a replica of the other people's lives as they are just nothing in the end. Like Pozzo, he believes in the meaninglessness of birth, which starts the existence, and death, which ends it with the same absurdity. His existence causes pain for Jerry as it does for Beckettian characters.

Grandma pitifully assumes that her entire life is so meaningless that she can gather it in a few boxes. When Young Man carries the boxes outside the house, Grandma is saddened with her case:

> Grandma: (A little sadly) I don't know why I bother to take them with me. They don't have much in them […] (She shrugs)… you know… the things one accumulates. (*American* 143)

Her eighty-six years of living do not amount to much. She senses that she has approached the end, and she believes that life is merely a trivial passage of time.

The reason of Tobias' withdrawal from life and his loss of the joy of life is probably the death of his son, Teddy, in *A Delicate Balance*. This issue causes several quarrels between him and Agnes. When Agnes blames him for not having sex with her any more despite her efforts, Tobias states: "I didn't want you to have to" (101). He does not want to have another child, or to cause another human being to come to an absurd world, one more human being to hold the burden of a trivial existence as he does. Therefore, the finitude of life makes it pointless for Tobias, too.

Man's inability to comprehend the significance of his own existence is revealed in his feelings or moods for the existentialists. These moods form the "anxiety" that Beckett's characters experience. Heidegger coins the term "thrownness" which means "the *facticity of its* [Dasein's] *being delivered over"*(174). This facticity is the cause of anxiety in *Waiting For Godot.* Heidegger suggests that man feels anxiety; but there is indefiniteness in this feeling as it comes from nothing or nowhere known (233). Sartre believes that the human being feels "nausea" thinking of his own existence. Sartre defines it as "a pure apprehension of the self as a factual existence". It is "an *insipid* taste", and the human being cannot get away from it (445). This feeling can be experienced in the apprehension of one's body, or realizing some aspects of the world; "the way nature of existence

itself disgusts us". The terror that the human being cannot escape from is partly because of the fear that he cannot manage his world properly (Warnock 110). These feelings are experienced due to the obscurity of existence.

Beckett's characters are always anxious, consciously or subconsciously, for the triviality of their lives and their being. In *Waiting For Godot,* Estragon is the one who can never get rid of this mood. He is most of the time "irritated" and anxious. When he appears at the beginning of the play, Vladimir is happy to see him whereas Estragon is cold and irritated. Vladimir wants to embrace him; but Estragon replies: "Not now, not now" (11). Estragon is not pleased with what he is or what his life is. He has to return to the same place which is haunted by nothingness, and he is to live there till he dies, and this leads to the Sartrean nausea for Estragon. Besides, when Vladimir tells him the story about the two thieves, one of whom was saved, while the other was damned, after stating that the story is doubtful, Estragon says: "People are bloody ignorant apes" (15) referring to those who believe in this story. He believes that man cannot relieve himself from anxiety with the help of religious faith.

This mood haunts Estragon with no apparent reason and all of a sudden. When Godot's messenger comes, Estragon questions him about his coming late (48). He depends on Godot to relieve them from their pitiful existence although it is not certain whether Godot will punish or save them. At the same time, he possibly believes that the messenger has not brought any relief for his anxiety, and even the stage directions reflect his anxiety:

> [Estragon releases the boy, moves away, covering his face with his hands… Estragon drops his hands. His face is convulsed.]
> Vladimir: What's the matter with you?
> Estragon: I'm unhappy.
> Vladimir: Not really! Since when?
> Estragon: I'd forgotten. (48-49)

His unhappiness is a reflection of his anxiety. He loathes life as man is haunted by this mood, and as there is no exit from this mood.

There are a lot of silences in the play when the characters deal with existential angst. The only relief may be talking to each other to eradicate the anxiety. When there is a long silence, Vladimir begs Estragon to say something:

> Vladimir: [In anguish.] Say anything at all!
> Estragon: What do we do now?

Vladimir: Wait for Godot.
Estragon: Ah!
[Silence]
Vladimir: This is awful! (59)

They invent the illusion of Godot to give them some sense of existence and to forget the uneasiness they feel.

Although Albee's characters seem to lead a more realistic life compared to those of Beckett's, there is still a void in their lives, which leads to anxiety. Albee portrays the nothingness that lies underneath the modern life, and his characters are inevitably anxious when they have to recognize this void at the center. In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry is ill at ease from the start, and the stage directions that inform the way he tells the story of the dog and himself clarify his anxiety. His long speech "should be done with a great deal of action, to achieve a hypnotic effect on Peter, and on the audience, too" (27). This story , which involves Jerry's life at the rooming house he lives in, tells of the alienation and the lack of communication he experiences. His anxiety, while he is telling this story, stems from the fact that he perceives the absurdity of his life and nullity of his existence.

Grandma in *The American Dream*, is the only character who approaches to authenticity. Nevertheless, she faces anxiety when she is threatened by being sent to a nursing home. Actually, her mood exemplifies Heidegger's notion of anxiety-towards-death. When Young Man comes to their flat, Grandma takes him for the van man, and she is in a shock:

Young Man: Hello there.
Grandma: My, my, my. Are you the van man?
Young Man: The what?
Grandma: The van man. The van man. Are you came to take me away?
Young Man: I don't know what you're talking about.
Grandma: Oh. (Pause) well. (Pause) My, my, aren't you something!
[…]
Young Man: Oh. Thank you.
Grandma: You don't sound very enthusiastic. (132)

She believes that the man is either a van man or the angel of death. She cannot even speak her mind, and calls him "something". The fact that she is close to death frightens her. If the first possibility is true, she still cannot escape from anxiety because she knows that what she will do in a nursing home is to wait for death in the silent void of that place.

The peace on the surface of the lives of the characters in *A Delicate Balance* is indeed pervaded by anxiety. Clum notes that this play focuses on the "implications of the discovery of the void, the 'nothing' at the heart of the human experience" (qtd. in Bottoms 66). This void breeds the "terror" that makes Harry and Edna leave their home and move to their friends' house. They describe the terror as follows:

> Harry: I… I don't know quite what happened then; we… we were… it was all very quiet, and we were all alone…(Edna begins to weep, quietly…) and then… nothing happened, but… (Edna is crying more openly now)… nothing at all happened, but…
> Edna: (Open weeping, loud) WE GOT… FRIGHTENED.
> […]
> Edna: We…were… terrified.
> Harry: We were scared. (46)

This terror is the best example for Heidegger's definition of anxiety which stems from no definite reason, yet which haunts the human being. Despite this anxiety of existence, these characters seem to be quite composed in their friends' house. Paolucci suggests that the terror carried by the guests, which is indeed the existential anxiety one feels towards his condition in the world, fails to shatter the apparent peace since nobody in the house pays attention to it (Paolucci *Tension* 107). That is why they lose the chance of becoming authentic beings. What they mostly disregard is the fact that whatever illusion they invent to console their deeper sufferings, the anxiety for their human condition will always be present. Nevertheless, they are disgusted with their lot as Beckett's characters are.

Beckett's characters feel a compulsion to prove their existence both to themselves and the people around them and require a Sartrean "look". They need other people around to look at them, to listen to them and to react to them because being watched, listened to or getting a reaction from other people convince them of their own existence. Normand Berlin explains: "Gogo doesn't exist without Didi, Pozzo without Lucky, goat boy without sheep boy, one thief crucified without the other, the waiters without Godot, and conversely Godot without the waiters" (qtd. in Brater 51). When Vladimir interrupts Estragon's story about the man in the brothel and exits in a hurry, Estragon goes to him, and almost begs him for some chatter:

> Estragon: [Gently.] You wanted to speak to me? [Silence. Estragon takes a step forward.] You had something to say to me? [Silence. Another step forward.] Didi…

> Vladimir: [Without turning.] I've got nothing to say to you.
> Estragon: [Step forward.] You're angry? [Silence. Step forward. Estragon lays his hand on Vladimir's shoulder.] Come, Didi. [Silence.] Give me your hand. [Vladimir half turns.] Embrace me! [Vladimir stiffens.] Don't be stubborn! [Vladimir softens. They embrace. Estragon recoils.](18)

In fact, Estragon begs for some evidence for his existence. It may be an utterance, a look or a touch. Only when he had such evidence, is Estragon contented. If he did not get such a proof, he believes that he would be nothing in the midst of nothingness.

As Vladimir presents the evidence for Estragon's existence, Estragon's presence makes Vladimir's existence evident. When Estragon appears on the stage the next day, Vladimir is relieved:

> Vladimir: [Joyous.] There you are again…[Indifferent.] There we are again… [Gloomy.] There I am again. (55)

His existence is guaranteed in this scene; yet, when he becomes sure of his existence, he is surrounded by the existential angst as the stage directions inform.

Pozzo requires confirmation of his existence, too. He is glad to meet the tramps as he states: "The more people I meet the happier I become. From the meanest creature one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one's blessings" (29-30). Lucky's presence does not render enough proof for Pozzo because Lucky does not look at him or speak to him most of the time. When Estragon asks Pozzo the reason why Lucky does not put down the bags, Pozzo wants everybody to look at him while replying:

> Pozzo: Good. Is everybody ready? Is everybody looking at me? [He looks at Lucky, jerks the rope. Lucky raises his head.] Will you look at me, pig! [Lucky looks at him.] Good. […] I am ready. Is everybody listening? Is everybody ready? (30-31)

He needs to acquire all the proof by being looked at and listened to. He feels that he will be lost in a vacuum otherwise.

Albee's characters share the same ground with Beckett's in their desire for being looked at, listened to and responded to. For instance, Jerry urges Peter to listen to him (*Zoo* 27) and repeats his statements several times to receive a reaction from Peter: "I've been to the zoo. (Peter does not notice) I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!" (15). Committing suicide when he was by Peter, Jerry perhaps proved that he existed. It was what Jerry needed frantically.

His life has been a "struggle for existence-in the jungle of the city" (Amacher 51). Hence to have access to such a finale ironically proves his existence.

Mommy wants Daddy to verify her existence by listening to her carefully and responding to her accordingly:

> Mommy: I went to buy a new hat yesterday. (Pause)I said, I went to buy a new hat yesterday.
> […]
> Mommy: Pay attention.
> Daddy: I am paying attention, Mommy.
> Mommy: Well, be sure you do.
> Daddy: Oh, I am.
> Mommy: All right, Daddy; now listen.
> Daddy: I am listening Mommy.
> Mommy: You're sure!
> Daddy: Yes… yes, I'm sure. I'm all ears. (*American* 99-100)

Mommy exaggerates her need for more proof and asks: "What did I say? What did I just say? What did I just say?" (100) in order to check whether Daddy is really listening to her.

Agnes develops another technique; she does not look at her sister, Claire. Claire goes on drinking, which is unbearable for Agnes, who ignores Claire's presence in the room (*Delicate* 34). She reduces Claire to non-existence in this way. When she turns to Claire to make her stop her song that mocks Julia's marriages, Claire exists again:

> Agnes: (Turning on Claire) Will you stop that?
> Claire: Ooh, I *am* here, after all. I exist! (37)

Even though Claire appears as the most self-aware character in this play, she still needs the confirmation of her being there.

Claire's strategy to verify her existence is to exhibit unusual behavior patterns. For instance, when the other family members discuss the unexpected visit of their friends, which presents a problem for them, Claire comes down with an accordion to draw attention upon herself:

> Julia: (Giggling in spite of herself) Oh, Claire…
> Agnes: (Not amused) Claire, will you take off that damned thing!
> Claire: "They laughed when I sat down to the accordion." Take it off? No, I will not![…]
> Agnes: You're not going to play that dreadful instrument in here, and… (But the rest of what she wants to say is damned out by a chord from the accordion) Tobias? Do something about that. (69)

Although the others reproach and humiliate her for such an absurd behavior in the middle of the chaos at home, their negative reactions still verify Claire's existence.

Claire wants to assert her existence by acquiring reactions from other people outside the family, as well. Her shopping adventure exemplifies this:

> Claire: I said, 'Hello, there, I'm in the market for a topless swimsuit'[…] 'A what, Miss?' she said, which I didn't know whether to take as a compliment or not.[…] 'I'm afraid we don't carry… those.' 'Well, in that case,' I told her, 'do you have any separates?' 'Those we carry,' she said […], and I said, 'I'll just buy the bottoms of one of those.'[…] She came up from under the counter, adjusted her spectacles and said, 'What did you say?'(59)

A topless bathing suit would shock the shop assistant as well as the family. She wants to draw the attention of everybody to herself to confirm that she really *is*. These efforts to prove that one really exists reflect the search for meaning in a universe that is devoid of meaning in the Absurdist picture.

One way that Beckett's characters choose to verify their existence is to tell stories. Story-telling becomes one of the obsessions of Beckett's characters. The narratives are sometimes fragmented, and there are also shifts of topics in their stories. No matter what their topics are, these stories are an attempt to persuade them and the others that they really exist, that they are alive to have experienced the story and tell it to the others. When Vladimir tries to remind Estragon of the Macon country, he relates their lives in that period in the form of a narrative. He says: "we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called… [He snaps his fingers]… can't think of the name of the man, at a place called…[Snaps his fingers] can't think of the name of the place" (*Godot* 57). However, he himself erases this proof by not remembering the name of the man and the place. Besides, Estragon's denial of such an experience makes the verification of the story fade away. He claims that he did not notice anything (57). Thus, their past life may be an invention, or they may be non-existent beings. The obscurity and the irrationality of their stories stress the uncertainty of their existences.

Some of Albee's characters are preoccupied with telling stories, too. These stories can be both experienced or invented by the characters. The audience may not be sure whether these stories are really experienced or not, which adds to the obscurity of the characters' existence. Jerry narrates his own experience with the dog of his landlady and calls his narrative "THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE

DOG". He tells that the dog of the landlady always snarls and attacks him and adds :"he got a piece of my trouser leg, look, you can see right here, where it's mended; he got that the second day I lived there" (*Zoo* 27). He needs to persuade Peter that what he tells is a real experience. He also describes the characters in his stories to create a vivid picture for Peter. For example, when he talks about one of his neighbors, he gives lots of details:

> Jerry: The room beyond my beaver board wall is occupied by a colored queen who always keeps his door open; […] when he's plucking his eyebrows, which he does with Buddhist concentration. This colored queen has rotten teeth, which is rare, and he has a Japanese kimono, which is also pretty rare; and he wears this kimono to and from the john in the hall, which is pretty frequent. (22)

The more details he mentions, the more convincing his story will be. The stories in Albee's plays may also mirror the characters' lives and the nihility in the center of their lives. The characters require their audience to listen to their story and to pay attention to them to guarantee their existence.

The concepts of love and sex can also be used as proof of one's existence. Sartre suggests that in a love affair one's existence "*is* because it is *given a name*" (483). One can be sure of his own existence when he is emotionally involved with someone. However, in Beckett's plays love is nostalgia. His characters experienced this feeling, but a long time ago. When Vladimir asks Estragon whether he remembers the Gospels, Estragon replies that he remembers the pictures of the Holy Land and adds that he *used to* say that they would go there for their honeymoon and be happy there *(Godot 13)*. However, whom he refers to is not clarified, and he uses past tense to refer to the story of a love relationship, which makes it a nostalgic experience. Besides, as there are no female characters in the play, they do not have the opportunity to be involved in a relationship with the opposite sex to prove their existence.

Affection, love and sex are absent in Albee's plays, as well. In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry does not have a lover. He just has some letters which are possibly sent by a lover. As he states, these letters are "please letters… please why don't you do this, and please when will you do that letters. And when letters, too. When will you write? When will you come? When? These letters are from more recent years" (22). He possibly did not answer these letters and lost the chance that would prove that he

is. Thus, Jerry remains dubious about his place in the crowded city and in the chaotic universe.

In *The American Dream*, Grandma mocks Mommy saying that Daddy does not have sex with her any more (108). Mommy looks at her relationship from a different angle. She claims that she is very lucky to have such a husband who is not "poor or argumentative" (123). She does not even notice what she misses in the relationship, that is one proof of her existence.

The male characters can be seduced by the females as it is the case in *A Delicate Balance*; yet sexual intercourse is generally not realized. When Harry and Edna decide to stay in the house of Tobias and Agnes, the latter had to stay in the same room; but they had separated their rooms long before. Agnes states: "there was a stranger in my room last night" referring to her husband. She needs to regain the love they lost and says: "I could get used to it again" (92, 93); but it is impossible. The ripe time about sexual intercourse has already passed them by. So, like Beckett's characters, they are deprived of an important human contact to validate their existence.

The structure of Beckett's play also reflects the existential theme of the uncertainty of existence. Beckett stresses the primacy of "direct expression" and states that in his plays "form is content, content is form" (qtd. in Innes 433). His plays do not have a conventional structure. They present a situation instead of developing an event. In *Waiting For Godot,* there is no change in the characters' lives. For example, the first act of the play ends with Estragon's suggestion: "Shall we go?" which is replied by Vladimir's: "Yes let's go"; however, they do not move (52). At the end of the second act Vladimir suggest going, and Estragon agrees; yet they do not move (88). The play starts and finishes with the same movements, even with the same utterances, which mirrors human life that starts from nothingness and finishes in nothingness.

Albee follows Beckett in this aspect in some of his plays to some extent. For example, the plot takes the characters in *The American Dream* to no change. At the end of the play, Mrs. Barker introduces her surprise to the couple, and that is Young Man (145), which repeats what she did years ago. Grandma tells Mrs. Barker that about twenty years ago, a lady who was very much like Mrs. Barker sold the couple a baby (125-126). Mommy is cheered up again when she meets Young Man, who is

to be her second adopted child. She is delighted with him: "Yes! Oh, how wonderful!" (145). It seems that their life repeats itself; therefore, making their existence a vicious circle.

A Delicate Balance opens up with Agnes talking about the possibility of madness and ends with her repetition: "What I find most astonishing-aside from my belief that I will, [is] one day…lose my mind- but when?" (122). She also asserts that now that the visitors are gone they can begin the day (122). If the family members had tried to question and comprehended the "terror" that Harry and Edna mentioned, they would have gained more awareness of the menacing void at the center of their lives. However, they go back to their casual lives at the end. Hence, nothing happens. The circular structures of both writers reflect the nothingness in the midst of the characters' lives and show the ambiguity and arbitrariness of their own existences.

Beckett merges the elements of tragedy and comedy in his plays, which emphasizes the enigma of existence. He is against making a distinction between tragedy and comedy (Albright 6). He calls *Waiting For Godot* a "tragicomedy"(7). He believes that life is a tragicomedy itself. James Acheson examines the effect of the blend of tragedy and comedy in his plays:

> Evidently he [Beckett] was aware that a wholly tragic play might imply the existence outside it of a settled, traditional world of gods, kings, heroes and villains- the metaphysical, social and ethical certainty; and that a wholly comic play might evoke an optimistic world oblivious of the inescapable uncertainty attendant on the limits of human knowledge. A blend of the comic and tragic could, on the other hand, convey something of the anguish of our uncertainty about the nature of the world at large, and our need to palliate the anguish through comedy. (143-144)

While the characters in *Waiting for Godot* are unhappy and suffering, there are a lot of comic scenes. They imitate one another, and fall down while imitating. When Lucky exhibits his dance performance, Estragon says: "Pooh! I'd do as well myself", and he imitates Lucky almost falling (39). Moreover, when their hopes for Godot fall through once more at the end of the second act, Estragon once more suggests hanging themselves from the tree. He says: "there's my belt" (87) as the tool they can use, and he "loosens the cord that holds-up his trousers which, much too big for him, fall about his ankles" (87). What would be tragic turns into a comedy with Estragon's fallen trousers. R. Cormier and J. L. Pallister explore the

comedy elements in this play and claim that it draws from farce, pantomime and vaudeville traditions. They include these elements in the comic elements in the play:

> Physical comedy found in such things as falling and stumbling, and in the voyeurism of Estragon. On a somewhat higher level, we have comedy coming from repetitions, puns, misunderstandings… From vaudeville we have the linguistic routines, the hat exchange, the fallen pants, the unzipped fly, the general outlandish clothing of the characters. (qtd. in Andonian 97)

The absurd behavior of the tramps serves for the comic effect. Didi and Gogo comment on the night as a mixture of comedy and tragedy:

> Vladimir: Charming evening we're having.
> Estragon: Unforgettable.
> Vladimir: And it's not over.
> Estragon: Apparently not.
> Vladimir: It's only beginning.
> Estragon: It's awful.
> Vladimir: Worse than pantomime.
> Estragon: The circus.
> Vladimir: The music-hall. (34)

However, Vladimir stops after breaking into a "hearty laugh" and states: "One daren't even laugh any more" (13). Laughter may be ceased by tears, or tears may be wiped out by laughter in their lives.

Pozzo appears to confirm Beckett's idea that life is a mixture of tragedy and comedy. When Lucky cries upon Pozzo's claim that the likes of Lucky should be killed, Estragon goes to wipe his tears. However, Lucky kicks him, and Estragon starts whimpering this time. Pozzo regards this simple act from a different perspective:

> Pozzo: He's stopped crying. [To Estragon.] You have replaced him as it were. [Lyrically.] The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. [He laughs.](33)

For him, the universe is full of people who either cry or laugh. So, life is either a tragedy or a comedy, or a mixture of both. Beckett's characters feel anxiety about the uncertainty permeating their existence; yet they could laugh at their human condition. According to Cohn, it is a "mirthless laugh" as one of Beckett's heroes, Arsene, calls it in *Watt*. This is "the laugh of laughs… the laugh laughing at the laugh,… at that which is unhappy" (qtd. in Friedman 185). Hence, what lies behind

this laughter is the agony of the characters. The audience are also laughing at their own human condition, their own suffering when they are laughing at Beckett's characters.

Albee blends the elements of comedy and tragedy in his plays as well. Ben-Zvi examines these elements as follows:

> Gags and bits without narrative continuity; …; surprise turns; unexpected entrances and exits; …; props used for shocking and humorous effects;…; snatches of song or musical routines;…; slippage from low to high art or reverse and from comedy to tragedy… Examples can be found in varying degrees and forms throughout his dramatic canon. They also happen to be the significant features of vaudeville. (in Bottoms 178)

Jerry regards the death of his parents as vaudeville. He says: "good old Mom and good old Pop are dead […] BUT . That particular vaudeville act is playing the cloud circuit now" (*Zoo* 22-23). The death of her aunt, whose home he moved into, adds to the agony of Jerry. He states: "She dropped dead on the stairs to her apartment, my apartment then, too, on the afternoon of my high school graduation. A terribly middle- European joke, if you ask me" (23). For him, life is a kind of coarse joke that is both tragic and comic. Man can be a clown for some time; he may laugh and make the others laugh as well; yet death, the tragic end, is always present in one's life.

Jerry imitates the voice of the dog which serves for comic effect while telling the story of his alienated self, which is tragic. He says: "Well, when he got to it he stopped, and he looked at me. I smiled[…] He turned his face back to the hamburgers, smelled, sniffed some more, and then… RRRAAAAGGGGGGHHHHH , like that… he tore into them" (*Zoo* 28). However, this apparently funny story ends with Jerry being even more lonely and desolate. His life, which is "vaudeville" as he puts forth, ends in tragedy.

The tragic and comic elements are present in *The American Dream*, too. Grandma tells Mrs. Barker the story of Mommy and Daddy's dismemberment of the child they adopted as if she were narrating a comedy film:

> Grandma: It began to develop an interest in its you-know-what.
> Mrs. Barker: In its you-know-what! Well! I hope they cut its hands off the wrists!
> Grandma: Well, yes, they did that eventually. But first, they cut off its you-know-what.
> Mrs. Barker: A much better idea. (128)

Killing of the child turns into a funny story. The child's life is wasted in the hands of his parents, which makes the play a black comedy.

In *A Delicate Balance*, Claire is the one who creates comic scenes and entertains the other characters amidst the "plague" brought in by Harry and Edna. When Julia and Agnes argue about the visit, it is seen that Julia is full of hatred for the visitors, which also irritates her mother. Agnes suggests: "Why don't you run upstairs and claim your goddamn room back! Barricade yourself there! Push a bureau in front of the door! Take Tobias' pistol while you're at it! Arm yourself!" (68-69). At this tense scene, Claire appears with an accordion. This makes Julia "giggle", and Tobias "chuckle" whereas Agnes is enraged. Claire keeps up her funny game asking: "Shall I start now? A polka?" (69). Moreover, after the scene when Julia explodes to the visitors telling them that she does not want them in her room (77-78), Claire puts on her accordion again stating: "I think it's time for a little music, don't you kids!"(82). She does not take the ongoing problem seriously. Her interference changes the dark atmosphere in the room.

Claire exhibited funny behavior patterns in the alcoholics' club, too. She tells Tobias about the day she introduced herself to the other alcoholics. She states that after introducing herself, she stopped and made her "little-girl curtsy". Tobias wonders whether the others laughed at her, and she replies: "Well, an agnostic in the holy of holies doesn't get much camaraderie, a little patronizing maybe. Oh, they were taken by the vaudeville, don't misunderstand me" (33). In fact, her situation in the club is a tragedy itself. She hints at her constant loneliness even in a group that is formed of the people who have common problems with her. However, she chooses to make the others laugh at her tragic life.

Thus, following Beckett, Albee deals with the ambiguity of existence in his plays. His use of place, his characters' occupation with death, which renders their existence meaningless, and the pervading anxiety in their lives reveal the dilemmas of existence. His characters look for confirmation of their being; yet they do not always succeed in this attempt. Moreover, the cyclic structure of his plays and the blend of tragedy and comedy emphasize the ambiguity and arbitrariness in the centre of the casual life. So, in both Beckett and Albee's works, the form of the play emphasizes the content, which is the uncertainty of existence.

2.1.3 Illusion versus Reality

Beckett's characters build their lives as an illusion. In such a life, they assume that they are happier because the realities of life are too harsh to bear. An illusory life tranquilizes the character's deep anxieties. Albee attempts to shatter these illusions by challenging his audience because he thinks that "the Theater of The Absurd [should] … make a man face up to the human condition as it really is". He even calls The Theatre of the Absurd "the Realistic theater of our time" since it dramatizes the illusory lives of the human beings (qtd. in Kernan 173). The human being can be categorized as an "authentic" or "inauthentic" being regarding whether his life is based on illusions or not. Heidegger calls the Dasein in his everydayness as "*they-self*", which is actually the inauthentic being (167). He acknowledges that the authentic self should decide for a "potentiality-for-Being", and that he should make this decision "from [his]… own self" (313). He stresses the free choices of the individual by means of which one can be himself or an authentic self. Heidegger remarks that the uniqueness of Dasein, the human being, is shattered when he merges into the crowd and accepts the establishments and rules of that crowd as his own rules. Heidegger names the crowd or the society as "they" and warns people against merging into "they" as "it deprives the particular Dasein of its answerability" (165,167).

In the inauthentic mode, man loses his individuality and pretends that he is not free in order to get rid of his responsibilities. He becomes one of the *anybody* in the society losing his own selfhood. Indeed, several other philosophers mention what Heidegger calls "they". For example, Kierkegaard takes it as "crowd" and asserts that it "renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction" (qtd. in Macquarrie 89). Sartre deals with "they" in another aspect. He asserts that in such a condition, when one is mixed in "they", he loses his real individuality as he accords to the other people's definitions or conventions (548). Thus, the inauthentic being is not himself. He loses his importance as an individual, unifying with the rest of the society. He acts like the others under specific circumstances so that he is not to blame for the unpleasant results. He deceives himself for the fact that it is a usual condition, and he does what others will do under similar conditions.

Beckett's drama mirrors the illusions of his characters who are leading inauthentic lives. Lamont claims that Beckett replaces knowledge with ignorance, comprehension with confusion and reality with illusion (qtd. in Friedman 205). The characters in *Waiting For Godot* try to avoid thinking, which is dangerous in their condition. Their pastimes and the trivia that they deal with aim to prevent them from thinking of the important questions of their being (Esslin 25). While one character is talking about a serious issue, the other may deal with an unnecessary object or talk about an irrelevant subject. When Vladimir broods over the lost chance of suicide at the Eiffel Tower loudly, Estragon is busy with his boots, and they change the subject matter to trivial matters:

> Vladimir: Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now, it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up. [Estragon tears at his boot.] What are you doing?
> Estragon: Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?
> Vladimir: Boots must be taken off every day. I'm tired telling of you that. (12)

They try to forget about their inner conflicts, about their beings, by dealing with their ailments. Estragon points at Vladimir's open zip, and Vladimir states: "Never neglect the little things of life" (12). Thus, boots and an open zip become a better subject matter than questioning their beings. Michael Worton denotes that the aim of Beckett's characters' dealings with unimportant facts is to shelter them from a world that they do not or cannot understand or accept (qtd. in Pilling 72). Hence, they are all used as painkillers.

Likewise, they attempt to silence the ones who denote the unbearable facts of life. Lucky's speech refers to the human condition as in the following example:

> Lucky: in a word the dead loss per caput since the death of Bishop Berkeley[…] in a word for reasons unknown no matter what matter the facts are there and considering what is more much more grave[…] labours abandoned left unfinished graver still(43)

In fact, there lies psychological pain due to the human condition beneath his seemingly nonsensical speech. This pain is perhaps what drove him mad (Acheson 149). Though not in a clear way, he speaks of the death, arbitrariness in existence and perhaps the futility of action. These are intolerable for the other characters. The playwright notes their reactions as follows:

1. Vladimir and Estragon all attention, Pozzo dejected and disgusted.
2. Vladimir and Estragon begin to protest, Pozzo's sufferings increase.
3. Vladimir and Estragon attentive again, Pozzo more and more agitated and groaning.
4. Vladimir and Estragon protest violently. Pozzo jumps up, pulls on the rope […] All throw themselves on Lucky. (42-42)

Even though Vladimir and Estragon are attentive at the beginning, the harsh reality is unbearable for them. So, they try to turn to their fantasy world and silence the questioning mind, the disillusioned mind in the play.

They use language as a means to pass time, making it another illusion. The story of the two thieves is an example for their use of language as an illusion:

> Vladimir: Ah, yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?
> Estragon: No.
> Vladimir: Shall I tell it to you?
> Estragon: No.
> Vladimir: It'll pass the time. [Pause.] Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. (14)

Despite Estragon's reluctance, Vladimir draws him and also himself to the fantasy world. Keeping himself busy with fiction, Vladimir wants to forget his plight. Furthermore, Estragon's suggestions, such as: "That's the idea, let's contradict each other", or "That's the idea, let's ask each other questions" (58) reflect their treatment of language as a way to escape the meanings, the reality of their condition.

The main illusion of Vladimir and Estragon is Godot. Metman observes that Godot's function is to make Vladimir and Estragon remain in an unconscious state (qtd. in Esslin 24). He may be a real person or a hope, maybe a chance. It is what keeps them immobile. Godot's messenger says: "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow" (49). Possibly, they received the same message the previous days when they waited for Godot as Vladimir asks him whether he is the boy who came the previous day (49). However, this message does not shatter the illusion of Godot. Vladimir is almost sure that Godot will come. When Estragon claims that they have nothing to do, Vladimir draws him to the fantasy world:

> Vladimir: Ah Gogo, don't go on like that. Tomorrow everything will be better.
> Estragon: How do you make that out?
> Vladimir: Did you not hear what the child said?

Estragon: No.
Vladimir: He said that Godot was sure to come tomorrow. (51)

Vladimir deceives himself and Estragon with this illusion, and they stubbornly wait for the illusion to become real. Vladimir believes that Godot will come the following day (51). Esslin observes this illusion as follows:

> Toward the end of the play, when Vladimir is about to realize he has been dreaming, and must wake up and face the world as it is, that Godot's messenger arrives, rekindles his hopes, and plunges him back into the passivity of illusion.(24)

When Godot comes "everything will be better" for them; but he will not come (51). Hence, Godot is a painkiller that will help them forget their obscure and absurd situation.

Albee's characters live in illusory worlds, too. There are lots of secrets, lies and hypocrisy in his plays, which the characters escape from facing or admitting. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter's apparently peaceful life consists of illusions. When the curtain rises, Peter is "reading a book" (15), and he claims later that he reads Time magazine, too (16). In one sense, he creates a fantasy world through these books, which are formed of others' ideas on life, rather than asking his own questions upon life. He consults ready-made solutions. Gilbert Debusscher remarks that Peter is one of those bourgeois who "appropriate[s] their opinions each week from *Time*, have a clear consciousness of good and evil" (19).

Jerry, who perceives the overall illusion Peter has created as his life, tries to make Peter become aware of his human condition and face it. In fact, the stories he tells are the tools he uses to explain disillusionment. For instance, the zoo story tells of the entrapment of the human being and the alienation in the society. Jerry says that everybody, the children, the sellers, the animals and also he was in the zoo (34). His story is left unfinished after he states that it was feeding time for the lions, and the lion keepers came into one of the lions cages (34). It is likely that Jerry means that he will be the lion keeper who will feed Peter with the harsh reality. However, Peter refuses to listen to the rest of the story, and he chooses to live in his fantasy life. He does not understand or does not want to understand what Jerry emphasizes with the story. That is why Jerry humiliates Peter: "You're a vegetable! Go lie down on the ground" (35). A vegetable is not a conscious being. Only when Jerry is

dying, does Peter have a chance for recognition as his exclamation, "Oh my God!"(39), suggests.

In *The American Dream*, Young Man is the symbol of the overall illusion of the American society. Although he is physically attractive, he lacks emotions. Grandma is attracted by his beauty:

> Grandma: Will you look at those muscles!
> Young Man: (Flexing his muscles) Yes, they're quite good, aren't they? (133)

She says that she could go for him if she were younger and names him the "American Dream"(132,133). However, there is nothing in this beautiful shape as he explains:

> Young Man: It's that I have no talents at all except what you see… my person; my body, my face. In every other way I am incomplete, and I must therefore… compensate. (137)

He earns his life by his physical beauty, which is an illusion as it is temporary. Moreover, he adds that he experienced "A fall from grace… a departure of innocence":

> Young Man: Once… it was as if all at once my heart…became numb… almost or though I […] it had been wrenched from my body… and from that time I have been unable to love […] I use what I have… I let people love me… I accept the syntax around me, for a while I know I cannot relate… I know I must be related to. (138-139)

Therefore, the truth is veiled by the appearance. He is possibly engaged in prostitution which is a demeaning job. He is there to find a similar job which means that he will keep living with fantasies and drawing people to the illusion provided by his body.

Mommy is another character who bases her whole life on illusions. Even when she was a child, she was a liar. She used to deceive her class-mates about her lunch box:

> Mommy: Grandma used to wrap a box for me, and I used to take it with me to school; and when it was lunchtime, all the little boys and girls used to take out their boxes of lunch, and they weren't wrapped nicely at all, and they used to open them and eat their chicken legs and chocolate cakes; and I used to say, 'Oh, look at my lovely lunch box; it's so nicely wrapped it would break my heart to open it.' And so, I wouldn't open it. (105)

In fact, she was ashamed of eating stale food while her friends were eating delicious food. She desired to belong to the group in order to forget about her poverty. Her attempt to belong to that society is her illusion.

Grandma is the spokesperson of the dramatist when she clarifies the fantasy-based lives of the society: "Middle-aged people think they're special because they're like everybody else. We live in the age of deformity" (119). She refers to her daughter and mocks the way she and her likes found a fantasy world among the crowd. This is a Heideggerian perspective, and she takes this state as deformity. She believes that getting lost in the crowd, the society, may be satisfying for some time; yet it is also an illusion.

The deformity that Grandma refers to is present in *A Delicate Balance*, too. Agnes' only aim is "to keep in shape", to maintain the statusquo. She is "the delicate balancer" in the play (Roudané 110). She denotes her stance in a discussion with Julia as follows:

> Agnes: 'To keep in shape'[…] Most people misunderstand it, assume it means alteration, when it does not. Maintenance . When we keep something in shape, we maintain its shape—whether we are proud of that shape, or not, is another matter- we keep it from falling apart. (66)

Her behavior proves this statement. When she enters the room in the middle of a quarrel between Claire and Julia, she ignores the problem: "'they' tell me we are about to dine. In a bit. Are we having a cocktail? I think one might be nice. […] It's one of those days when everything's underneath. But, we are all together…which is something"(61). Although she regards Claire and Julia as a burden for her (36), and although the visitors make her uneasy, she tries to go on with her life as if nothing could disturb the peace of her home.

Furthermore, she senses that her husband had an affair with her sister; yet she does not question them to learn the truth. Instead of discussing it with Tobias, she asks Harry whether Tobias cheated on her, and the answer is of course "No!" (80). It is almost impossible for Harry to speak the truth since he may also get into trouble about the same issue, or since he believes that such an important problem cannot be discussed publicly. Agnes is smart enough to know this. But, since she possibly believes that if she learned the truth, it might break down the cozy atmosphere at home, she resumes her illusory life.

The greatest tool for the characters in *A Delicate Balance* to ignore the reality of life is alcohol, which helps them to forget their deeper worries. Albee exaggerates the alcoholism of the characters; they almost always have a glass of drink when they are on the stage. Claire is an alcoholic. Agnes complains about Claire's alcoholism:

> Agnes: If you come to the dinner table unsteady, if when you try to say good evening […] you are nothing but vowels, and if one smells the vodka on you from across the room […] then the reaction of one who is burdened by her love is not brutality. (25)

Claire does not stop drinking. Once Agnes leaves the room, she accepts Tobias' offer for a drink. She insists that she is not an alcoholic and that she could stop it; yet she is "willful" (34). Her life is disorderly. She is not welcomed in Agnes' home; but she believes that she has to stay there. Besides, her past love affair with Tobias makes her suffer. She is a lonely woman. Hence, there is no exit from these problems. Alcohol renders her semi-conscious and helps her not to brood over her life.

Beckett uses the oppositions like day and night, sleeping and being awake for revealing the theme of illusion versus reality. Day is generally used as a motif to reveal the everydayness, the illusions, and night can be used as a symbol to show the confrontation of the man with himself. It may also be used in the opposite way. Anne M. Murch notes that the characters in *Waiting For Godot* wait for the night as they believe it will bring "temporary oblivion" (qtd. in Gontarski 191). Vladimir and Estragon are disgusted with the day. During the first act, Vladimir waits for the night. When it falls, Vladimir recoils: "At last!"(50). Night means sleeping for them, and it is like death when they are conscious no more. Thus, they will not suffer from the overall uncertainty pervading their lives. Estragon is fond of sleeping, which is a sign of his living in an illusory world. Whenever he gets a chance, he sleeps. When Estragon hurts himself kicking Lucky, he sits down on the mound and falls asleep. Realizing that he is left alone, Vladimir shakes him awake, which irritates Estragon:

> Estragon: Why will you never let me sleep?
> Vladimir: I felt lonely.
> Estragon: I was dreaming I was happy.
> […]

Estragon: I was dreaming that-
Vladimir: [Violently.] Don't tell me! [Silence.] (83-84)

Vladimir cannot stand the false happiness which is caused by fantasy. Perhaps, he believes that in real life, happiness is impossible as the harsh reality of the human condition cannot make the human being happy.

Besides, dreams do not always bring happiness. Vladimir helps Estragon to sleep singing a lullaby. Estragon "wakes with a start, jumps up, casts about wildly", and says that he was falling in his dream (65-66). As man faces his sub-consciousness or his other self during sleep, it does not relieve the human being. In sleep, a human being may also suffer from the most evaded truths of life. If it is a happy dream, Estragon goes on sleeping until he is awakened by Vladimir; yet if it is a nightmare, he wakes himself up. This reflects his attempts to go on living in a fantasy world.

Albee uses similar oppositions to emphasize the illusory lives of his characters. The opposition of youth versus old age underlines the theme of illusion versus reality in *The American Dream.* Grandma represents the disillusionment as she is old, and as she has experienced the human condition longer than the other characters. She speaks for the elderly: "old people wake up in the middle of the night screaming, and find out they haven't been asleep; and when old people *are* asleep, they try to wake up, and they can't… not for the longest time" (107). She feels insecure in her daughter's home since each human being is a stranger to the other even though they are relatives. Besides, she hints that her death is approaching. As she is anxious-towards-death, drawing from Heidegger's term, she is an authentic being. She is more self-aware compared to the other characters who lose themselves in a fantasy world.

Young Man is the character that presents another illusion. He says that he is devoid of any emotions and adds that he is just an appearance and nothing more (138- 139). Nevertheless, the female characters are attracted to him. Mrs. Barker utters: "some things have changed for better. I remember […] the van man who came for her [Mrs. Barker's mother] wasn't anything near as nice as this one" (141). Mommy is also impressed by this beauty. She states that they have to celebrate it (146). Thus, while Mommy and Daddy get rid of Grandma, the reality of life, they embrace Young Man, the illusion.

Agnes resembles Estragon in her desire to sleep, which is a painkiller for her problems. When Edna slaps Julia for yelling at her about their long stay, Agnes repeats Julia's question: whether Harry and Edna came to live with them. Upon Edna's "Why, yes, we have", Agnes recognizes the seriousness of the problem at her home and chooses sleep. She takes Julia upstairs stating: "we shall soothe…and solve…and fall to sleep"(*Delicate* 90). She assumes that when they fall asleep, they will not face this problem. Therefore, sleep is equal to illusion which tranquilizes the self.

Albee uses the opposition of alcohol and coffee in *A Delicate Balance* to emphasize this theme. The characters shelter in alcohol to escape from the important issues in their lives. Coffee is used as the symbol of awakening in the play; but the characters change the drink to alcohol at the first opportunity. In the morning, Tobias and Agnes argue about what they will do with the guests. Tobias is indecisive, and Agnes urges him to make up his mind about this problem. At this point, Julia appears and suggests making some coffee. Agnes replies: "Why don't you do that, darling" (98). Coffee would help them to awaken, and maybe it would help Tobias to make up his mind. However, soon after, they change the drinks. Firstly, Claire prefers vodka in her coffee to start the day (105). Tobias and Harry also drink alcohol before the recognition scene:

> Tobias: Brandy?
> Harry: No, oh, God, no.
> Tobias: Whiskey, then.
> Harry: Yes. Thank you.
> Tobias: Well, here's to youth again. (112)

They need to be in a semi-conscious state before confronting the fact that their friendship is not built on a strong base. Maybe alcohol can help them to feel less ashamed of their superficial relationship.

Tobias equates daylight with the "pressures" he will be subject to, which he is not strong enough to face (95). In the daytime, these characters are within a group, their friends and families. Their conversation, which is mostly aimed to pass the time, prevents them from brooding over the important facts. Heidegger's assertion about "tranquility" will clarify the attitudes of Albee's characters. Heidegger asserts:

> The supposition of the 'they' that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine 'life', brings Dasein a *tranquility,* for which everything is 'in the best of order' and all doors are open. Falling Being-in-the-world [becoming inauthentic self], which tempts itself, is at the some time *tranquilizing.* (222)

The characters are merged in the causalities during the day. Tobias goes to the club and Claire shopping. However, when the darkness falls, they are left alone. While they are sleeping, they face their subconscious and their other selves. That is why sleep is also equated to nightmares in both of these writers' plays.

According to the existentialists, man must not retreat from the reality of his condition. In both Heidegger's and Sartre's philosophies, anxiety works to realize a confrontation with one's condition. In the perspective of the Absurd drama "the dignity of man lies in his ability to face the reality in all its senselessness; to accept it freely, without fear, without illusions- and to laugh at it" (Esslin 316). So, the human being should recognize his condition in the world. Nevertheless, Beckett's characters do not always come to terms with their plights. They do not accept life as it is. In *Waiting For Godot,* they would not accept the fact that Godot is not coming. They would go on waiting. It is likely that they would go on waiting for him if the play had more acts.

Albee forces his audience to break the illusions and to live in an authentic way. He states:

> I am very concerned with the fact that so many people turn off because it is easier; that they don't stay fully aware during the course of their lives, in all the choices they make… I am concerned with being as self-aware, and open to all kinds of experience on its own terms- I think those conditions, given half a chance, will produce better self-government, a better society.(qtd. in Roudané 8)

Albee dramatizes recognition scenes; but in some his plays the characters "avoid the truth until it is forced upon them" (Krasner 82). Still, his characters mostly tend to return to their *normal* state instead of changing their attitudes. In *A Delicate Balance*, the "terror", which makes Harry and Edna leave their home in frenzy, does not have any impact on the other characters. Instead of discussing this terror, the family members talk about Harry and Edna's invasion, their unwelcomed visit. When the visitors return to their own house, everything is in order again according to Agnes: "Well, they're safely gone… and we'll all forget…quite soon. (Pause) Come now; we can begin the day" (122). In the plays of these dramatists, accepting

the reality of one's human condition is very difficult. So, the characters remain inauthentic, choosing to live in an illusory world.

2.2 Alienation

Beckett believes that the human being is alienated and that it is a major element of the human condition. He follows Sartre's ideas in this issue. According to Sartre, man is abandoned to himself to form his life and to realize his choices (qtd. in Macquarrie 14). Man can find no relief from his abandonment for each and every human being is in the same condition. Sartre notes:

> I am abandoned in the world, not in the sense that I might remain abandoned and passive in a hostile universe like a board floating on the water, but rather, in the sense that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from the responsibility for an instant.(710)

Thus, man is doomed to be alone throughout his life, and there is no resolution in this impasse. Alienation has been used or explained in various and sometimes opposing ways. Josephson itemizes them as "the loss of self,..., anomie,..., depersonalization, roothlessness, apathy,..., loneliness, atomization, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation,... and loss of beliefs or values" (12-13). Beckett portrays these personal and social elements in an absurdist view within his plays.

Albee follows Beckett's footsteps while dramatizing the alienation of his characters. He also adds social aspects of this state because man is:

> Confused to his place in the schema of a world growing each day closer, getting more impersonal more densely populated yet in face-to-face relations more dehumanized; a world appealing ever more widely for his concern and sympathy with unknown masses of men, yet fundamentally alienating him even from his next neighbor, today Western man has become mechanized, routinized, made comfortable as an object. (Josephson 10)

In Albee's plays, the characters also experience this kind of isolation. He approves of the fact that despite the technological developments and improvements in the life standards of the modern man, alienation pervades the life of the human being in personal and social aspects.

Beckett portrays the characters who are alienated from themselves. He follows Sartre who handles alienation in inward terms. "It is the existent's alienation from his own deepest being" (Macquarrie 160) that Sartre is mostly concerned with. The uncertain identities of these characters make them strangers to themselves. They have a deep-rooted loneliness, which they struggle to overcome continually. Singing is one way of eliminating this loneliness:

> Estragon: I heard you singing.
> Vladimir: That's right, I remember.
> Estragon: I said to myself, he's all alone, he thinks I'm gone for ever, and he sings. (*Godot* 59)

When a character is *like* a puppet and speaks under another's directions, he becomes self-alienated. The speeches of the characters, especially of Pozzo and Lucky are like tape-recordings. Lucky uses the phrase "I resume" for several times in his speech; but he talks after the others put his hat on his head:

> Lucky: in a word for reasons unknown no matter what matter the facts are there and considering what is more much more grave that in the light of labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman it appears (43)

He does not stop until other characters take his hat off. The words are his own words; but he does not seem to relate to them. It has been long since he lost his self and became a stranger to himself.

Beckett's characters are not sure about themselves, and this adds to their alienation from their selves. They forget what they do or say. Estragon asks for something to eat. When Vladimir offers him a carrot, Estragon asks: "Is that all there is?". After a few minutes he forgets the question he asked, which is left unanswered. He states: "I've forgotten. That's what annoys me" (21). As time flows, the memory failures make the characters even more alienated from themselves.

Albee's characters are self-alienated, too. Agnes believes that she might lose her mind one day, "becoming a stranger in the world, quite… uninvolved […] only a drifting-" (*Delicate* 19). She is an alien to her own self, being obsessed with going mad. Claire's alcoholism reveals her attempt to create a distance between her sober self and drunk self. She always drinks without paying attention to any warning. What she asks for as she enters the room is a drink: "Are you going to make a whatever, Tobias?". When Tobias does not move, she says: "Then I shall make my

own" (58). This addiction signals her attempts for self-destruction, which is in a way equal to Estragon's attempts of suicide. She wants to get rid of herself. She has become an alien to herself.

The alienation of Albee's characters' from their selves results from their already ambiguous selves as it is the case in Beckett's work. The characters are not sure about their ideas or choices. When Jerry patronizes Peter with his questions, Peter becomes flustered: "I…I don't express myself too well, sometimes" (*Zoo* 21). So, he cannot talk about his taste of specific writers. He has lost touch with his individuality.

Several of Albee's characters resemble Pozzo, who refers to himself as if he were an actor. For instance, Young Man in *The American Dream* talks about his physical beauty to Grandma:

> Grandma: Oh, that's nice. And will you look at that face!
> Young Man: Yes, it's quite good, isn't it? Clean-cut, Midwest farm boy-type, almost insultingly good-looking in a typically American way. Good profile, straight nose, honest eyes, wonderful smile. (133)

He does not have a soul, and he uses his physical appearance to earn his life which prevents him from reaching his real self. Also, Mommy refers to herself as if to a third person: "Mommy forgot!" (*American* 121). She does not say "I" as if Mommy and she were different people. So, like Pozzo, neither Young Man nor Mommy will be their true selves. They will remain aliens to their own selves.

Time works as an enemy for Beckettian characters as it does for Grandma, whom time has isolated from her younger self. As she is an old woman, she thinks that she is not a woman anymore, but a sexless person. She says: "I don't count as a woman" (119). Later, she tells Young Man that she introduced herself as "Uncle Henry" in a bakery competition, and when Young Man is surprised she states: "Why not? I didn't see any reason not to. I look just as much like an old man as I do like an old woman" (136). Despite her portrayal as the most self-aware character in the play, she is a stranger to herself, too.

Beckett portrays derelict tramps in *Waiting For Godot* to show the isolation of the whole mankind. They have no sense of belonging to anywhere, which makes them feel strangers to their surroundings. Estragon tells Pozzo: "We're not from these parts, sir" (24). Pozzo describes them in the most general terms: "You are human beings none the less (23). When Pozzo asks them who they are later on,

Vladimir's answer is: "We are men" (82). Being alienated from themselves, they do not really know who they are, specifically. Moreover, they have no home. When Vladimir asks Estragon where he spent the night, Estragon answers: "In a ditch […] Over there" (11). They do not belong anywhere, and they do not have a family, which adds to their estrangement.

Castaway and idle characters are present in Albee's plays, too. Jerry, in *The Zoo Story,* is a tramp like Estragon and Vladimir. He has neither a cozy home nor a family. He describes where he lives as in the following:

> Jerry: I live in a four-story brownstone rooming house on the Upper West Side... It is a laughably small room and one of my walls is made of beaver board; this beaver board separates my room from another laughably small room. (21)

He is alone in this "laughably small room". He does not like that rooming house because he does not belong in that place. He also calls himself "a permanent transient" (32), implying that he has no connection to anyone. He is isolated in the urban life of New York City. He does not have any relatives alive. His mother, father and aunt died long ago; so, he is "broken about it, too" (23). His situation is almost the same with that of Beckett's tramps. He is subject to an unbearable alienation.

Young Man in *The American Dream* is an isolated man, like Jerry. He does not have a family, friends, acquaintances or social connections. He explains his isolation to Grandma:

> Young Man: My mother died the night that I was born and I never knew my father; I doubt my mother did. But, I wasn't alone, because lying with me...in the placenta...there was someone else...my brother...my twin...But we separated when we were still young. (138)

After this separation he becomes a man with "no emotions" (139), which increases his suffering.

Beckettian characters are skeptical about the existence of God, and this enhances their estrangement. They think that God is either non-existent or indifferent. Levy asserts that:

> Characters in Beckett's… plays certainly do not take the existence of a God for granted… Beckett imposes ritualized behavioural patterns upon his characters, while denying them of the comfort of believing in the objective, absolute and obligating value-system.(qtd. in Buning, Engelberts and Kosters 20)

Although Pozzo tells the tramps that they are "of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image!" (*Godot* 24), God has already forsaken them.

Lucky's speech also remarks the indifference of God: "a personal God... who from the height of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown" (42). He believes that God is far away from the human being and of no help for man's plight. Acheson clarifies Lucky's statements:

> Apparently He [God] suffers from apathia (insensibility to suffering), athambia (divine imperturbability) and aphasia (inability to understand or use speech - i.e. to hear prayers and supplications or to communicate with man). (147)

Therefore, Lucky, the seemingly mad-man in the play, is perhaps the most self-aware character. However, his awakening is connected with his madness and loneliness.

Estragon identifies himself with Christ when he wants to leave his boots and go on bare foot.

> Vladimir: Christ! What's Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!
> Estragon: All my life I've compared myself to him. (51)

Christ is known to ask his father, God, the reason for abandoning him on the Cross in a suffering position, and Estragon may be hinting at his own abandonment by God here.

Albee's characters are not sure about the existence of God, either. Jerry identifies God with his lonely neighbors:

> Jerry: GOD WHO IS A COLORED QUEEN WHO WEARS A KIMONO AND PLUCKS HIS EYEBROWS, WHO IS A WOMAN WHO CRIES WITH DETERMINATION BEHIND HER CLOSED DOOR... God who, I'm told, turned his back on the whole thing some time ago...some day with people. (*Zoo* 30)

God may be a homosexual or a crying woman. He implies that God is also an outsider like his neighbors with no interaction with anyone. Like Lucky, he believes that God abandoned the human being a long time ago. Besides, he assumes that there is no point in praying to God, because even if God exists, he is indifferent to

the agonies of the human being. Therefore, when his landlady wants him to pray for his dog which is ill, he wants to respond her as follows:

> Jerry: Madam, I have myself to pray for, the colored queen, the Puerto Rican family, the woman who cries deliberately behind her closed door, and the rest of the people in all rooming houses, everywhere, besides, Madam, I don't understand how to pray.(29)

He reduces the people, his neighbors and himself to the level of the landlady's dog. They all need help. As God is deaf to man's prayers, the human kind has to go on suffering his alienation. Esslin highlights the impact of the death of God on the modern man:

> For God is dead, above all, to the masses who live from day to day and have lost all contact with the basic facts – and mysteries - of the human condition with which, in former times, they were kept in touch through the living ritual of their religion, which made them parts of a real community and not just atoms in an atomized society (291)

As Jerry and the likes of him cannot find a meaning in religious rituals, such as praying, they cannot find solace in faith. This makes them feel even more alienated.

According to Beckett, alienation has social aspects, too. His naked stages symbolize the isolation in the society. The stage of *Waiting For Godot* is "a country road" with a single tree (11). It has no connection to anywhere else like the characters who have no relation to other people. The characters remain as onlookers. For instance, when Pozzo falls down and cries for help, Vladimir and Estragon look at him and discuss unrelated subjects. Vladimir says: "He can't get up" (73). Their help comes very late.

The characters in Albee's plays are indifferent to each other's agonies, as well. The rest of the society becomes bystanders as it is the case with Beckett's play. Jerry is an onlooker for his neighbors, and he stresses this alienation in the rooming house where he lives:

> Jerry: The room beyond my beaverboard wall is occupied by a colored queen who always keeps his doors open; well, not always but always when he's plucking his eyebrows [...] he never bothers me, and he never brings anyone to his room.[...] Now, the two front rooms on my floor are a little larger, I guess; but they're pretty small, too. There's a Puerto Rican family in one of them, a husband, a wife, and some kids[...] And in the other front room, there's somebody living there, but I don't know who it is. I've never seen who it is. (*Zoo* 21-22)

So, if the colored queen wanted something from Jerry, that would be bothering him. It is very likely that he never visits the room of the Puerto Rican family, who belongs to the alienated ethnic groups in America. Jerry also mentions a lady who always cries (25). However, he does not mention any time that he goes to console her. He is a stranger in that rooming house who does not care for anyone's suffering. What he confronts in the society is a similar indifference. He states that people do not care for him generally (27). Everybody is atomized in his world living in their own shells.

Similarly, Agnes and Tobias do not care for their best friends' fear of the unknown terror. The latter couple come to Agnes and Tobias' house since they are frightened. They try to explain why they come:

> Harry: We were alone…
> […]
> Edna: WE GOT… FRIGHTENED.
> Harry: We got scared. (*Delicate* 46)

However, Agnes keeps distant from these unwanted visitors. Although they have been friends for a long time, none of the family members wants to put up with the presence of the visitors. This reflects the alienation in the social groups.

In Albee's plays, he family members are alienated from each other, too. Peter states that they have got two televisions at home, one for the children and one for him and his wife (*Zoo* 17). The family do not share a leisure activity. Peter's leisure activity, going to the park to be able to read in a quiet place, underscores further the alienation in his family. He utters: " I sit on this beach almost every Sunday afternoon in good weather. It's secluded here; there's never anyone sitting here, so I have it all to myself" (35). Instead of spending his spare time with his children or wife, he chooses to be alone on the isolated bench. His isolation is self-willed. It seems that man himself is also the cause of his isolation.

Agnes and Tobias' home is like that of Peter in the atomization of the family members. They live in their own separate cells. There is an unbridgeable gap between Agnes and Claire though they are siblings. Claire wants Tobias to shoot Agnes (*Delicate* 27), and Agnes likens Claire to a "serpent" (21). They hate each other as if they were enemies, and nothing is likely to connect them. Julia experiences parental rejection, and her homecoming becomes a problem for her parents. Tobias scolds her for her separation from her fourth husband: "This isn't

the first time you know. This isn't the first time you've come back with one of your goddamned marriages on the rocks. Four! Count 'em!"(55). Agnes also says that she does not want Julia at home (36). She refuses to help Julia when the latter is in hysterics:

> Tobias: Don't you think you should go tend to her?
> Agnes: (Shakes her head lightly) No. She will be down or she will not. She will stop, or she will...go on.
> Tobias: (Spluttering).Well, for God's sake, Agnes...!
> Agnes: (An end to it; hard) I haven't the time, Tobias. (85)

So, Julia remains alone in the room upstairs. Her parents think that she must deal with her problems by herself. In fact, love is absent in their attitude towards Julia. They cast her away as if she were a stranger, not their child.

Albee also presents the alienated old characters in the family. Grandma in *The American Dream*, is an example for that. Mommy, her daughter, wants to put her in a nursing home. In a discussion with Daddy, she clarifies her desire to get rid of Grandma:

> Mommy: She doesn't know you'd like to put her in a nursing home.
> Daddy: I wouldn't.
> Mommy: Well, heaven knows, I would! (105)

Although Grandma is her mother, Mommy regards her as an intruder in her marriage. She cannot stand living with her mother and starts a quarrel with Grandma every time she has a chance. In one of these quarrels, she blames Grandma for crowding their apartment: "In the first place, it is too crowded in this apartment. And it's you that takes up all the space, with your enema bottles, and your Pekinese, and God-only- knows-what-else... and now all these boxes" (120). Although Grandma is all the family she has except for her husband, Mommy seems to be determined to get rid of her.

Grandma accepts the exclusion of old people in the society; but she is offended at the treatment she gets from Mommy and Daddy. When Daddy mocks her cries in the toilet, she is offended:

> Grandma: I suppose I deserve being talked to that way. I've gotten so old. Most people think that when you get so old, you either freeze to death, or you burn up. But you don't. When you get so old, all that happens is that people talk to you that way. (104)

She knows that isolation is inescapable for the elderly in the modern society. Although she tries to remain cool in her quarrels with Mommy, she knows that in the end she will be abandoned. In fact, alienation is a curse in the lives of these characters. Hence, Mommy will possibly experience what Grandma experiences when she gets old.

Beckett thinks that the prejudices of other people lead to man's alienation. These prejudices can be likened to Sartre's "look". Sartre remarks that "To come into the world as a freedom confronting Others is to come into the world as alienable" (674). He believes that through their "look", other people objectify the human being giving him a label, and this results in the alienation of man. In *Waiting For Godot*, Pozzo labels Lucky as a "servant", and this separates him from Lucky who used to be his tutor once. Pozzo acknowledges Lucky's plight: "I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him. The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them" (32). According to Pozzo, Lucky is one of "such creatures", a being-in-itself, an object, who should be killed. Gogo and Didi also have prejudices towards Pozzo. When Pozzo lies on the ground and asks for help, Didi says: "Pest! He thinks of nothing but himself". He calls Pozzo "bastard Pozzo" and "crablouse" (77). He labels Pozzo as a cruel tyrant, and Pozzo cannot escape this prejudice. That is why Pozzo lies on the ground for a long time, which reflects his helplessness.

In Albee's plays, the prejudices of other people play an important role in the alienation of the characters, too. Similar to the alienating effect of Sartrean "look", the complacency of the modern society and the prejudices they have toward the people who have different choices compared to the rest of the society, contribute to the estrangement of these characters. Rutenberg notes that Albee's plays are "all protests in defense of those outcasts of society who have been victimized by the stupidity and the bias of the successful elite" (qtd in James Nagel 123). Jerry's clothes are careless, and when Peter sees him, he must think that Jerry is a thief or a tramp. Peter is "anxious to dismiss him" (*Zoo* 16). His prejudice against Jerry becomes a reason for the gap between him and Jerry. Jerry was afraid of the "look" of the society when he was a teenager because he discovered that he was a homosexual. He explains how he felt at that time : "I was queer [...] queer, queer, queer... with bells ringing, banners snapping in the wind"(24). He knew how the

other people would react to him when they labeled him as a homosexual. Jerry is aware that he may be excluded from the society if others learn of his homosexuality. So, he suppresses it.

Mommy, in *The American Dream,* categorizes Grandma as "a troublemaker" (130). According to Grandma, not only Mommy but also the other people think that old people are nuisances. She claims that "old people are gnarled and sagged and twisted into the shape of a complaint" (117). This "shape" is the label that society gives to old people, which makes them an object in the Sartrean sense, and which isolates them from the rest of the society.

The stories that Beckett's characters tell with the themes of death and violence hold a mirror to the isolation of the characters. Vladimir is obsessed with telling the story of two thieves who were "crucified at the same time as our saviour". He tells Estragon that these thieves were saved from "hell" and then, changes his mind and says that they were saved from "death" (*Godot* 14-15). Hell is the place where the guilty are tortured, and death may take man to hell. Vladimir possibly thinks that when one dies, he will be alone, and when one is in hell, he will be subject to the tortures as they are in the world. Estragon also attempts to tell the "story of the Englishman in the brothel" (17-18). However, Vladimir stops Estragon. This man must be lonely to go to a brothel. He looks for love in a brothel. Vladimir does not want to hear about the story as it will remind him of their own isolation.

Like Beckettian characters, Albee's characters are fond of stories that focus on alienation. Death and violence are present in these stories, too. In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry explores the failure of establishing a contact with the dog of his landlady. The dog attacks him, and he decides to kill the dog. He tells his plan to Peter:

> Jerry: The day I tried to kill the dog I bought only one hamburger and what I thought was murderous portion of rat poison. [...] AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT THE BEAST WAS DEATHLY ILL. (28-29)

Jerry confesses that he really did not want the dog to die: "I wanted the dog to live so that I could see what our new relationship might come to" (30). After a while, the dog recovers its health; but it is now indifferent towards Jerry. He does not attack Jerry anymore. Although he gains "a solitary free passage" into the house (31), he is desolute for having lost his contact with the dog. He thinks that man needs

"someway of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people…if not with people…SOMETHING" (33). He is in such a need of a companion that even an object may be a friend to him. This is an excessive argument; yet as Keniston notes the stories that the alienated deal with include extreme points and topics (157).

Grandma in *The American Dream* tells the dismemberment of the child that Mommy and Daddy adopted in a narrative form. She states that when they cut his penis, the child looked for it and goes on: "So, finally, they had to cut off his hands to the wrists". Moreover, they cut his tongue and took out his eyes (128). The violence that the child was subject to resembles the tortures in Vladimir's hell. It is important to note that the tongue and eyes are the organs to make a contact with another person. The child, who did not have any organs to contact with a person, dies finally. This means that the isolation of the human being is like death.

In *A Delicate Balance*, Tobias tells the story of his cat, which is similar to Jerry's story in that it involves violence towards the animal and its death:

> Tobias: One night [...] I had her in the room with me, and on my lap [...] I knew she could get down, and I said "Damn you, you like me; God damn it, you stop this! I haven't done anything to you." And I shook her; I had my hands around her shoulders, and I shook her[..] and she bit me; hard; and she hissed at me. And so I hit her. With my open hand, I hit her, smack, right across the head. I... I hated her! (39)

He does not try to regain the love of the cat. He is cruel toward it, and that eradicates any possibility of contact with the pet. Tobias has her killed at the vet's (40) because he cannot stand being hated or not loved. He feels betrayed when the cat stops loving him.

Beckett's lonely characters want to make contact with another person, and they hate being lonely. Pozzo is very happy to meet Didi and Gogo. He cancels his departure as long as he can, and he wants them to stay there. He acknowledges his dread of being alone:

> Vladimir: Let's go!
> Pozzo: I hope I'm not driving you away. Wait a little longer, you'll never regret it. (*Godot* 29)

Pozzo finds it very difficult to part from Estragon and Vladimir. The three bid "Adieu" several times; even then nobody moves. Eventually, Pozzo states that he is unable to leave them (47). If he leaves, he will remain by himself, and he cannot stand this situation. Estragon refers to their static and forsaken state: "Nothing

happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (41). If there were more people there, there would be more voices which would help him forget his loneliness.

One reason for Gogo and Didi's mutual dependence is that they need each other to sooth the agony of isolation. Separating from each other is impossible for them though they discuss this possibility recurrently:

> Vladimir: We can still part, if you think it would be better.
> Estragon: It's not worthwhile now.
> [Silence]
> Vladimir: No, it's not worthwhile now. (52)

They know that they cannot survive possibly if they break up from each other. Not only Gogo needs Didi, but also Didi needs Gogo. When Gogo sleeps, Didi wakes him up. When Gogo gets angry for being awakened, Didi says: "I felt lonely" (83). He is stronger than Gogo, and he acts as if he were Gogo's guardian. Still, he needs the Other, the weaker man that he guards.

Albee's characters need some kind of contact with a person, an animal or an inanimate object, too. Jerry says: "every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk; like to get to know somebody , know all about him" (*Zoo* 19). He tries to make friends even with a stranger, Peter, in the park although the stranger ignores him most of the time. He is afraid of being abandoned. When Peter becomes nervous upon hearing the story of Jerry's landlady, Jerry utters: "Don't go. You're not thinking of going, are you?" (26). He is afraid of being alone again. It seems that even a short conversation with Peter will lessen Jerry's sufferings. He speaks of the compulsion that lonely people feel to have a relation with people or objects:

> Jerry: It's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start WITH ANIMALS! (Much faster now, and like a conspirator) Don't you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people [...] with a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror [...] with a carpet, a roll of toilet paper. (30)

Here he refers to alienated people and to the various connections they find in order to ease their isolation. He tries to make friends with the landlady's dog; yet he fails. He means that he may be friends even with objects to get some relief.

Grandma, in *The American Dream,* wants to stay with her family. Mommy states that Grandma does all the housework and adds: "She likes to do that. She says it's the least she can do to earn her keep" (106). As Grandma is unwanted in that house, she wants to make Mommy forget about the trouble she causes by doing the

housework. Otherwise, she may be carted off in a van. Her biggest fear is to be taken away from that apartment. When suddenly the doorbell rings, she becomes really frightened:

> Mommy: Oh, goodness! Here they are!
> Grandma: Who? Who?
> Mommy: Oh, just some people.
> Grandma: The van people? Is it the van people? Have you finally done it? Have you called the van people to come and take me away? (109-110)

She thinks that if she is taken to a nursing home, she will be a stranger among the people she does not know. She believes that her daughter's house is a secure place, unlike a nursing-home, in spite of the fact that she is not treated with respect and love there.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* need each other's company, too. Agnes wants Tobias to sit by her (20) because she suffers from their distant relationship and yearns to establish a closer relation with her husband. Tobias also searches for companionship. He used to have a cat to keep him company before he met Agnes; but the cat abandoned him: "She ... one day she... well, one day I realized she no longer liked me. No, that's not right; one day I realized she must have stopped liking me some time before" (38-39). He feels betrayed because he no longer has her on his lap.

In Beckett's play, the characters exhibit unusual behavior patterns and extreme reactions due to their isolation. For instance, each time Vladimir is happy to meet Estragon, Estragon is unhappy and angry:

> Vladimir: Get up till I embrace you.
> Estragon: [Irritably] Not now, not now(*Godot* 11)
> […]
> Vladimir: Come here till I embrace you…
> Estragon: Don't touch me… Don't question me…Don't speak to me. (58)

Estragon's anger goes on throughout the play. He stops Vladimir "violently" when Vladimir tries to help him with his boots (65). Indeed, his aggression contributes to his isolation.

The alienation of Albee's characters leads to extraordinary behavior and reactions towards the others. Keniston claims that the alienated are "dominant", "negative" and "contemptuous" (94) when they are in a group. Jerry has a negative stance towards Peter. He wants to dominate Peter when he asks Peter to give up the

bench he usually sits on: " Listen to me, Peter. I want this bench. You go sit on the bench over there and if you're good I'll tell you the rest of the story"(*Zoo* 35). He uses violence to dominate Peter. He pushes Peter almost off the bench, kicks and slaps his face (36). He is the one who started conversation; but like Estragon, he is not happy in this social group formed of himself and Peter. Jerry behaves obnoxiously towards Peter:

> Jerry: (Laughs) Imbecile! You've slow-witted!
> Peter: Stop that!
> Jerry: You're a vegetable! Go lie down on the ground. (35)

He is not comforted in Peter's company because he knows that any attempt to build a contact between himself and another person will fail in the end. That is why he belittles Peter, calling him "stupid" contemptuously to distance himself from Peter (37).

The isolated characters become irritable, rude, cross or aggressive. Mommy in *The American Dream,* tells Daddy about the shopping adventure she experienced the day before. She remarks that when she was not satisfied with the color of the hat she bought, she returned to the shop and had a quarrel with the sellers (101). Grandma's reactions towards her daughter are also rude and aggressive. When Mommy asks about the boxes she brings into the room, Grandma answers: "That's nobody's damn business" (103). Grandma relieves her lonely and helpless situation by lashing out at her daughter cruelly:

> Grandma: (To Daddy) It's Mommy over there makes all the trouble. If you had listened to me, you wouldn't have married her in the first place. She was a tramp and trollop and a trull to boot, and she's no better now. (107)

There is a constant fight between Agnes and Claire. Agnes refers to a discussion that they had before the start of the play. She says: "If you come to the dinner table unsteady.... then the reaction of one who is burdened by her love is not brutality...If I scold, it is because I wish I needn't" (*Delicate* 25). She humiliates Claire for her alcoholism. However, such aggressive scenes distance them from each other more and more.

Claire cannot place her self in a social group. When Tobias asks her the reason why she stopped going to the alcoholics' club, her answer is: "Because I don't like the people" (28). She cannot find any reassurance in a friendship, so she cannot see any point in joining such a club. She does not trust such involvements.

There may be two possible solutions for the alienation of the human being, suicide and love. Beckett's characters cannot attain either of them. References to death and attempts to suicide are present in *Waiting For Godot*. Ending one's life will be a painkiller according to his characters. Vladimir regrets the fact that they lost the chance of committing suicide from the top of the Eiffel Tower (11- 12). He must endure his situation now. Estragon is also preoccupied with death. When Vladimir asks him what to do while waiting for Godot, he answers: "What about hanging ourselves?" (19). As the bough is too weak to hang themselves, their plan fails at the start. Estragon reminds Vladimir to bring some rope the next day (51). However, the next day the situation is the same:

> Estragon: Why don't we hang ourselves?
> Vladimir: With what?
> Estragon: You haven't got a bit of rope?
> Vladimir: No.
> Estragon: Then, we can't. (87)

They yearn to end their isolated state; but they are incapable of doing it.

Love, the other possibility, is also lost in Beckett's play. For example, Lucky used to be Pozzo's tutor; yet Pozzo treats him in a cruel way. He jerks the rope that is around Lucky's neck and calls him "pig" and "hog" (24). Although Lucky "used to be so kind... so helpful... and entertaining" (34), Pozzo takes him to a fair to get rid of him. There is no affection or respect left in their relationship. Pozzo makes Lucky carry the bags and shouts at him "Woaa!" treating him like a beast or burden (39-40). He does not respect or love his teacher anymore, and this adds up to their loneliness.

The love between the tramps is precarious. When they think of leaving each other, there is no love between them. When they have fun playing games, doing exercises, they embrace and enjoy each other's company.

Among Albee's characters, Jerry seems to be the most alienated one, with an agonizing yearning for love. He attempts to cease his alienation once for all. At the end of the play, he enrages Peter, and gives him a knife. He "impales himself on the knife" and dies. Thus, his suffering is ended. He possibly thought of suicide to start with and carried the knife with him. Maybe he was looking for a man that would help him with this self-destruction. Peter is the real victim in this case because Jerry

will suffer no more while Peter's life will be haunted by this murder or being instrumental to suicide.

Claire chooses a slow self-destruction. Her excessive addiction to alcohol is a suicide in a sense. She tries each drink in the house. Even when she is out, she drinks heavily. When she enters the room, she asks to the others: "Do I breathe gin?" (*Delicate* 57). Hers is a life full of agony, and she desires to cease it in this way.

In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry tells Peter the absence of love in his life:

> Jerry: I wonder if it's sad that I never see the little ladies more than once. I've never been able to have sex with, or how is it put,... make love to anybody more than once. Once; that's it... Oh, wait; for a week and a half, when I was fifteen and I hang my head in shame that puberty was late... I was a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l [...] for those eleven days, I met at least twice a day with the park superintendent's son... I think I was very much in love...may be just with sex. (24)

He possibly never had a girl-friend. He satisfies his sexual desires in brothels. The only possible love affair that he experienced was when he was a teenager. He also mocks the loss of love while talking about the pornographic cards that he has and that Peter admits having had them himself indirectly: "when you're a kid you use the cards as a substitute for real experience, and when you are older you use real experience as a substitute for the fantasy" (24 -25). According to Jerry, Peter used them in his youth instead of a love affair. Although Peter claims: "I didn't *need* anything like that when I got older" (24), he is not very convincing. Now, Peter's sex life with his wife is possibly devoid of any affection. Man is lonely in either case.

Affection is absent in the household of Mommy and Daddy. Although Mommy and Daddy claim that they love Grandma (*American* 105), the verbal violence they exhibit towards her shows that they do not love her. They regard her as a nuisance, and at each opportunity either shut her up or threaten her, like "I'll take care of you later" (124).

Lack of desire and infertility between Mommy and Daddy separates them from each other. Mommy acknowledges the loss of desire in her wedlock: "I used to let you get on top of me and bump your uglies" (106). She uses past tense referring to her sexual life in marriage. Grandma notes the separation between Mommy and Daddy in a discussion saying that Daddy does not want to sleep with

Mommy any more (108). The only meaning of love for them is to have sex. However, sex is absent in their marriage. Young Man is also the symbol of sexual pleasures. He is an alien in the society even if he lets other people love him. He explains his situation: "I have been unable to love anybody with my body [...] I let people touch me... I let them draw pleasure from my groin [...] I can feel nothing" (138-139). He cannot love anyone in a sharing and caring relationship. Sex has become mechanical between alienated people.

The family members in *A Delicate Balance* are devoid of tenderness toward each other, too. For example, Tobias hesitates to talk to Julia about her marriage. Agnes implies that Tobias never loved Julia: "If we do not love someone... never have loved them" (38). She hints at Tobias' rejection of Julia after the death of their son, Teddy. Teddy is dead; but Julia is alive. She needs affection and care even as a woman in her thirties. Nevertheless, Tobias forgets about this fact. Teddy's death also ends the love between Agnes and Tobias. Agnes utters: "I thought Tobias was out of love with me-or, rather, was tired of it, when Teddy died, as if that had been the string" (80). Like Julia, Agnes suffers from this loss of love. The couples start sleeping in separate rooms on Tobias' wish. So, they become aliens towards one another. The night that they have to sleep in the same room as they have a shortage of rooms with the visitors, reminds Agnes of the past life when Tobias used to sleep with her. She states that it was nice to be in the same room with her husband (92). However, Tobias does not stay long in her room. His rejection of her love agonizes Agnes. Like Mommy and Daddy, they do not make love anymore, and this is due to Tobias' inability to love and her inability to reach her husband. That is why everybody lives in separate rooms, isolated in their own worlds.

Although Albee's characters have social groups, they are still isolated beings like Beckett's tramps. They are alienated from themselves and from the society as well. While some of them are derelict characters who have no home, some others are alienated despite having a family. The indifference or nonexistence of God and the distant attitude of other people make his characters more isolated. The prejudice of the society may also separate a character from the rest of the group. What they need is love; but in an atomized society no one cares for the others. As a result, they are doomed to live in their own cells.

2.2.1 Lack of Communication

Lack of communication is a reason for the alienation of the characters in Beckett's drama, and it is of primary importance. This issue has been a preoccupying concern for the existentialist philosophers, and Beckett mostly draws from their ideas upon this issue. Heidegger explains this lack in his discussion of "idle-talk" which discourages any new inquiry and any disputation, and in a peculiar way suppresses them and holds them back (213). Although he believes that there is a possibility to understand another person, he equates "the groundlessness of idle talk" with the "publicness" of Dasein, the human being. He states that though everything appears to be "genuinely understood, genuinely taken hold of, genuinely spoken", it is not so (213-217). A true comprehension and genuine communication become an illusion in daily life. Macquarrie maintains that in Heidegger's philosophy the idle talk does not reveal entities as they are; rather it conceals them (112-113). Sartre also explores the communication problem, and explains that to comprehend the utterances of an individual is to take in what that person means (660). However, as the Other has his own viewpoints about the individual, and as he will interpret what he hears according to these points of view, a genuine communication is almost impossible.

Beckett uses various ways to reflect his view, that is "the attempt to communicate where no communication is possible is merely a simian vulgarity, or horribly comic, like madness that holds a conversation with the furniture" (qtd. in Esslin 4). This view is parallel to the philosophy of Gorgias Lentini who declares:

1. Nothing is.
2. If anything is, it cannot be known.
3. If anything is, and cannot be known, it cannot be expressed in speech. (Lamont, qtd. in Friedman 201)

To present the devaluation of language, Beckett applies several unconventional techniques. For example, his characters generally talk in monologues even if they appear to talk to another character. Didi and Gogo do not always listen to each other as in the following speech upon the lost chance of suicide:

Vladimir: We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties.

> Estragon: Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing [referring to his boots].
> Vladimir: Hand in hand from the top of the Eifel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now, it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up. [Estragon tears at his boot] What are you doing? (*Godot* 12)

Vladimir talks to himself and does not notice Estragon's asking for help. Even though he seems to talk to Estragon, he is indeed talking to himself.

Although Albee's characters seem to be able to communicate with each other, they fail to do so from time to time. Albee follows Beckett's strategies to dramatize lack of communication in the society he portrays. His characters are unwilling to converse with another character, and their speeches tend to be in the form of monologues. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter is reluctant to talk to a stranger, Jerry. Jerry perceives Peter's reluctance from the way Peter responds to him. Peter is anxious to dismiss Jerry while preparing his pipe (16), and he wants to get back to his reading (15). As Peter is forced to talk, he prefers to "steer the conversation to the safe, if shallow, waters of conventional small talk" (Zimbardo 11). When Jerry asks him whether he minds if they talked a bit, Peter answers: "Why... no, no" obviously minding (17). Jerry knows that Peter does not want to talk to him because the way how one utters a sentence indicates his resistance to contact with others (Sykes 449). Jerry starts the conversation asking him about his family, pets, house, salary, etc, and urging Peter to answer his questions; yet his speech turns into a monologue. He tells Peter the story of the dog: "ALL RIGHT. THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE DOG" (27), and his decision to kill the animal. When Peter winces with disgust upon what he tells, Jerry says: "Don't react, Peter; just listen" (27). Jerry continues telling the story without letting Peter say anything. Although Jerry is the one who needs to talk to another person, he is the one who forgets the essentials of communication.

Mommy in *The American Dream* talks in monologues, too. She tells Daddy about the shopping adventure and quarrel with the sellers about the hat she bought: "I went right back into the hat shop, and I said, 'Look here; what do you mean selling me a hat that you say is beige, when it's wheat all the time'" (101). She makes Daddy listen to her monologue, and he seems to listen to her with such exclamations: "Have they!" (101). However, they do not talk to each other. It is just that Mommy talks and listens to herself.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance*, too, are lost in their own anxieties in their monologues, and they are not listened to. Agnes talks of the possibility of losing her mind; but Tobias ignores her preparing drinks:

> Agnes: Some autumn dusk: Tobias at his desk, looks up from all those awful bills, and sees Agnes mad as a hatter, chewing the ribbons on her dress...
> Tobias: (Pouring) Cognac?
> Agnes: Yes: Agnes Sit-by-the-fire, her mouth full of ribbons, her mind aloft, adrift. (20)

Tobias lacks any interest in listening to his daughter's agonies. Julia tells him that she thought he was a great man when she was a child. Tobias' responds are: "(At the sideboard; unconcerned) Five to one? Or more?". He is again preparing a drink, and he hardly listens to her. Meanwhile, Julia continues her monologue: "And then, as the years turned - poor old man – you sank to cipher, and you've stayed there" (56). Now, Tobias has become ineffectual in her eyes. If Tobias had listened to her heartily, he would have had a better perception of his daughter's hopeless plight and her need for love.

Another technique Beckett uses to reveal the insufficiency of language is using unfinished and fragmented sentences, unanswered questions and interruptions. In *Waiting For Godot*, the sentences or questions are left uncompleted. The characters cannot express their thoughts upon something clearly, or they cannot get an answer. When Beckett's tramps consider the possibility of suicide by hanging themselves on the tree, Gogo uses fragmented statements: "Gogo light-bough not break- Gogo dead. Didi heavy-bough break- Didi alone. Whereas- ", and his sentence is interrupted by Didi's: "I hadn't thought of that" (19). Gogo's fragmentary utterance, which is devoid of any grammar, shows that language and the rules of grammar will not be of any help to express his agonies.

Albee makes use of fragmented language following Beckett. All his characters at one time or another fall into broken speech. Jerry describes the dog in a chopped up language: "eyes…and…yes…and an open sore on its…right forepaw" (Zoo 127). Grandma talks about her belongings in separate phrases: "some old letters, a couple of regrets… Pekinese… blind at that… the television… my Sunday teeth…eighty-six years of living…some sounds… a few images, a little garbled by now…and, well… you know… the things one accumulates" (*American* 143). Tobias' embarrassment in his friends' finally leaving his home can be observed in

his speech: “Before you came down, and…By God, it isn’t easy Harry…but we can make it…if you want us to… I can, I mean, I think I can” (*Delicate* 113). The characters have difficulty in finding the right words to express their feelings or thoughts and in speaking with full sentences.

Beckett’s characters do not answer the questions because they are either not listening or preoccupied with their own thoughts. Pozzo ignores the questions that Didi and Gogo ask to him:

> Estragon: Why doesn’t he [Lucky] put down his bags?
> Pozzo: But that would surprise me. [Referring to their meeting]
> Vladimir: You’re being asked a question.
> Pozzo: [Delighted] A question! Who? What? (30)

He may not have heard the question, or he may be escaping from answering it because he does not want to own up Lucky’s situation.

Beckett’s drama presents characters who interrupt each other’s speech, which deteriorates any attempt at communication. Estragon starts telling Vladimir the story of an English man:

> Estragon: An English man having drunk a little more than usual goes to a brothel. The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one, or a red-haired one. Go on.
> Vladimir: STOP IT!
> [Exit Vladimir hurriedly … Enter Vladimir]
> Estragon: [Gently] You wanted to speak to me?
> Vladimir: I have nothing to say to you. (*Godot* 18)

So, Estragon never finishes his story. This makes him more alienated in the universe where he cannot share even a story with his peer.

Albee’s characters are not let by others complete their sentences. Jerry stops Peter with a sharp “Skip it” when Peter tries to express his vague views on Stephen King (*Zoo* 21). Jerry says: “Her dog! I thought it was my… No. No, you’re right. It’s her dog” (32). He refers to the landlady’s dog in fragmented sentences. Due to such interruptions and fractions, they cannot make full sentences and this shows their fragmented ideas upon life, which they cannot explain easily.

In *The American Dream*, Grandma is interrupted and silenced by Mommy;

> Mrs. Barker: There is too much woman hatred in this country, and that’s a fact.
> Grandma: Oh, I don’t know.
> […]

Grandma: In case anybody's interested…
Mommy: Be quiet, Grandma. (118)

Grandma is not allowed to voice her opinions since nobody is interested in her or in her boxes.

Agnes tries to make Tobias understand her problems in the household: "If I were to list the mountain of my burdens- if I had a thick pad and a month to spare- that bending my shoulders most" (*Delicate* 21); but she is stopped by Tobias. Once her train of thought is interrupted, the conversation turns to another subject, Claire. It disturbs Tobias to discuss the problems or complaints of the household.

Beckett's characters misunderstand each other, which is another strategy of the playwright to reveal the insufficiency of language as a convenient means for communication. Vladimir pulls up Estragon's trousers to look at the wound on his leg. He says: "The other"; yet Estragon gives the same leg, and as a result, Vladimir insults him: "The other, pig!" (*Godot* 62). Vladimir tells the story of the thieves, which brings another misunderstanding:

Vladimir: The third says that both of them abused him.
Estragon: Who?
Vladimir: What?
Estragon: What's all this about? Abused who?
Vladimir: The Saviour.
Estragon: Why?
Vladimir: Because he wouldn't save them.
Estragon: From Hell?
Vladimir: Imbecile! From death.
Estragon: I thought you said hell. (14-15)

Misunderstandings put more distance between the characters, and make it more difficult for them to relate to each other.

Albee's characters may make nonsensical and unrelated conversations due to misunderstandings. In *The American Dream*, Mrs. Barker is not sure why she is in that apartment, and thus, she needs some help. But Mommy and Daddy misinterpret her need for help as follows:

Mrs. Barker: I know I'm here because you called us, but I'm such a busy girl […] I'm afraid you'll have to give me some help.
Mommy: Oh, no. No, you must be mistaken. I can't believe we asked you here to give you any help. With the way taxes are these days [...]
Daddy: And if you need help... why, I should think you'd apply for a Fulbright Scholarship...
Mommy: And if not that... why, then a Guggenheim Fellowship. (122)

They are talking at cross purposes and not taking in the other character's need, which adds to their estrangement in one sense.

Similarly, the characters in *A Delicate Balance* misinterpret each other's statements. Julia tries to explain why she has broken up with her husband:

> Julia: He's against everything!
> Agnes: Your father?
> Julia: Doug! [Her last husband] (63)

This misunderstanding implies that both Tobias and Doug are problematic husbands according to their wives. Also, it reflects the fact that it is almost impossible to understand what is in one's mind even if that person is one's own child.

The repetitions in *Waiting For Godot* show how the playwright mocks language. The characters find the synonyms and antonyms of a phrase or repeat the same utterances for several times. Estragon suggests to Vladimir to kill him. Vladimir reminds him that one is forgotten after death; but they do not want to hear the voices dead people make:

> Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.
> Estragon: Like leaves.
> Vladimir: Like sand.
> Estragon: Like leaves.
> [...]
> Vladimir: Rather they whisper.
> Estragon: They rustle.
> Vladimir: They murmur.
> Estragon: They rustle.
> […]
> Estragon: Like leaves.
> Vladimir: Like ashes.
> Estragon: Like leaves. (58)

Didi is more resourceful in finding a suitable word. What they talk of does not mean anything for the audience. While they are speaking of the dead voices, their voices turn into a meaningless buzz. These repetitions highlight the fact that Beckett's tramps use language as a game to pass the time which is a frightening vacuum in the ambiguous universe that they exist in.

Albee follows Beckett in the use of repetitions in his plays. His characters repeat what they say for several times. Sometimes this becomes a strategy they use to pass the time. When Jerry learns that Peter does not have a son, yet desires to

have a son, he utters: "But that's the way the cookie crumbles?". He repeats the same statement when Peter explains that he will have no more children (*Zoo* 18). The repetitions also imply that the characters find it difficult to express themselves:

> Jerry: I've been walking north. […] Good old north. […] But not due north.
> Peter: I… well, no, not due north; but, we… call it north. It's northerly. (15-16)

Albee acknowledges what Nursel İçöz says about the repetition in Beckett's plays: "Sometimes, repetition empties the statement of its content and destroys its significance. The repeated elements...tend to get robbed of meaning" (qtd. in Buning and Oppenheim 283). For instance, Grandma's boxes contain all her worldly goods; but their significance disappears in repetition:

> Grandma: The boxes… The boxes… […] The boxes, damn it!
> Mrs. Barker: Boxes, she said boxes. She mentioned the boxes.
> Daddy: What about the boxes Grandma? Maybe Mrs. Barker is here because of the boxes. […]
> Mrs. Barker: Can we assume that the boxes are for us? (*American* 115)

Agnes asks Tobias whether he visited Claire the night before for several times just to get the same answer each time:

> Agnes: Did you go to Claire?
> Tobias: I never go to Claire.
> Agnes: Did you go to Claire to talk?
> Tobias: I never go to Claire.
> […]
> Tobias: I never go to Claire at night, or talk with her alone- save publicly.
> Agnes: In public rooms… like this.
> Tobias: Yes.
> Agnes: Have *never*. (*Delicate* 93-94)

Agnes needs to be assured that there is nothing going on between Tobias and Claire. Tobias' responses do not satisfy her. The more characters repeat themselves, the more what they say becomes unsatisfactory.

Rapid changes of the subject matter in Beckett's play underscore the devaluation of language. Vladimir talks about having repented; but he does not answer when Estragon asks "What". Instead, Vladimir jumps to another subject, the impossibility of laughter: "One daren't laugh any more". Before talking about the impossibility or without connecting it to the next subject, Vladimir asks Estragon whether he read the Bible (*Godot* 13). There are no connections between these subjects; so, Vladimir leads an inconsequential talk. He cannot explain what is

in his mind in a coherent and orderly way. This quick shift of topic hinders one from developing a conversation. Also, when Pozzo asks the tramps whether they recognize him, Vladimir says: "I once knew a family called Gozzo. The mother had the clap" (24). This kind of speech reflects Heideggerian "idle talk".

Albee's characters do not stick to a rational order when they talk, and what they talk about may change very quickly rendering the speech absurd. Jerry, in *The Zoo Story*, talks about the possibility of Peter's getting lung cancer; he tells Peter about Freud who wore a prosthesis. In a few seconds, the subject matter switches to the Time magazine and goes on incoherently:

> Jerry: Well, *Time* magazine isn't for blockheads.
> Peter: No, I suppose not.
> Jerry: (After a pause.) Boy, I'm glad that's Fifth Avenue there. (16)

Jerry does not make a coherent speech. He does not stick to one issue and go on exploring it. He tries to make a conversation with Peter anyhow no matter how nonsensical or incoherent it may be.

The characters in *The American Dream* do not speak in a coherent and orderly way, either. For example, when Daddy wants to talk about his operation, Mommy's comment has no connection to it. She changes the subject:

> Mrs. Barker: What was wrong Daddy?
> Daddy: Well, you know how it is: the doctors took out something that was there and put in something that wasn't there. An operation.
> Mrs. Barker: You're very fortunate, I should say.
> Mommy: Oh, he is, he is. All his life, Daddy has wanted to be a United States Senator; but now… why now he's changed his mind, and for the rest of his life he's going to want to be a Governor… it would be nearer the apartment, you know. (117)

There is a hint of Daddy having become impotent after the operation. This might be a disturbing subject for Mommy. Hence, the characters shift the course of a conversation when they want to avoid or forget a distressful experience.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* also jump from topic to topic in their speech. While they are talking about marijuana, Julia alters the topic:

> Tobias: I've never had marijuana...in my entire life.
> Julia: Want some [...] What the hell do Harry and Edna want?
> Tobias: Just let it be.
> Julia: Didn't you try to talk to them today? I mean...
> Tobias: Well, no; they weren't down when I went off to the club, and...
> Julia: Good old golf?

Tobias: Don't ride me, Julia, I warn you.
Julia: I've never had any marijuana, either. Aren't I a good girl? (54)

Julia is concerned with the unwanted visit of Harry and Edna. She is anxious about this visit because it may lessen the affection and care Julia desires to receive from her parents. They have inhabited her room, and this situation makes Julia feel that she does not belong to this home anymore. Then, in a further attempt to relate to her father, she goes into another subject, golf. None of the three topics is properly discussed.

Not only Julia but also the visitors use such changes in the topic they talk of. Edna and Harry probably sense that they are not welcomed in their friends' house; yet as they want to stay there, they switch to another topic when they feel that the discussion will come to their unexpected visit. Julia emphasizes that they are guests in that house, and she repeats it over and over to vex them: "YOU ARE GUESTS IN THIS HOUSE" (76). However, Edna does not respond to her, and speaks about Julia's marriage. She says that some people are concerned about Julia's marriage and that Julia's actions affect the life of the household (76). Then, she ignores Julia, and asks Claire: "Where does Agnes have her upholstery done?" (76). In this way she wants the others to forget about their unwanted visit and concentrate on other daily matters of the house.

Silences and pauses in Beckett's work form a significant part in the discussion of the problem of the communication of his characters. Richard Ellmann declares that Beckett is fond of silences (qtd. in Esslin 5). Beckett might have drawn his usage of pauses from Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger equates one's keeping silent with one's grasping "an authentic and rich disclosedness of itself" (208). In *Waiting For Godot,* it also reflects the anxiety of the characters due to the uncertainty that haunts their lives. When Estragon asks Vladimir whether it is the day that they are to meet Godot, Vladimir answers: "He said Saturday. [Pause.] Or Friday?" (16-17). Neither Vladimir nor Estragon can be sure about the date to meet Godot which may be an illusion itself.

Also, silence pervades in their speech at the moments the characters think of the ultimate nothingness of their existence:

Estragon: Tell me what to do.
Vladimir: There's nothing to do.
Estragon: You go and stand there […] Do you see anything coming?

Vladimir: What ?
Estragon: Do you see anything coming?
Vladimir: No.
Estragon: Nor I.
[They resume their watch. Silence.]
Vladimir: You must have had a vision.
Estragon: What?
Vladimir: You must have had a vision!
Estragon: No need to shout!
[They resume their watch. Silence] (69-71)

Indeed, the tramps feel the existential anxiety, which is caused by nothing definite, during these silences. That is why silence is unbearable for them.

Lucky speaks just once in the first act. Although this single speech seems to be nonsensical and absurd, he tells the human condition between the lines of his speech. This includes the indifference of God with "divine apathia", irrationality in the universe for "unknown reasons", and man whose skull is "to shrink and dwindle" in life (42-43). So, he is the wisest man among the other characters. His dumbness in the following act may be symbolizing his being more intellectual than those who speak all the time, such as Pozzo. According to Heidegger, reticence reflects the individual's questioning mind and his attempt to understand his own self (208). Therefore, Lucky is the most authentic character in this play, and it is reflected in his speechlessness.

Albee uses silence and pauses in his plays. Silence in Albee's plays is related to one's regression to his inner self. Brinzeu points to the regression of a character to his inner self during these silences:

> Being silent, the hero retracts from the physical world into the recess of the mind... The pause appears thus as a point of junction between the inside and the outside, between the individual and the world, between the spirit and the flesh. (qtd. in Buning and Oppenheim 232)

The critic refers to the pauses in Beckett's works; yet it is also applicable in Albee's plays.

In *A Delicate Balance*, Edna refers to the separation between her and her husband pausing several times during her speech: "For our own sake; our own... lack. It's sad to know you've gone through it all, or most of it, without...that the one body you've wrapped your arms around...the only skin you've ever known … is your own- and that it's dry...and not warm.(Pause)" (118). She suffers from the loss

of love in her marriage like Agnes. While talking in the form of a monologue and giving pauses in this monologue, she in fact faces the incurable alienation of the human being. She knows that neither she nor Agnes will regain the love of their husbands that was lost a long time ago.

Likewise, Tobias has to face a recognition scene where he cannot understand the true nature of love between friends. He cannot explain his emotions in a coherent way to Harry. He says that he wants them in his house and contradicts what he says: "I DON'T WANT YOU HERE" (115-116). He suffers from not being a decisive man. When the guests leave the house, Tobias utters: "I tried (Pause) I was honest. (Silence) Didn't I? (Pause) Wasn't I?" (121). He knows that he was honest either to himself or to the other people. During the pauses he fights with himself. No matter why the character keeps silent, it is a definite obstacle to self-expression and also to communication.

Beckett uses language as a camouflage for reality. His characters use contradictory sentences, and their utterances are contradicted by their action or inaction. So, the language is not to be trusted, and the individual is to question everything. Pozzo contradicts himself while smoking his pipe: "[Having lit his pipe.] The second is never so sweet... [He takes the pipe out of his mouth, contemplates it]... as the first, I mean. [He puts the pipe back in his mouth.] But it's sweet just the same" (*Godot 29*). He is unsure about his own tastes, his own ideas.

The characters in *Waiting For Godot* do just the opposite of what they say, or their inaction refutes what they say. There is a certain fear in doing that. Vladimir wants Estragon to give Lucky his hat. When Estragon does not want to do it, Vladimir says: "I'll give it to him"; but he does not move (41). Lucky needs to wear his hat in order to think. Vladimir, by not doing what he has said, implies that he is afraid of someone thinking.

Both acts of the play end with speech negating action:

Estragon: Well, shall we go?
Vladimir: Yes, let's go.
[They do not move.] (52)

Godot is the illusion that binds them to that place. They choose to remain blind to their condition by waiting for him. No matter how much they discuss leaving that

place, they cannot escape from the illusion of Godot. They are also afraid that if they left, they might miss the meeting with Godot.

Albee uses language as a disguise for the reality, which is one reason for the lack of genuine communication, as it is in Beckett's play. Jerry knows that language may conceal facts. So, he does not trust language to be meaningful. When he relates how his landlady abuses him, Peter is shocked. Jerry replies: "Fact is better left to fiction" (*Zoo* 26). He believes that discriminating between reality and fantasy is impossible. He adds: "Sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly" (27). By "a long time", he means telling a story which is an indirect and long way to express his ideas and feelings.

Mommy describes the chairman of her woman's club: "She's just a dreadful woman, but she *is* chairman of our woman's club, so naturally I'm terribly fond of her" (*American* 101). She does not explain why she finds the woman dreadful; but she is a capitalist citizen who is concerned with her own benefits. Thus, the disgusting chairwoman becomes lovable once more proving that language can veil the truth.

Grandma is the spokesperson of Albee in the use of language as a cover for reality. When Daddy asks her whether she thinks Mrs. Barker is in their apartment because of her boxes, she answers: "I don't know if that's what I mean or not. It's certainly not what I *thought* I meant" (116). Her complex statement underscores the impossibility of understanding what one means. She may be covering her anxiety about being taken away by the van man.

In *A Delicate Balance,* reality is distorted by the language, too. Tobias says that he will talk to Doug, Julia's last husband (37). However, he puts it off. Edna explains Julia's tantrum in the living room, where she yelled at the others and did not let Harry and Edna get a glass of drink, as if everything was as it should be: "She rose...like a silent film star, ran to the sideboard, defended it, like a princess in the movies, hiding her lover in the closet from the king" (84). What really bothers Julia is the visitors. Edna wants to disguise the discomfort that their visit causes in this way. Claire tells one of her memories in the alcoholics' club to Tobias. She states that when she introduced herself to the other members in a childish way, a lady came and said that she had taken the first step. Nevertheless, Claire cannot take

in what she means. She says, referring to that lady: "She didn't say the first step toward what, of course. Sanity, insanity, revelation, self-deception" (33). The lady refers to the first step to come to the club. However, it hides the initial step to the hardship of trying to cure alcoholism.

According to Agnes, Tobias had an affair with Claire. She asks Harry whether her husband cheated on her in front of everyone:

> Agnes: I thought Tobias was unfaithful to me then. Was he Harry?
> Edna: Oh, Agnes.
> Harry: Come on, Agnes! Of course not! No!
> Agnes: Was he Claire? […] Did my husband… cheat on me?
> Claire: Ya got me, Sis.
> Agnes: And that will have to do.
> Edna: Poor *Julia*. (80-81)

Agnes does not get a clear explanation. People's responses veil the issue. Language is of no help to learn the truth.

Language is also used as a tool to exercise power over other people, or a situation in *Waiting For Godot*. Gogo is under the control of Didi as the latter uses language better than him:

> Vladimir: You must be happy, too, deep down, if you knew it.
> […]
> Vladimir: Say you are, even if it's not true.
> Estragon: What am I to say?
> Vladimir: Say, I am happy.
> Estragon: I am happy.
> Vladimir: So am I.
> Estragon: So am I. (55-56)

Didi dominates Gogo with the help of the words. He, also, seeks for a confirmation of happiness in the repetition of the words.

Albee's characters manipulate language to control the situation they are in or the people around. Jerry enrages Peter with the help of words in order to make Peter help him to commit suicide. He utters: "You fight for your self-respect; you fight for that goddamned bench". He uses insults to achieve his ambition: "You fight, you miserable bastard; fight for that bench; fight for your manhood, you pathetic little vegetable… You couldn't even get your wife with a male child" (*Zoo* 38). Jerry's verbal attacks frighten Peter to such an extent that he picks up the knife Jerry gives to him to protect himself, which is what Jerry has been aiming for so that he can throw himself onto the knife (38).

Mommy is another character whose strength at home comes from her ability to use language in a forceful way. She keeps Daddy in control and makes him do whatever she wants. For example, when Daddy is hesitant to open the door thinking that they are the van men who came for Grandma, Mommy reminds him of the decision he made:

> Mommy: Well, go let them in Daddy. What are you waiting for?
> Daddy: I think we should talk about it some more. Maybe we've been hasty… a little hasty, perhaps. I would like to talk about it some more.
> Mommy: There's no need. You made up your mind; you were firm; you were masculine and decisive.
> Daddy: We might consider the pros and the …
> Mommy: I won't argue with you; it has to be done; you were right. Open the door. (*American* 110)

She gets him to open the door. Praising him for being masculine and decisive, she imposes her own decision on him.

Agnes, too, uses words to pressurize. She states: "We let our… men decide the moral issues" in a quiet and calm tone (*Delicate* 97). She urges Tobias to make up his mind about the visitors and do what he should do as a man. Besides, she keeps calm even when there is a quarrel or an unwanted situation. For instance, when Tobias tells her that Julia is in a hysterics upstairs tearing the clothes and crying, her response is a steady "I see" and "All right" (83-84). In the presence of the outsiders, Edna and Harry, she does not give in to her anger or anxiety. She forces Tobias to a decision about the guests. When Tobias becomes enraged and says that he will not do so, she says: "This is not the time for you to lose control" (98). She dominates the whole family and keeps them under control. Thus, she keeps the delicate balance.

Although Albee's characters give the impression that they are communicating, there is a serious communication problem in their lives. This is due to their use of various techniques, which devaluate language and hinder their speeches from being a meaningful interaction.

2.2.2 Entrapment

Entrapment is a recurrent existential theme in Beckett's works, which also reveals and enhances the alienation of the characters. The setting, the repetitive speech and movements of the characters, the present time that the characters exist in and the other people around these characters all present the imprisonment of the human being. Sartre implies this sense of imprisonment as follows: "I exist in my place without choice, without necessity either, as the pure absolute fact of my being-here. I am there, not here but there. This is the absolute and incomprehensive fact… a fact of pure contingency, an absurd fact" (631). He seems to note that the human being, who is thrown in this universe by coincidence, is all to himself, and there is no exit from this situation. He has to exist there, in the cage of his own existence.

The settings of Beckett's plays arouse a sense of entrapment. Beckett's preference for box stage, which reduces his characters as well as all mankind to marionettes, signals the characters' entrapment. This absurd sense is present in the stage of *Waiting For Godot* although it takes place outdoors, in an open area. Beckett's short description of the setting is: "A country road. A tree. Evening" (11). The characters inspect the place they are in as if they look for an exit. Estragon "rises painfully, goes limping to extreme left, halts, gazes, into distance off with his hand screening his eyes, turns, goes to extreme right, gazes into distance" (15). As he finds no way out, he returns to the centre. The same search for a way to escape from the place is made by Vladimir in the second act: "He halts and looks long at the tree, then suddenly begins to move feverishly about the stage…Comes and goes. Halts extreme right and gazes into distance off, shading his eyes with his hand, comes and goes. Halts extreme left, as before. Comes and goes" (53). Both of them perceive that they have a limited area to move in. This is absurd as they are outdoors; yet for Beckett, the human being is in a cage and will remain in that cage wherever he goes. The human being is in a trap at the moment he is born. So, there is no need for an actual cage to portray this sense.

The entrapment of the human being is also present in Albee's works. His settings mirror the prison that the characters exist in. Like Beckett's characters, Albee's cannot escape this prison, either. Jerry is the spokesperson of the dramatist

who explores the prison of every human being in his own dwelling. He says that he lives in a rooming house in a "laughably small room" (*Zoo* 21). His description suggests that the rooming house that he lives in is indeed a big prison which has separate wards for each dweller. Moreover, he has minimal possessions just like a man in a prison:

> Jerry: What I do have, I have toilet articles, a few clothes, a hot plate that I'm not supposed to have, a can opener, one that works with a key, you know; a knife, two forks, and two spoons, one small, one large; three plates, a cup, a saucer, a drinking glass, two picture frames…and a small strong box without a lock. (22)

Jerry hates this prison as he cannot get away from it. Whatever he does during the day, he has to return to this place. Jerry believes that not only he but also all mankind is imprisoned. As the title of the play suggests, man's life is a "zoo story". He states: "I went to the zoo to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other, and with people too […] everyone [is] separated by bars from everyone else […] if it's a zoo, that's the way it is" (34). He knows that it is impossible to get out of these separate rooms. Jerry describes the zoo, which he has visited, as a disgusting and chaotic place:

> Jerry: Well, all the animals are there, and all the people are there, and it's Sunday and all the children are there. […] And it's a hot day, so all the stench is there, too, and all the balloon sellers, and all the ice cream sellers, and all the seals are barking, and all the birds are screaming. […] And I am there. (34)

In fact, Jerry identifies this zoo with the zoo which is this chaotic world. The prisoners who are the seals and birds in his story desperately try to get out. Nevertheless, like Beckett's tramps, they cannot get out.

Furthermore, one's seemingly cozy house can be a prison in Albee's plays. Jerry claims that Peter, who has a family and who lives in a better place, is also in a cage. He says: "you've told me about your home, and your family, and your own little zoo" (*37*). So, Peter's apartment is equal to Jerry's "laughably small room" in the rooming house. Both men live in cages like the animals in the zoo.

In *The American Dream,* Grandma comes in "loaded with boxes, large and small, neatly wrapped and tied" (103). She claims that there is not much in them, and that they are just the things one collects (143). These boxes remind one of her life, which is like that of a prisoner in her daughter's house. Grandma has been

living in her daughter's flat for a long time; but she has no meaningful possessions to make the place her own.

The repetitive speech of the characters in *Waiting For Godot* forms a vicious circle, which is another trap for them. The characters restate the same utterances over and over again. Each time Estragon sleeps and gets up, he and Vladimir have a similar talk:

> Estragon: I had a dream.
> Vladimir: Don't tell me!
> […]
> Estragon: Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?
> Vladimir: Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that. (17)

Estragon needs to unburden himself of his nightmare. Vladimir refuses to hear about it. The same talk is repeated, which becomes a vicious circle that traps them:

> [Estragon sleeps… wakes up with a start, jumps up, casts about wildly.]
> […]
> Vladimir: There… There… it's all over.
> Estragon: I was falling-
> Vladimir: It's all over, it's all over.
> Estragon: I was on top of a-
> Vladimir: Don't tell me! (66)

Sleep is also a kind of dark cell where they lose touch with their existence. That is why they keep asking about it anxiously:

> Pozzo: Sometimes I wonder if I'm not still asleep. (80)
> […]
> Vladimir: Was I sleeping? (84)
> […]
> Estragon: Was I long asleep? (86)

Vladimir's song about the dog, at the beginning of the second act both denotes their state of imprisonment and foreshadows that this act will repeat the former one:

> Vladimir: A dog came in the kitchen.
> And stole a crust of bread.
> Then cook up with a ladle
> And beat him till he was dead.
> […]
> Then all the dogs came running
> And dug the dog a tomb
> And wrote upon the tombstone
> For the eyes of dogs to come (53)

The song keeps repeating itself in a circular fashion, not coming to an end. It also emphasizes the repetitive nature of almost every discussion between Vladimir and Estragon which traps them in their own speech.

Beckett's characters do the same movements again and again. Beckett states that "Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit. Breathing is a habit. Life is a habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of the individuals" (qtd. in Esslin 25). His characters are imprisoned in their habitual movements. At the beginning of the play Estragon deals with his boots and suffers from the pain they cause. He is "sitting on a low mound, trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before" (*Godot* 11). He always wants Vladimir to help him.

> Estragon: Help me!
> Vladimir: It hurts?
> Estragon: Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!
> Vladimir: [Angrily] No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. (12)

His boots are the cage of his feet; yet he cannot go on without them. He tries and puts them on even though they are too tight. The cage of the human being is also too small for him to dwell in; but it is impossible to get out of this cage.

The characters are bound to eating the same old food all the time. When Estragon is hungry, Vladimir feeds him with carrots, turnips or radishes:

> Vladimir: Do you want a carrot?
> Estragon: Is that all there is?
> Vladimir: I might have some turnips.
> Estragon: Give me a carrot. (21)

Likewise, Lucky lives on the bones of the chicken Pozzo eats. Pozzo says he has "never known him refuse a bone before" (28).

The lapse of memory is another trap for them. When Estragon does not recognize the tree that was there the day before, Vladimir urges Estragon to remember it:

> Vladimir: Look at the tree.
> Estragon: Was it not there yesterday?
> Vladimir: Do you remember? We nearly hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you not remember?
> Estragon: You dreamt it.(56)
> […]
> Vladimir: The tree!

Estragon: The tree?
Vladimir: Do you not remember it?
[…]
Estragon: I see nothing. (65)

Vladimir does not give up despite Estragon's lapse of memory. He goes on forcing Estragon to recognize Pozzo and Lucky: "And Pozzo and Lucky, have you forgotten them too?" (56). All of his attempts are in vain as Estragon is prone to forget everything he sees, or everybody he meets. Estragon is trapped in not remembering. Vladimir is trapped in his vain attempts to jolt Estragon's memory.

Albee's characters are imprisoned in the daily routine of their lives, and as it is in Beckett's play, they reveal this imprisonment by repetitious speech and actions. Jerry keeps coming back to a single statement: that he has been to the zoo (*Zoo 15*). This statement, in various sentence and/or question forms (15, 17, 21, 33) is uttered until finally he explains why he went to the zoo (34). The obsessive sentence hypnotizes Peter, too, who keeps reminding Jerry of "The zoo; the zoo […] Oh, yes, the zoo" (28, 33). So, both characters reflect in the repetitive speech, the main idea of the play, that the humans are trapped in a human zoo.

Jerry describes the rooming house that he lives in to Peter in detail. After a while, he repeats what he said before:

> Jerry: I've told you about the fourth floor of the rooming house where I live. I think the rooms are better as you go down, floor by floor. I guess they are; I don't know. I don't know any of the people on the third and second floors. (25)

Even his repetitive speech is formed of similar statements. It is very difficult for him to lead a coherent and fluent discourse. He is entrapped in the cage of the lack of communication that is built of his restatements.

The story about the dog and himself also involves recurrent sentences which note the recurrent behavior patterns of both Jerry and the dog over several days:

> Jerry: When I got back to the rooming house the dog was waiting for me. I half opened the door that led into the entrance hall, and there he was; waiting for me. […] Then, when he'd finished the meat, the hamburger, and tried to eat the paper, too, he sat down and smiled. […] Then, BAM, he snarled and made for me *again*. He didn't get me *this time*, *either*. So, I got upstairs, and I lay down on my bed and started to think about the day *again*. (28)

The tool Jerry uses to kill the dog is the same: rat poisoned hamburgers; the reaction of the dog is the same: snarl, sniff, move, BAM. The vicious circle never ends. Everything happens again and again, as it does in *Waiting For Godot*. There is no end.

Like the habits of Vladimir and Estragon which have been going on for a long time, Peter habitually spends his spare time in the Central Park and possibly on the same bench which is also the prison he is in. When he and Jerry start a fight over the possession of the bench, Peter utters: "I've come for years; I've hours of great pleasure, great satisfaction, right here" (*Zoo* 37). His leisure activity has become a routine activity which has no chance of a change.

In *The American Dream* the repetition shows the habitual patterns in which the characters are caught up, too. The characters use similar statements, and they repeat each other. When Daddy opens the door, he says to the visitor: "Come in. You're late. But, of course, we expected you to be late; we were saying that we expected you to be late" (112). He repeats what he has said before as if there were no other explanations, as if he were trapped in just one sentence. Mommy and Daddy discuss the problem with the toilet: "Grandma cries every time she goes to the johny as it is; but now that it doesn't work it's even worse, it makes Grandma think she's getting feeble-headed". Daddy repeats what Mommy says: "Grandma is getting feeble-headed," and Mommy restates her sentence: "Of course Grandma is getting feeble-headed"(102). Their discourse becomes a Heidegerrian idle talk, in which they can reach no resolutions and no genuine comprehension. They cannot get out of this idle talk.

Mommy and Grandma quarrel throughout the play. Arguing and bickering with each other becomes a suffocating habit. For instance, Grandma says that it is a pity Daddy married Mommy who is a whore, which makes Mommy angry enough to start a quarrel:

> Mommy: Grandma!
> Grandma: (To Mommy) Shut up!
> Mommy: You stop that!
> […]
> Mommy: Grandma! I'm ashamed of you. (107-108)

Mommy tries to order Grandma about:

> Mommy: Grandma, go get Mrs. Barker a glass of water.

> Grandma: Go get it yourself. I quit […] I quit! I am through!
> Mommy: Now, you be a good Grandma, or you know what will happen to you. You'll be taken in a van.
> Grandma: You don't frighten me. I'm too old to be frightened. Besides…
> Mommy: Well! I'll tend you later. I'll hide your teeth… I'll…(124)

They have only each other to torment in the cage which is a living room in their case. These quarrels and repetitive attacks on each other are efforts to try to assert their identities and pass the time in their prison.

In *A Delicate Balance,* the characters are confined in a vicious circle of questions. Agnes suspects that there has been a love affair between her husband and her sister. However, as she cannot be sure, or cannot prove it, she is entrapped in her suspicions. She thinks that "the one thing sharper than a serpent's tooth is a sister's ingratitude" (20-21). The question of love is painful. The characters question whether they are loved or not constantly:

> Agnes: If we do not love someone… never have loved them… (38)
> Harry: Do you… do you, uh, like Edna?
> Tobias: Well, sure I *like* her, Harry. (113)
> Tobias: DON'T WE?! DON'T WE LOVE EACH OTHER? (115)

The same difficulties, the same battles and unanswerable questions will go on throughout their lives (Paolucci *Hegelian* 309) because they cannot find any answer to their confusing questions.

The daily activities of these characters are formed out of routines. Drinking, together or alone, is a daily routine which chains them together. Tobias offers a cognac to Agnes when she is busy discussing her possible madness (23-24). He drinks anisette meanwhile (19-20). Tobias is like a barman offering drinks to his customers: "Cognac? […] Do you like a quick brandy? […] Anisette" (19, 20, 27). The others treat him as one, too. For instance Claire holds her glass out and utters: "Be a good brother-in-law; it's only the first I'm not supposed to have" (28). Claire is a heavy-drinker. When Tobias offers her brandy, she says:

> Claire: (Laughs some) Not at all; a public one. Fill the balloon half up, and I shall sip it ladylike, and when she … glides back in, I shall lie on the floor and balance the glass on my forehead. That will give her occasion for another paragraph, and your ineffectual stop-it-now's. (26)

Her alcoholism and their arguments about it is another vicious circle. They have repetitive discussions and the same quarrels, which bring about no positive result.

Recurrent arguments between Agnes and Claire are about Claire's alcoholism. It is as if drinking heavily were not enough for them. They have to talk about it, too. Claire claims that she is not an alcoholic and starts drinking with Tobias (32). Agnes is fed up with this situation, and she bursts out:

> Claire: (Great mocking) But I'm not an alcoholic, baby!
> Tobias: She… she can drink… a little.
> Agnes: (There is true passion here; we see under the calm a little) I WILL NOT TOLERATE IT!! I WILL NOT HAVE YOU!
> […]
> Tobias: Please, Agnes…
> Agnes: What I cannot stand is the selfishness! Those of you who want to die… and take your whole lives doing it. (34-35)

Alcohol can be an exit for Claire from her prison. If she becomes drunk, she may not have to think over her past and present failures and inadequacies. She was a burden on her sister in the past as she is now. In her case, being drunk is a relief for a while. She gets entangled in her addiction deceiving herself that she is not an alcoholic.

When Harry and Edna drop in, the family is surprised. Agnes tries to learn why they have come:

> Agnes: Have you been… out? Uh, to the club?
> […]
> Agnes: I wondered, for I thought perhaps you'd dropped by here on your way from there.
> […]
> Agnes: Or perhaps we were having a party, and I'd lost a day. (41, 43)

Both Agnes and Tobias, and Harry and Edna are upper middle-class couples who go to clubs and have parties at homes. These are superficial activities. They try to forget their anxieties. In fact, Edna and Harry's anxieties come up onto the surface as soon as they arrive. They state that they were scared in their home (46). Edna and Harry are not only confined in the superficiality of their daily habits, but more serious, they are trapped in their anxieties.

According to Beckett, other people around a person can restrict his freedom, and this makes man more and more entrapped. In *Waiting For Godot*, Godot is the mysterious man or being that binds the tramps to staying there, in their open prison. They are dependent on Godot as they depend on each other. Lyons suggests that "one's dependency upon another human being… is a trap that binds the self in

habitual patterns of behaviour from which it is impossible to grow free" (48). Whenever Estragon suggests going away, he gets the same answer from Vladimir: "We can't". When Estragon asks the reason, Vladimir gives the same answer: "We're waiting for Godot" (15). They are to wait for this strange being although he does not appear:

> Vladimir: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
> Estragon: And if he doesn't come?
> Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.
> Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.
> Vladimir: Possibly.
> Estragon: And so on. (16)

They do not really consider leaving the place. They are aware that they cannot leave that cage even if they want to because wherever they go, they would still wait for Godot. Wherever they go, they will still be in the cage of waiting for Godot.

The tramps are yoked to each other on several occasions, too. For example, when Vladimir repeatedly tries to remind Estragon of their past experiences, Estragon feels pressurized:

> Vladimir: You don't remember any fact, any circumstance?
> Estragon: [Weary.] Don't torment me, Didi. (62)

Estragon wants to go on with his life as a Sartrean being-in-itself, as a non-conscious being. So, he is content with his lapse of memory. It helps him not to think about the past; thinking is disturbing for him. However, Vladimir is a disturbance following Estragon with his parrot-like statements.

Lucky is Pozzo's prisoner. His master drives him by means of a rope that passes round his neck. Lucky is also bent under the burden Pozzo loads on him, which are a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a great coat (22-23). He has to obey to his master. When Pozzo shouts: "Coat!", to help Pozzo with his coat, Lucky puts down the bag and the basket, gives the coat to Pozzo. Then, takes up the bag and the basket again (25). When his master bids him to dance, Lucky obeys. Pozzo says that Lucky calls it "The net. He thinks he's entangled in a net" (39). Lucky is a prisoner under Pozzo's tyranny. He is incapable of breaking out of this prison; or maybe he is just reluctant to do so. Beckett's characters are both trapped by others and by themselves.

Albee's characters are also entrapped by the others around them. Jerry is imprisoned by his landlady and her dog:

> Jerry: She and her dog are the gatekeepers of my dwelling.[…] When she's had her mid-afternoon pint of lemon-flavored gin she always stops me in the hall, and grabs hold of my coat or my arm, and she presses her disgusting body up against me to keep me in a *corner* so she can talk to me. (*Zoo* 25)

He is not free to enter the rooming house and leave it as he wants to. Whenever he meets the woman or the dog, he has to deal with them. Jerry already senses the feeling of entrapment as an element of the human condition. Still, this feeling is increased by the disgusting woman and her disgusting pet. Like Didi and Gogo, who are in the prison of Godot, he is in the prison of the woman and the dog.

Peter is similarly in the cage built by Jerry. Jerry interrupts Peter's seclusion and freedom in the park by his irrelevant questions and his wish to communicate with Peter. He intrudes into Peter's private life by asking Peter whether he has got a television, whether he has got a wife and children, and how much money he earns (17-19). Peter is annoyed with this intrusion. He reacts to Jerry: "You don't really carry on a conversation, you just ask questions. And I'm normally…uh…reticent" (20). He thinks that strangers are to be kept at a distance. He is reluctant to participate in an exchange of privacy. Jerry tells various stories to Peter to make him feel what he feels. He does not want Peter to leave him, and he explains the reason as if to a child: "Because after I tell you about the dog, do you know what then? Then… then I'll tell you about what happened at the zoo". Peter acknowledges his irritation: "You're … You're full of stories, aren't you?" (26). Peter feels suffocated and caged in by Jerry's aggressive way of telling his views and stories.

Peter is also in a trap of his own making, in his seemingly cozy home. He implies this to Jerry when Jerry tickles him and makes him laugh:

> Jerry: (Mysteriously) Peter, do you want to know what happened at the zoo?
> Peter: Ah, ha, ha. The what? Oh, yes; the zoo. Oh, ho, ho, well, I had my own zoo there for a moment with… hee, hee, the parakeets getting dinner ready, and the… ha, ha, whatever it was…
> Jerry: (Calmly) Yes, that was very funny, Peter. I wouldn't have expected it. (33)

Suddenly, Peter finds an affinity between the animal zoo and his own life. His family, his pets, his job all put him in a human zoo. Maybe that is why he chooses

to leave his house each Sunday and go to the park to be on his own, to escape from his cage for an afternoon.

The characters in *The American Dream* stifle each other's movements and speeches. This makes everybody live in separate cages. Mommy is uneasy with the presence of Grandma in her home. She says: "Well, I wish somebody would do something with her!" (106). She is burdened with the responsibilities towards her mother although she does not seem to care for Grandma. She believes that Grandma is an intruder in her marriage. Grandma feels Mommy's overbearing attitude, and she is oppressed by Mommy:

> Mommy: Go to bed.
> Grandma: I don't want to go to bed. I just got up. I want to stay here and watch. Besides…
> Mommy: Go to bed.
> Daddy: Let her stay up, Mommy, it isn't noon yet.
> Mommy: Well all right, you can watch; but don't you dare to say a word. (109)

Grandma cannot speak what is in her mind freely. She is expected to stay still. Mommy's attitude towards her implies her wish to make Grandma subjugated. She cannot bear Grandma's presence. This makes Grandma entrapped in her old age, in silence and in a separate room.

Daddy is the one who tries to calm down Mommy and Grandma, and he is surrounded by women and he is not free. He utters his wish that he were not surrounded by women and his wish to have some men in the flat (119). He is fed up with the others' constant quarrels. When Mommy asks him to call some van men to take Grandma away, he says: "No, now, perhaps I can go away myself" (120). He resembles Estragon and Vladimir, who always say that they will go, but who can never leave. He thinks that he can get away from the house, from the other inmates; yet it is impossible. He continues staying there and suffering from the stressful situation Mommy and Grandma generate.

The family members present a burden for each other in *A Delicate Balance*, too. Agnes has some love for her sister though she does not show it, and this is what makes her suffer. She cannot bear Claire's presence, who is a nuisance for Agnes. Agnes wants to get rid of her:

> Agnes: Why don't you go off on a vacation, Claire, now that Julia's coming home again? Why don't you go to Kentucky, or Tennessee, and visit the

> distilleries? Or why don't you lock yourself in your room, or find yourself a bar with an apartment in the back. (37-38)

Claire is unwanted in Agnes' home. Agnes cannot stand Claire's alcoholic habits. She also remembers her old questioning about the love affair between Claire and Tobias. That is why she feels entrapped between her love for her sister and her hate for the woman with whom her husband cheated on her.

Claire is under the threat of Julia's home coming. It restricts her freedom in the house. She says to Julia: "Are you home forever, back from the world? To the sadness and reassurance of your parents? Have you come to take my place?", and Julia replies: "This is my home!" (74). Even though the house is a prison for each one, it still serves as a shelter for Claire and Julia. They want to ascertain their place, their rooms in the house. Neither of them wants the other to invade her territory.

Tobias is engulfed by the three women, Agnes, Claire, and Julia. Tobias' home is never in peace. The women argue with each other, and this atmosphere oppresses Tobias. One of those arguments is about Julia's room being given to Edna and Harry:

> Julia: What are they doing here? Don't they have a house anymore?[…]
> Agnes: Just… let it be.
> […]
> Julia: Well, haven't you talked to them about it? I mean, for God's sake…
> Agnes: No. I haven't.
> […]
> Julia: … you go straight to hell…
> Tobias: Now, now, what's going on here? (50-52)

When Agnes finds it difficult to deal with Julia, she turns round and expects Tobias to solve the argument stating: "Your daughter is in need of consolation or a great cuffing around the ears. I don't know which to recommend" (52). Although Tobias yearns for breaking out of his oppressive household and to "sell the house and move to Tucson. Pine in the hot sun and live forever" (22), he doubts whether he can do that: "You mean I have no hope of Tucson?" (24). Agnes sums up his lot:

> Agnes: You have hope, only, of growing even older than you are in the company of your steady wife, your alcoholic sister-in-law and occasional visits… from our melancholy Julia. (24)

The constant quarrels of the family members alienate them further from each other and confine them each in a cell of his/her own.

Beside the family members, the unwelcomed visitors increase the feeling of imprisonment for the hosts. Everybody regards Harry and Edna as intruders. There are now more people in the house. They all seem to be on top of each other. Giving them Julia's room to stay, moving Julia into Tobias' room, and after so many years, Tobias' having to come to his wife's room add to the problems the family members already have with each other. What is more, the visitors, especially Edna, try to take control of the household criticizing family members and their relationships. When they are there, it is almost impossible for the family to deal with their own problems and help themselves. Thus, the visitors entrap the hosts in their own house. The worst effect of the visitors is that they have brought their own anxiety with them, which Agnes calls "the plague" (109-110). Agnes is afraid that the visitors have infected her house and family with an unexplained sense of loneliness and entrapment.

Another element Beckett uses to reveal the imprisonment of the human being is the notion of time. His characters are imprisoned in the *present* time, and time is stopped in their universe. In his plays "time is an eternal present" which is "a temporal trap that prevents man from reaching the ultimate finality" (Gluck 160, 162). Vladimir hints at the time which is stopped asking: "Will night never come?" (*Godot* 33). He is caught up in a never-ending evening. Their uncertain waiting for Godot makes the time stop, and they can never go on with their life freely. They can change nothing. They are bound to waiting which is a static state. While Vladimir thinks that "time has stopped" (36), Estragon believes that time is of no use to the human being as it cannot change anything in their lives even if it flows. According to them, although the linear progression of time toward death goes on, each day is a circle in itself repeating the past (Chase 301). Vladimir asks Estragon if he remembers the sun and the moon, which denote the passage of time; but Estragon replies: "They must have been there, as usual" (62). Time will not make them meet Godot or solve the mysteries of life. So, the passage of time increases the uncertainty in their lives, and it makes a tighter prison.

Time adds to the feeling of imprisonment also in Albee's works. Nothing will change in Peter's life in time. He is entrapped by his wife and daughters; yet

time will not bring him a son. He says: "naturally, every man wants a son, but" and continues: "No. no more" (*Zoo* 18). He will remain in the same house with the same responsibilities for the same people. Also, he may experience the pessimism of the alienated people about the future as he does not adopt a "long-range idealism" (Keniston 180). Moreover, when Jerry impales himself on the knife that Peter holds and dies, Peter howls pitifully: "OH MY GOD!" (40). The burden of the man and the unbearability of life just increase day by day as it is the case for Vladimir and Estragon; but man remains in the same cage of his own.

Similarly, the present time is a prison for Grandma. Mommy thinks that it is high time she put Grandma in a nursing-home (*American* 120). Mrs. Barker supports Mommy stating: "old people don't go anywhere, they're either taken places, or put places" (127). These "places" are the prisons which drive old people crazy. Grandma cries like an animal when she learns that some people are on the way: "Who? Who?" (109). Time works only to take her from one prison, which is Mommy's home, to another, a nursing home. She experiences time as "decline or stagnation rather than progress or growth" (Keniston 180). Time is an enemy, a trap for the human beings.

Albee handles time as a trap for the human being from another aspect in *A Delicate Balance*. He reveals that time becomes a cage due to the fact that one can never correct his past mistakes. Tobias is the one who experiences this state. He must have made love with his sister-in-love, and he suffers from this past mistake:

> Claire: Of course, you had the wanton only once, while Harry! Good friend Harry, I have it from the horse's mouth, was on top for good and keeps twice, with a third try not so hot in the gardener's shed, with the mulch, or whatever it is, and the orange pots…
> Tobias: (Quietly) Shut your mouth. (30)

He does not have a chance to correct what he did. He cannot share this secret with his wife. He is in the prison of time while his suffering cannot bring relief to him.

Following Beckett, Albee's settings, the repetitious talks and lives of his characters present a prison for his characters. Each character becomes a limit on the freedom of the other characters. The present time is also another cage for these characters, who cannot change any past deed. Thus, human being is entrapped in both dramatists' plays.

2.3 Question of Freedom, Responsibility and Anguish

Freedom is a fundamental existential issue in Beckett's works. The influence of the existentialist philosophers about freedom is felt in his plays. Heidegger states that "Only the particular Dasein decides its existence", and this particular Dasein is the human being (33). So, man is free by birth. Sartre confirms Heidegger's idea asserting that "Every for-it-self is a free choice" (764). The human being may make a mistake by blaming his facticity which is the situation he finds himself in, such as his gender, his family, his nation or his physical state. However, man decides to be whomever he wants. Sartre explains the reasons why the human being is free:

> Human reality is free because it is not enough. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by months from what it is and from what it will be. It is free, finally, because its present being is itself a nothingness… man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself. Freedom is precisely which is what is made-to-be at the heart of man, and which forces human reality to make himself instead of to be. (569)

Human being has various possibilities before himself. He chooses whichever possibility he wants or he does not choose anything at all, which is indeed another way of using his free will. Human beings can "influence their values and ends" because "they are equipped with the capacity of practical reasoning" (Grüne 154). No matter what condition they are in, human beings are alone to decide freely, and choose what they think is the best for them.

Nevertheless, there are some paradoxes at this point, and Beckett dramatizes them through his characters. Sartre seems to accept these paradoxes asserting that one's freedom is constantly in question in one's being (567). This statement raises the question of the meaning of freedom for Beckett's characters. If one *has to* be free as he is a human being, then freedom does not set him free. On the contrary, it chains man to his condition. Can this chained situation be called freedom? The answer will possibly be "No" for Beckett's characters. In *Waiting For Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon experience these paradoxes; so, they cannot decide what to do. They appear to be in a choiceless situation where there is no freedom, where they are entrapped and limited. The first sentence of the play is Estragon's "Nothing to be done" (11). This sentence is repeated several times throughout the play. Vladimir responds Estragon in the same way: "Nothing to be done" (12). For the

existentialist philosophers, a free agent should not think like the tramps because there are always various options for the human being; but the tramps do not want to see and consider these options or act accordingly.

The tramps wait for Godot on a road. The road must be ironically symbolic in their case. Nykrog claims that "A road is the archetypal metaphor for a movement, a development… which takes someone from one place (or state) to others" (qtd. in Andonian 122). Pozzo and Lucky are travellers on this road. Compared to the tramps, they are active agents, which also shows their freedom to go to wherever they want. Pozzo enters the stage with an exclamation: "On!"(23). This exclamation reflects a progression; but the tramps are stubbornly static there. When Pozzo claims that Didi and Gogo are on his land, the tramps are even more confused about their static situation:

> Pozzo: Waiting? So you were waiting for him?
> Vladimir: Well you see-
> Pozzo: Here? On my land?
> Vladimir: We didn't intend any harm.
> Estragon: We meant well.
> Pozzo: The road is free to all.
> Vladimir: That's how we looked at it.
> Pozzo: It's a disgrace. But there you are.
> Estragon: Nothing we can do about it. (24)

Didi and Gogo try to defend their static position. However, Pozzo means that there is a chance for them to take the road and go off like he does. They consider that, too. They can stop waiting for Godot; but they do not want to since everything is uncertain in their lives. They may think that it would be a better choice if they left the place; yet there is no guarantee. As there is no certainty about the validity of the choices they might make, they resume waiting.

The characters' hesitant approach to making a decision and to apply it is clear in their discussion of hanging themselves from the tree:

> Estragon: Let's hang ourselves immediately.
> Vladimir: From a bough? [They go towards the tree.] I wouldn't trust it.
> Estragon: We can always try.
> Vladimir: Go ahead.
> Estragon: After you.
> Vladimir: No no, you first. (18-19)

Estragon wants to act out what he decided *immediately.* Possibly, he knows that he will change his mind in a few minutes. He mentions Sartrean possibilities ahead of

a human being when he says that they can *always* try. Vladimir cannot be sure whether it would be a good choice to end their lives. So, he steps backward. In such a few seconds, Estragon changes his mind and makes a serious issue such as suicide turn into a childish joke or a word game. Making a choice is very difficult for them, and it makes acting according to that choice impossible.

The tramps are all alone to make a choice among various choices. Even Godot, who is the mysterious, never appearing, yet an authoritative figure for Didi and Gogo, must be reluctant to make his mind for a definite decision. When Didi and Gogo discuss what they asked him for and what he replied, Godot is portrayed as a hesitant figure like the tramps:

> Estragon: And what did he reply?
> Vladimir: That he'd see.
> […]
> Vladimir: Consult his family.
> Estragon: His friends.
> Vladimir: His agents.
> Estragon: His correspondents.
> Vladimir: His books.
> Estragon: His bank account.
> Vladimir: Before taking a decision.
> Estragon: It's the normal thing.
> Vladimir: Is it not?
> Estragon: I think it is.
> Vladimir: I think so, too.
> [Silence.] (20)

Godot has to consult people, the set ideas in the books; also, he has to consider his facticity, which is in this case his economical position, before making up his mind. This is contradictory to the Sartrean understanding of freedom; yet the characters take it as "normal". Nevertheless, they cannot be sure about whether it is really normal as their silence suggests.

Even though the characters appear to be reluctant to decide and act freely, Beckett reveals that their static case and their dependence on Godot is freely chosen. So, waiting and their static state are the choices they have made. After imitating Pozzo and Lucky to pass the time, Didi and Gogo start thinking about other games to play:

> Estragon: What do we do now?
> Vladimir: While waiting.

Estragon: While waiting.
[Silence.] (71)

Vladimir says "Off we go" (71), and they list their various exercises. They do not choose to leave the place; they do not cease the uncertain waiting. What they do is to pass the time "while waiting" not to consider another possibility *instead of* waiting.

Vladimir is the one who binds both of them to Godot, to an uncertain hope. When Estragon offers him to "go far away from here", Vladimir refuses this offer:

Vladimir: We can't.
Estragon: Why not?
Vladimir: We have to come back tomorrow.
Estragon: What for?
Vladimir: To wait for Godot. (86)

Indeed, there is no justifiable reason that makes him will freely to remain in that position in that place a correct one. He also affects Estragon who cannot make his own choices in life. They are free agents; however, they cannot justify any one of their choices.

Freedom is an important issue for Albee's characters, too. Albee's characters remain hesitant when they are to make a choice like Beckett's. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter is not sure whether he should talk to a stranger or not. When Jerry asks him if he would like to talk to him, Peter is confused:

Jerry: Do you mind if we talk?
Peter: (Obviously minding) Why… no, no.
Jerry: Yes you do; you do.
Peter: (Puts his book down, his pipe out and away smiling) No, really; I don't mind.
Jerry: Yes you do.
Peter: (Finally decided) No, I don't mind at all, really. (17)

Peter is not sure whether it will be safe to talk to Jerry. He does not trust other people. They may give him some harm. Eventually, he talks to Jerry partly because Jerry insists on talking to him in clichés, such as "It's a nice day", or asks him absurd questions like "I bet you've got TV, huh?" (17), and partly because he is a lonely man. However, Peter, can never be sure whether he does the right thing talking to Jerry.

Jerry's suicide at the end of the play must have been planned; yet like Estragon and Vladimir, who cannot commit suicide after discussing the possibility

due to absurd excuses such as the weakness of the tree, Jerry halts before acting out his plan. So, all the previous speeches reveal his hesitancy to make up his mind. His story of Jerry and the dog and the zoo story are just the means for Jerry to gain some time in order to make a definite choice between life and death. Jerry explains even the tiniest details about the subject he tells Peter. Before starting to tell the zoo story, he says: "Let me tell you about why I went… well, let me tell you some things" (25). Instead of giving the reason why he went to the zoo, he describes the rooming house, the dwellers, which are repetitious and the landlady, which is unnecessary and irrelevant to his relationship with the dog. He utters:

> Jerry: But the one I'm getting to, and all about the dog is the landlady. I don't like to use words that are too harsh in describing people. I don't like to. But the landlady is a fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misantrophic, cheap, drunken bag of garbage. And you may have noticed that I very seldom use profanity, so I can't describe her as well as I might. (25)

It is very difficult for him to start the story of the zoo, and he turns to the landlady again: "I will tell you about the dog […] The woman is bad enough; she leans around in the entrance hall, spying to see that I don't bring in things or people" (25). Jerry sticks to such unnecessary points, which help him delay his possible plan of suicide some more. He is free to do whatever he wants to; but he must be scared of the decision he will make.

Like Vladimir and Estragon, who brood over the possibilities ahead of them for a short time and resume passivity, Daddy cannot settle his mind about opening the door to some mysterious visitors. Albee mocks the hesitancy of his character by putting him in a stupefied state upon such an absurd decision. These visitors may be the van men who came to take Grandma away, some repairmen or other people. Although Daddy does not know for sure who is at the door, he hesitates to open it. He backs off from the door and says: "Maybe we can send them away" (*American* 111). He opens the door only after Mommy's verbal pressure: "Oh, look at you! You're turning into jelly; you're indecisive; you're a woman" (111). He depends on Mommy to decide and act. He is not sure whether it will be a correct choice to welcome the visitors or not. His final decision does not stem from his own reasoning but from Mommy's authority over him.

The reluctance of the human being to make decisions as a free agent is revealed mostly through the portrayal of Tobias, who is an indecisive man in *A*

Delicate Balance. Like Godot, who consults various people before deciding, he wants to depend on Agnes' ideas about what to do with the unwelcomed visitors, Edna and Harry. Although he stays awake whole night considering two possibilities, to get rid of the visitors or to remain reticent, he cannot choose one of them. He even ignores Agnes' question "What did you decide?" for several times, and at last replies: "Nothing" (95, 96). He chooses to depend on Agnes:

> Tobias: What are we going to do? About everything?
> Agnes: Whatever you like. Naturally.
> […]
> Tobias: Shall I ask them to leave?
> […]
> Agnes: You'll have to live with it either way: do or don't. (102, 103)

He tries to involve Agnes in a decision; yet Agnes leaves him alone. Agnes means that his choice will affect his whole life, and this is what makes Tobias more and more indecisive. When it comes to confronting Harry with a decision, Tobias' contradictory statements reveal his indecisiveness:

> Tobias: (Loud) I DON'T WANT YOU HERE! YOU ASKED?! NO! I DON'T. BUT BY CHRIST YOU'RE GOING TO STAY HERE! YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT! THE RIGHT! DO YOU KNOW THE WORD? THE RIGHT!
> (Soft) You've put nearly forty years in it, baby; so have I, and if it's nothing, I don't give a damn, you've got the right to be here, you've earned it! (116)

His tone, which always changes from loud to soft, reflects the conflict Tobias experiences. He is to choose between the peace of his family and the forty-year-old friendship with Harry. Both arguments are important for him. It is likely that he does not want to offend either side. So, he is in between two choices, and he cannot stick to one of them.

Julia is another indecisive character. She is totally free; but she does not know what to do with that freedom. She returns to her parents' house in search for an authority over her to decide for herself after her forth marriage. Claire criticizes Julia for this reason:

> Julia: I have left Doug. We are not divorced.
> Claire: […] But you've come back home haven't you? And didn't you—with the others?
> Julia: Where else am I supposed to go?
> Claire: It's a great big world, baby. There are hotels, new cities. Home is the quickest road to Reno I know of. (61)

Claire means that there are several choices for Julia. She may try to make it up with her husband, Doug; she may move to another place instead of her parents' home; or she may go to Reno for a quick divorce. However, Julia is not courageous enough to consider other choices. It is as if there were two choices before her: her parents or her husband. She is not sure about her marriage, either. When Edna asks: "Will you be seeing Douglas?", she replies: "I doubt it" (118). She is not sure whether she wants to be under her husband's or parents' control. She is unable to judge her situation herself.

The unwillingness of Beckett's characters to make a definite decision upon any issue, and to act on it is caused by the fact that freedom brings on responsibility. Sartre explains the issue of responsibility as follows:

> Man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being. We are taking the word 'responsibility' in its ordinary sense as 'consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object'. (707)

Therefore, man's choice has some consequences. While deciding, man is to be conscious of these consequences and accept them as they are. Also, he has to accept the responsibility that choice burdens him with. Beckett's characters yearn to forget about these responsibilities, and they almost reject being free in order to evade the consequences of their choices. Pozzo reflects this existential idea as he warns Vladimir: "Think twice before you do anything rash" when Vladimir announces that he is going (29). Vladimir will have to bear the results of his choice. If he goes, it may not lead to a better life. Pozzo points out: "Suppose you go now… what happens in that case to your appointment with this… Godot… Godot… Godin…anyhow you see who I mean, who has your future in his hands" (29). Moreover, if he goes away with Estragon, Godot may punish them (87). Although Sartre believes that "every action is determined by a choice", Beckett's characters are in an existential paradox as "the choice itself is not determined by anything" (Grüne 156). Thus, Vladimir cannot leave because he cannot bear the possible results of the unknown.

Estragon has a dread of responsibility, too. When Pozzo complains of Lucky, Estragon thinks taking Lucky's place and being a slave instead of a free and responsible subject. He asks Vladimir: "Does he want to replace him?" (34). If he

becomes a slave, he will be driven by Pozzo, and he will do whatever his master orders him to do. He will totally depend on another subject, and get rid of any responsibility as the rope that will pass round his neck will be in Pozzo's hand.

While Vladimir and Estragon try to get rid of the responsibilities, they are in the Sartrean bad-faith. They deceive themselves and each other as well. Vladimir accepts this state when he turns to Estragon, who deals with his boots, stating: "There's man all over you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet" (13). By foot he means the man; by boots he means the excuses man finds to deceive himself. Man would put the blame on anyone but himself. The mysterious Godot is their excuse for their passive state. So, as Esslin asserts, he represents the bad-faith of these characters (26). They blame Godot for their passivity:

> Estragon: Let's go.
> Vladimir: We can't.
> Estragon: Why not?
> Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot. (46-47)

Godot does not appear in the play. When Pozzo comes, Estragon thinks he is Godot. He asks Vladimir: "Is that him?". Vladimir replies: "Not at all!" (23). Maybe there is no one or nothing as Godot. Maybe it is just an invention of the characters to put the blame of their inaction on.

Albee's characters try to escape the responsibilities for their past or present deeds, too. Jerry expresses the regret he experienced when he tried to kill the dog and when the dog became seriously ill: "I didn't want the dog to die. I didn't" (*Zoo* 29). He could not have borne the pangs of conscience if the dog had died. Although he believes that man is responsible for his actions as he says: "We have to know the effect of our actions" (29), his suicide reveals that he wants to get rid of all the responsibilities that he holds or will hold. He even thanks Peter for comforting him and helping him to end the life of a free and responsible human being: "Peter…Thank you. I came unto you and you have comforted me. Dear Peter" (39).

Mommy tries to deceive herself by blaming Daddy about the issue of Grandma's being taken away. She says that Daddy is the one who "would like to put her in a nursing home" (*American* 105). Although Daddy rejects the idea, she goes on pretending that it is Daddy who will do this. In fact, she is the one who will be responsible for Grandma's being carted off. In a quarrel with Grandma, she acknowledges her decision to put the responsibility on Daddy: "I'll let him do that"

(130). Grandma is her mother; so, Mommy will suffer from the consequences of sending her away. She knows this and tries to deceive herself and others by accusing Daddy. She is in the state of bad-faith like Beckett's tramps who accuse Godot for their passive state.

Daddy, who is controlled by his wife most of the time, is also willing to leave all the responsibilities he has as a family man. When Mommy and Grandma argue about Daddy's reluctance to sleep with Mommy, he utters: "I just want to get everything over with" (108). What he desires is a total withdrawal from having to make decisions. To leave all his responsibilities behind, he is even ready to leave his apartment, which possibly symbolizes all his burdens as a human being.

Young Man is in bad-faith when he regards his separation from his twin brother as an excuse for not establishing a spiritual side in his self-hood:

> Young Man: We were separated when we were still very young, my brother, my twin and I […] in the years that have passed, I have suffered losses… that I can't explain. A fall from grace… a departure of innocence. (198)

In fact, he can explain the losses he experienced since he is the one who made them happen. His fall or the loss of innocence has nothing to do with his twin. Sartre notes that it is "senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live or what we are" and continues: "What happens to me happens through me" (708). Hence, his twin cannot be blamed for the plight of Young Man. He is the one who made his life the way it is as he made all the choices himself.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* try to escape from the responsibilities, too. They try to distort what they did in the past in order to avoid the discomforting results. Claire questions Tobias about his relationship with Harry:

> Claire: What do you have really in common with your very best friend…'cept the coincidence of having cheated on your wives in the same summer with the same woman?
> […]
> Tobias: (Quietly) Shut your mouth.
> […]
> Claire: What was her name?
> Tobias: I don't remember. (29-30)

Tobias wants to forget about the past affair. As Claire goes on referring to this secret, Tobias begs her to stop: "Please, Claire" (29). He wants to erase the past:

"When will it all…just go in the past…forget itself ?" (31). Sartre suggests that "It is the fact that one's past is pressing, urgent, imperious", or in other words "the engagement, which I have undertaken weighs upon me" (640).

Agnes accuses Tobias of shirking his responsibilities to their daughter. For instance, he did not do anything about Julia's failed marriages. Agnes forces him to mend her last marriage:

> Tobias: Well, I'd like to talk to Doug.
> Agnes: […] I wish you would! If you had talked to Tom, or Charlie, yes! even Charlie, or.. uh…[…]
> Agnes: ….Phil, it might have done some good. If you've decided to assert yourself, finally, too late, I imagine. (137)

Tobias does not talk to Doug, though. Seemingly, he does not want to interfere with his daughters' marriage; yet the fact is that he just does not want to take any responsibility.

Agnes continues with her complaint about not having another child after Teddy's death:

> Agnes: (Remorseless) When Teddy died? (Pause) We could have had another son; we could have tried […]
> Tobias: No more of this! (101)

Tobias cannot stand even being reminded of his inaction. He is afraid of facing the possible death of another child; so, Tobias chooses separating his bedroom. In this way, he makes Agnes suffer, too. Agnes states: "you are racked with guilt—stupidly!—and I must suffer for it" (102). Actually, Tobias' withdrawal is another way of using his free will. Although he withdraws from a decision, he can never get rid of the burden that his choices put on him.

Although it is Agnes who blames Tobias for his withdrawal from action, from asserting himself and taking a definite stance, she, too, wants to escape the responsibilities as a mother and as a wife. She lists her roles that load responsibility: "to be wife; a mother; a lover; a homemaker; a nurse; a hostess, an agitator, a pacifier, a truth-teller, a deceiver" (51). She desires to be a man and claims that "Their concerns are so simple: Money and death—making ends meet until they meet the end" (51). However, one can never evade one's responsibilities no matter if she is a woman or he is a man. Agnes acknowledges this fact referring to a book which claims that "The sexes are reversing or coming to resemble each other […] If

the book is right, and I suspect it is, then I would be no better off as a man…would I?" (52). So, she chooses to stand back and make Tobias hold all the responsibility in their home: "there are things we [as women] do not do". She goes on: "We don't decide the route […] we follow. We let our…men decide the moral issues […] Whatever you decide…I'll make it work" (97). Tobias is reluctant to assume the role of the decision maker: "No. No […] No" (97). Agnes does not give up pushing him to that role: "Well, when you have…let me know" (97). She acts like a coward when it comes to asserting her decisions.

Albee also presents the responsibilities of people for each other, and criticizes the way they tend to forget about their responsibilities for the well-being of other people. When Jerry implies his suffering due to his suppressed homosexuality, Peter does not care for him. He does not try to help Jerry or say something to console such a lonely person. Peter's responses are rather distant and cold:

> Jerry: And now; oh, do I love the little ladies; really, I love them. For about an hour.
> Peter: Well, it seems perfectly *simple* to me…
> Jerry: (Angry) Look! Are you going to tell me to get married and have parekeets?
> Peter: (Angry himself) Forget about the parakeets! And stay single if you want to. It's no business of mine. I didn't start this conversation. (*Zoo* 24)

Jerry's plight is "perfectly simple", rather unimportant for Peter. Peter could have listened to Jerry's problems, and give some advice to him as a fellow man; but he thinks that there is no reason to bother himself with the problems of a stranger.

Albee mocks people's superficial rights with the absurd fight over the possession of the park bench in *The Zoo Story*. When Jerry pokes Peter to give him some more space to sit on the bench and finally dismisses Peter from the bench, Peter gets angry and utters: "I'm a responsible person, and I'm a GROWNUP. This is my bench and you have no right to take it away from me" (37). It is as if Peter were the only one in the park to possess that bench. Since he is used to coming and sitting there every weekend, he believes that the bench belongs to him. Furthermore, although he claims that he is a responsible citizen, he chooses to leave Jerry to die on the bench after their fatal fight:

> Jerry: Wait… wait Peter. Take your book… book. Right here… beside me… on your bench… on my bench, rather. Come… take your book. (Peter starts for the book, but retreats)
> Hurry… Peter.
> (Peter rushes to the bench, grabs the book, retreats)
> Very good, Peter… very good. Now… hurry away.
> (Peter hesitates for a moment, then flees) (40)

Instead of taking Jerry to a hospital as a responsible citizen is expected to do, he takes the advice of this stranger who was formerly an unimportant creature according to him. So, although he has a high social status and although he claims to be a grownup, he is just a coward when he faces an important issue.

The characters' understanding of one's responsibilities and rights are distorted in *A Delicate Balance*, too. Julia does not feel responsible for any one of the divorces. She only pities herself for her plight as she yells at her mother: "Do you think I like it? Do you?" (49). When she asks her father about the news in the paper wondering whether there is some good news, Tobias states: "My daughter's home"; yet she pretends not to understand and asks: "Any other joys?" (53). She believes that she belongs to that house and that she has a right in that house:

> Julia: I WANT… WHAT IS MINE!!
> Agnes: Well, then, my dear you will have to decide what that is, will you not. (79)

Agnes implies that Julia does not have any rights in that house any more. She believes that Julia is an adult and that she has to deal with her own problems by herself. When Julia tries to justify her homecoming asking: "Where else am I supposed to go?" (61), Claire reminds her that she could have gone to a hotel. Edna is more outspoken about Julia's irresponsibility in her marriages: "You're not a child anymore, Julia, you're nicely on your way to forty, and you've not helped…wedlock's image any, with your… shenanigans" (76). However, Julia keeps her childish behavior.

The visitors, Harry and Edna, believe that they have some rights to interfere with the household of Tobias and Agnes. When Claire asks Julia to prepare a drink for Edna, Julia starts a quarrel, and Edna stresses that they have rights in the house:

> Julia: No! (To Edna)You have no rights here…
> Edna: […] My husband and I are your parents' best friends. We are, in addition, your grandparents.

Julia: DOES THIS GIVE YOU RIGHTS?
[…]
Edna: Some. Rights and responsibilities. Some. (76-77)

Although she mentions that they also have responsibilities for the hosts, they stay in that house as if it were their own house. They try to change things that they are not satisfied with. For example, Edna states: "I do wish Agnes would have that chair recovered" (76). Moreover, Agnes tells Tobias that the visitors asked the maids "to make sandwiches, which were brought to the closed door and handed in" (62). Harry and Edna do not think that they are disturbing the comfort or the family life of the hosts. They are concerned with just their own comfort. Actually, they do not know what it is to be responsible, and they do not consider the fact that "Rights mainly provide people with the reasons not to do certain things to other people—not to treat them or interfere with them in certain ways" (Nagel 133). Therefore, they distort what they understand as rights.

The dread of responsibility in Beckett's characters stem from the anguish that they experience at the moment of making a decision. For Sartre, anxiety is caused by the fact that man distrusts himself and also his own reactions (qtd. in Macquarrie 131). In anguish, man is confronted with his responsibilities for himself and also for other people. Sartre thinks that "my possibilities were filled with anguish because it depended on me alone to sustain them in their existence", and adds that anguish "can be neither hidden nor avoided" (72, 83). Since the consequences of one's choice will affect the well-being of himself and the other people around him, the human being is doomed to experience this pain throughout his life.

To avoid the anguish of deciding and acting out their decisions, Beckett's tramps choose passivity. They are "stupefied and incapable of action" (Corcoran 513). They pretend that they totally depend on Godot for the rest of their lives:

Vladimir: Well? What do we do now?
Estragon: Don't let's do anything. It's safer.
Vladimir: Let's wait and see what he says.
Estragon: Who?
Vladimir: Godot.
Estragon: Good idea.
[…]
Vladimir: I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we'll take it or leave it. (*Godot* 19)

Vladimir is anxious for the possibility that they have to make a new decision. So, he is content to know that they are going to keep the *status quo* which is *waiting.*

Estragon questions their dependence on Godot and their purposeless waiting. After discussing the possibility that Godot will consult various people before making a decision, Estragon wonders if they are to be involved in any decision making:

> Estragon: [Anxious.] And we?
> Vladimir: I beg your pardon?
> Estragon: I said. And we?
> Vladimir: I don't understand.
> Estragon: Where do we come in?
> […]
> Estragon: We've no rights any more?
> […]
> Estragon: We've lost our rights?
> Vladimir: [Distinctly.] We got rid of them.
> [Silence. They remain motionless, arms dangling, hands sunk, sagging at the knees.] (20)

They suppress their anxiety by thinking it is their choice not to make new decisions.

For Albee's characters, anguish is inevitable since they are damned to be free. Jerry tries to make up his mind to kill the dog: "I decided: First, I'll kill the dog with kindness, and if that doesn't work… I'll just kill him" (*Zoo* 27); however, he is in a lot of torment to do so. He shows this strain in the way he prepares the poisonous hamburgers: "On my way back to the rooming house, I kneaded the hamburger and the rat poison together between my hands, at that point feeling as much sadness and disgust" (28). The "sadness and disgust" which haunt him "at that point" mirror the anguish he experiences. He knows that the dog will most probably die after eating those hamburgers, and that he will suffer from what he will do to the dog.

Peter experiences a similar anguish at the moment he unwillingly kills Jerry. He screams "Oh my God, oh my god, oh my God" very rapidly (39). He knows that he will be put into prison and punished for having killed a person. He is shocked at what he did. He will be haunted with this crime for the rest of his life.

Grandma feels helpless to avoid being sent away. She does not know how to use her free will to change the situation. When someone is at the door, she becomes very anxious:

> Mommy: Why are they so late? Why can't they get here on time?
> Grandma: Who? Who?...Who? Who?
> Mommy: You know Grandma.
> Grandma: No, I don't. (*American* 108)

Claire chooses alcohol to forget about this existential angst as if it were possible to avoid it. She expresses to Tobias what it is like to be in her shoes or what it is like to be an alcoholic:

> Claire: You think—that you're more like an animal every day… you snarl, and grab for things, and hide things and forget where you hid them like not-very-bright dogs, and you wash less, prefer to be washed, and once or twice you've actually soiled your bed and laid in it because you can't get up. (*Delicate* 31)

She rejects her freedom and the responsibility it involves in this way. She chooses either to be manipulated by others or to be inert. She knows that she is losing her identity as a human being and becoming a creature, a dog. Thus, no matter how much she drinks, she is unable to stop the pervading anguish.

Tobias' portrayal is one of the best examples to explore the angst that Albee's characters face at the moments when they are to decide. While discussing the problematic visit of Harry and Edna with Agnes, Tobias remarks that it is very difficult to be the one who is expected to decide. He tries to think about the situation in the empty cold living room late at night. He prefers not making any changes because "each…thing stands out in its place" (94); but when the morning comes, "the pressures will be on" (95), and he will be forced to make a decision. There are two possibilities for him; he will either dismiss his friends from his house or let them stay. Agnes voices his dilemma: "You'll have to live with it either way: do or don't" (103). Claire explains why people escape from making changes in their lives: "We can't have changes-throws the balance off" (105). At this moment he is full of anguish "knowing that he must decide and choose and that these choices are his and his alone" (Rose 3). He has to consider this issue with various aspects. He has to think of the well-being of the other members of the family. He becomes more helpless due to his indecisiveness. When he gathers the other family members in a room and tries to discuss what to do, he loses control and shouts at Julia, who claims that Harry and Edna are intruders: "HARRY AND EDNA ARE OUR FRIENDS!!!" (108). The exclamation marks and the capital letters mirror his

anguish as well as his "frustration and rage". When Agnes forces Tobias for a decision, she, too, runs away from taking any responsibility.

If Tobias could make a decision about his friends, he might not experience such a soul-tormenting pain. He tries to convince Agnes that he cannot make the decision to send their friends away:

> Tobias: (Quiet anguish, mixed with impatience) Oh, for God's sake, Agnes! It is our friends. What am I supposed to do? Say, "Look, you can't stay here, you two, you've got trouble. You're friends, and all, but you come in here *clean*." Well, I can't do that. No. (109)

His friends are frightened at their home, and Tobias cannot bear the idea of sending them back. At the final recognition scene, freedom becomes an imprisonment for Tobias as he has to assert himself to Harry and Edna. His final long monologue displays the agony of decision making. He ends up telling his friends to go. Then, begs them to stay:

> Tobias: YOU BRING YOUR PLAGUE!
> YOU STAY WITH US!
> I DON'T WANT YOU HERE!
> I DON'T LOVE YOU!
> BUT BY GOD… YOU STAY!!
> (Pause) STAY!
> (Softer) Stay!
> (Soft, tears) Stay. Please? Stay?
> (Pause) Stay? Please? Stay? (117)

Since Harry and Edna leave on their own decisions at the end, Tobias is saved from making that decision and its anguish.

The question of freedom is one of the basic issues for Albee's characters. They cannot make a decision at the moment of a crisis. They delay their decisions like Beckettian characters. They experience a dread of responsibility and anguish that freedom forces on them. So, they remain inauthentic beings who reject being free most of the time.

2.3.1 Futility of Action

Although Beckett dramatizes characters who are free to choose what they want to be or to do, they are haunted with the futility of action. This stance is

contradictory with the existentialist philosophy which takes the human being as an active subject. Heidegger and Sartre regard the future as a cause to act (qtd. in Warnock 119). Heidegger's potentiality-for-Being and Sartre's being-for-itself emphasize action for the becoming of the human reality. Sartre believes that "to act is to modify the shape of the world; it is to arrange means in view of an end", and he adds that "an action is on principle intentional" (559). It is actually a reciprocal issue for the philosopher: one is to act in order to acknowledge his freedom, and freedom leads the conscious being to action. For the existentialists, only death will cease the process of man's becoming, and even that does not come at the time or in the way one desires. There are always various choices for a man to make. For Beckett's characters, any action will be meaningless. His characters are aware that any activity will be buried in the void of existence.

Beckett's characters lack the desire to act because they deny expectations in life (Innes 434). These characters do not believe that they can change their lives by action. In *Waiting For Godot,* "as nothing real ever happens, that change is in itself an illusion", and "the more things change, the more they are the same" (Esslin 18-19). When Estragon eats the carrot Vladimir gives him, he says it gets worse as he eats it, and the following speech reveals the characters' denial of any hopes:

> Vladimir: Nothing you can do about it.
> Estragon: No use struggling.
> Vladimir: One is what one is.
> Estragon: The essential doesn't change.
> Vladimir: Nothing to be done. (22)

They believe that whatever they do, they cannot change anything in their lives. They accept life as it is and reject doing anything to change it.

Estragon is more pessimistic than Vladimir in this aspect from time to time. When he meets with Vladimir, who questions why Estragon was beaten, Estragon says: "Another day done with". Vladimir states that it is not finished yet. However, Estragon's response is: "For me; it's over and done with, no matter what happens" (54). The following silence mirrors the pessimism of Estragon thinking over his life and his future. He regards each day as something to get over with. Every day follows the previous day in the same monotony.

Even when the tramps try to be of some help to Pozzo, who lies on the ground and begs for help, their help comes very late, and it is a futile attempt:

> Vladimir: We are bored to death, there's no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let's get to work! [He advances towards the heap, stops in his stride.] In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness! (75)

As he tries to pull Pozzo up, he stumbles and falls down. He cannot even get up himself. In his petty attempt to act out, he fails. Each labor of the human being is doomed to failure. Things will most likely remain as they are; yet there is another possibility: they can get worse as one tries to change them.

Beckett mocks the attempts of human beings to change their lives, which will be of no help and will fail, by making his characters do absurd and clown-like movements while they wait for Godot. Vladimir sees Lucky's hat on the ground, takes it, and they start a game with the hat:

> Vladimir: Hold that.
> [Estragon takes Vladimir's hat. Vladimir adjusts Lucky's hat on his head. Estragon puts on Vladimir's hat in place of his own which he hands to Vladimir. Vladimir takes Estragon's hat. Estragon adjusts Vladimir's hat on his head. Vladimir puts on Estragon's hat in place of Lucky's which he hands to Estragon…] (66-67)

This game repeats itself for several times. They choose to pass the time with such absurd and comic games to give themselves the impression that they are giving some meaning to their lives.

Although the theme of the futility of action is contradictory to American Drama, which urges the human being to be an active agent in the twentieth century, Albee follows Beckett's theme in his plays to some extent. His characters do not have any hopes for the future. That is why they reject being active agents. Referring to his relationship with the dog, Jerry states: "I had tried to love, and I had tried to kill, and both had been unsuccessful by themselves" (*Zoo*, 30). Like Vladimir who fails in his attempt to help Pozzo, Jerry fails in his attempt to help himself by being friends with people, even with a dog in order to end his alienation. The failures teach him that all his future efforts will be in vain, too. He explains this idea:

> Jerry: I have learned that neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates any effect beyond themselves; and I have learned that the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotion. And what is gained is loss. (31)

He seems to be echoing Estragon's belief that "the essential does not change", and this unchangeable essential is the human condition. Jerry remains lonely and unhappy after his attempt to make friends.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* do not believe that anything can change their lives for the better. Claire tells Tobias one of her experiences in the alcoholics' club:

> Claire: I marched […] and faced my peers. And I looked them over- all of them, trying so hard, grit and guilt and failing and trying again and loss… and I had a moment's-sweeping-pity and disgust, and I almost cried. (32)

There is no possibility of recovery for Claire's alcoholic peers, or for Claire herself. She pities those hopeless addicts. Indeed, she pities her own self, her own life which will never become better. So, like the clownish movements of Beckett's characters, she introduces herself to the other people there in a clownish way:

> Claire: Now, I was supposed to go on, *you* know, say how bad I was, and didn't want to be, and How It Happened, and What I Wanted To Happen, and Would They Help Me Help Myself… but I just stood there for a … ten seconds maybe, and then I curtsied; I made my little-girl curtsy, and on my little-girl feet I padded back to may chair. (33)

She believes that neither she herself nor that organization will be of any help for her to recover from her addiction. Hence, rather than taking an action, she mocks herself playing the little girl.

Agnes also thinks that nothing can change one's life easily no matter how much one tries. When Tobias says that Julia is in hysterics and wants Agnes to console her, Agnes refuses to do so claiming that "Nothing is calmed by a pat on the hand, a gentle massage, or slowly, slowly combing the hair, no" (85). She thinks that Julia felt "unwanted, tricked" when Teddy was born and adds that she failed in schools and in her marriages due to this feeling (85). Agnes believes that Julia's case will not be improved even if she tries to help her. Agnes thinks that Julia is a hopeless case.

Beckett's characters choose passivity due to their reluctance to modify their lives. When Vladimir tries to recall what they did the previous day, Estragon says that they just passed the time with idle talk, and that it is the "case for half a century" (*Godot* 61). They have been passive agents from the start. If they act out in their ambiguous position and terrifying world, it will bring some results that they

cannot face or cope with. They do nothing because "it's safer" according to Estragon (19). Thus, they willingly choose passivity. On the other hand, the tramps maybe taking *waiting* as an illusion of *acting.* At the same time, their willingness to wait shows that they take it as the reality of their lives. Vladimir points out that there is nothing that they can do (63). Estragon names what they do as "Wait" (18). They choose this static attitude themselves.

Albee's characters opt for passivity, like Beckett's characters. Jerry perceives that his last attempt to stick to his absurd life has failed as Peter cries out loud that he does not understand anything about the story of the dog or any other thing Jerry explained (*Zoo* 32). This makes Jerry choose an eternal inaction, which is death. He says: "So, be it!" and throws himself on the knife in Peter's hand (39). He must be fed up with being an outcast, who is entrapped on every side, who cannot communicate with anyone. His last action brings him a constant passivity.

In *The American Dream,* it turns out that Young Man is brought to the family to replace the boy Mommy and Daddy had and killed by dismembering. Mommy and Daddy are very happy. They are in the same situation as they were before. Grandma sums up the absurdity of their situation as follows:

> Grandma: I don't think we'd better go any further. No, definitely not. So, let's leave things as they are right now…while everybody's happy…while everybody's got what he wants…or everybody's got what he thinks he wants. Good night dears. (148)

For her, the lives of the couple will repeat themselves as they have done so far, and nothing will erase the absurdity in their lives. Thus, she believes in the futility of action.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* choose inaction, too. When Claire suggests the idea that Tobias may take all the family away from their "regulated grey life, dwindling before him" and maybe move to another city, Tobias replies: "It's … it's too late, or something" (60). He does not give a chance to himself or his family for a change. He does not choose to do something to help himself or Julia who comes home heart-broken.

Agnes is aware of their passive state. She knows that they lose the chance for a better life in this way. She remarks on their passive state in life while the guests are leaving their home:

> Agnes: Time. (Pause. They look at her) Time happens, I suppose. (Pause. […]) To people. Everything becomes… too late, finally. You know it's going on… up on the hill; you can see the dust, and hear the cries, and the steel… but you wait; and time happens. When you do go, sword, shield… finally… there's nothing there…save rust; bones; and the wind. (Pause) (118)

Still, she is quite content to go back to their usual life stating: "Well, they're safely gone…and we'll all forget…quite soon. (Pause) Come now; we can begin the day" (122). "The day" will be the same round of Agnes thinking of going mad, Claire drinking all day, Julia breaking up with a husband and Tobias trying to avoid making decisions for the family.

Albee's characters are devoid of any willingness to modify or better their lives. Like Beckettian characters, they believe in the futility of action. They think that they can do nothing that will save them from suffering. So, they choose a passive state or withdrawal from life. However, even when one is not an active subject in life, he is still responsible for this attitude, and that is why Albee's characters cannot find any relief.

CHAPTER 3

ALBEE'S SOCIAL CONCERNS

Albee uses Absurd drama to mirror his social concerns. He believes that his plays should reflect the society with all of its follies and shake the minds of his audience in order to force some change in the deteriorated social order. "Albee has a philosophy of the theatre which entrusts it with vital functions in society" (McCarthy 27). While dramatizing the human condition, he does not skip criticizing American society that is formed of problematic, irresponsible and unaware individuals. He explains his aim: "the function of the theatre as a form of art is to tell us who we are: that is its first value; and the health of the theatre depends on the degree of self-knowledge we wish to have" (qtd. in McCarthy 27). So, Albee is first of all a social critic. He does not just satirize the society. He urges his audience for self- awareness, for innovation since he believes that "change is possible" (Bigsby, *Critical* 263). Thus, while following Beckett in the exploration of the human condition, as Kolin asserts, he remains "distinctively American, pressing for social change and reform" (qtd. in Bottoms 17). The main social concerns of the playwright are materialism, loss of values and the broken human relationships.

3.1 Materialism

Albee is against the materialism in the society which goes along with consumerism. In the society he depicts, the characters take money and wealth as the major criterion in life. Money plays a major role in their lives. They believe that happiness is related to wealth. Consumer society was a common phrase of the 1960s, and many playwrights regarded consumerism or materialism as "spiritual bankrupt" (Krasner 63). Albee is one of those playwrights who is against excessive consumption. According to Kolin, "Albee targets the depraved power of money to

set moral standards in America" (qtd. in Bottoms 28). He satirizes the greedy American society through his materialistic characters.

In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry tells Peter the story of the dog and himself which involves his plight. However, Peter ignores him and his story claiming that he does not comprehend Jerry (32). So, Jerry turns this story into a commodity to be sold in order to draw Peter's attention, who is a capitalist citizen. When he finishes the story, he says "Well, Peter? Do you think I could sell that story to the Reader's Digest and make a couple of hundred bucks for The Most Unforgettable Character I've Ever Met? Huh?" (31). In fact, the story mirrors his whole life, his estrangement from the society, his feeling entrapped in the rooming house; yet for Peter, it can be a valuable piece only if it brings money. "For Jerry, however, [it] represents possibly the most exciting and meaningful experience of his entire life—something that has nothing at all to do with money value" (Amacher 45). Jerry criticizes Peter whose only concern is money.

Jerry also mocks Peter's greed. When he pokes Peter to give him some more space on the bench for several times, Peter is enraged and says: "People can't have everything they want. You should know that; it's a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can't have everything" (35). Nevertheless, ironically he does not give up *his* bench. At this point, Jerry is the spokesperson of Albee uttering: "Are these the things men fight for? Tell me Peter, is this bench, this iron and this wood, is this your honor? Is this the thing in the world you'd fight for? Can you think of anything more absurd?" (37). Even the possession of a bench becomes a matter of possessing, and it reveals Peter's greed for consuming. Kolin asserts that this scene is a "cruel satire on American society's insistence on compartmentalization". The critic also claims that the sub-text of this action asserts: "This is your patch; this is mine; we can't share; we must have our own isolated territories" (qtd. in Bottoms 24). In the materialist society that Peter belongs to, there is no sharing, and everybody should insist on the most of what he can get.

The characters in *The American Dream* are materialistic, too. Mommy represents women's addiction to shopping. Furthermore, she assesses her marriage in a materialistic way. Grandma remarks that Mommy believed she could be wealthy marrying a rich man even when she was a child:

> Grandma: When she was no more than eight years old she used to climb on my lap and say, in a sickening little voice, "When I gwo up, I'm going to mahwy a wich old man; I'm going to set my wittle were end right down in a tub o'butter, that's what I'm going to do." (107)

Mommy realizes her childhood plan. Now that she is married to Daddy, she is rich (105). Nevertheless, this is not enough for Mommy. She has sex with her husband in return for money. She tells Daddy that she has a right to the money Daddy will provide as she let him have sex with her (106). She thinks that she is very lucky to have such a wealthy husband (123). She appraises the money her husband gives her, not his love or the personality of her husband. She thinks of personal benefits rather than the well-being of the family.

Daddy and Mommy's dismemberment of their adopted child due to its being unsatisfactory reflects their materialism which becomes the most cruel in this case. Grandma tells Mrs. Baker what the couple did to the child. She says that they cut off its organs and eventually killed the child (127-128). Grandma uses the pronoun "it" when she refers to the adopted child. It reveals the fact that the family regarded the child as a property. Grandma finishes her explanation stating that the child did not satisfy his parents:

> Grandma: Well, for the last straw, it finally up and died; and you can imagine how that made them feel, their having paid for it, and all. So, they called up the lady who sold them the bumble in the first place and told her to come right to their apartment. They wanted satisfaction; they wanted their money back. That's what they wanted. (129)

As they paid for the adoption, Mommy and Daddy must have believed that they have a right to shape the child according to their taste. When it turns up to be a dissatisfaction, they think that they should be paid back. Their dismemberment of the child is "the unabashed response to a satisfaction guaranteed market and mentality" (Roudané 46). The child is killed because it was a waste of property.

Young Man is another character that is fond of money. When Grandma asks him whether he could help her with the problematic uncertainty in the house, he says: "I hope so… if there's money in it" (135). He can help her only if she pays for it. Besides, he implies that he does all kinds of demeaning works for money: "I let them draw pleasure from my groin… from my presence… from the fact of me" (139). He possibly works as a male-prostitute. In order to have more money, he disgraces himself.

Mrs. Barker helps people with suspicious adoptions for money although she seems to be a responsible citizen "who did all sorts of Good works" according to Grandma (126). When she introduces Young Man to Mommy and Daddy, Mommy is satisfied and she thanks her. Mrs. Barker tells her that Mommy is to send her a bill (146).

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* are also pragmatic and materialistic. For instance, Harry mentions that he wants his books "done in leather; bound" (42). He supposes that the leather-bound books will reflect his wealth to the people who come to his home. He does not deal with the ideas written in the books. He thinks of their appearance. He wants people to perceive his socio-economic position when they see these books.

Tobias is in the midst of familial problems, such as Julia's home-coming after a separation from her husband, Harry and Edna's intrusion in his home, Agnes' constant references to going mad and Claire's continuous drinking. However, he is more concerned with tax-deductions: "The goddamn government is at me over some deductions!"(55). For him, an economic problem is equally important as a family problem. He does not ignore the materialistic problems the way he ignores the other issues.

3.2 Loss of Values

Albee believes that the modern American society experiences a loss of values. He portrays the "moral and spiritual exhaustion" in the society (Paolucci, *Tension* 5). This exhaustion results from the society's ignorance of the past values. He shows that the present values in the society, if there are any left, are "incoherent and inhuman" (McCarthy 8). Among the values that the dramatist analyzes in *The Zoo Story* are trust, loyalty and love. Peter does not trust Jerry, who is a stranger. When Jerry asks Peter about his job and how much money he earns, Peter thinks that Jerry is possibly a thief.

> Peter: Well, I make around two hundred thousand a year, but I don't carry more than forty dollars at any one time… in case you're a… holdup man… ha, ha, ha. (20)

Peter supposes that Jerry asks all kinds of irrelevant questions such as "Where do you live?" (20) in order to learn where his house is and how much he earns. According to him, some harm may come from a mysterious stranger like Jerry. That is why the thinks that he should not tell much about his life to this strange man.

Loyalty is another important value for Albee; yet it is absent in the society that Jerry lives in. Jerry reveals the disloyalty of his mother as follows:

> Jerry: Good old Mom walked out on good old Pop when I was ten and half years old; she embarked on an adulterous turn of our southern states… a journey of a year's duration…and her most constant companion…among others, among many others…was a Mr. Barleycorn. (23)

She returns home only when her dead body is brought back. This adultery affects Jerry as a child. His father, drunk, Jerry tells stepped in front of a bus and died (23). He experiences alienation mostly for these reasons. As he does not have a family, he becomes an outcast.

Besides, Jerry does not know what love is any more. He confides to Peter that he does not see any girl for a second time, and that he loves girls only "for about an hour" (23, 24). Loss of love makes his life more unbearable. He does not have anybody around him to relate to. This makes him feel like a stranger. He does not love anybody, and nobody loves him. For him, love was lost long ago.

Albee handles love, respect and hospitality in *The American Dream*. These are all lost values. Both Mommy and Daddy are pleased to have another boy, Young Man, who is going to take the place of the boy they killed. They show no regret, no pain for the one they caused to die. That boy is already forgotten.

Young Man is the character through whom Albee depicts loss of love. He tells Grandma that he has suffered some losses and goes on:

> Young Man: Once… it was as if all at once my heart… became numb…almost as though I…almost as though…just like that…it had been wrenched from my body…and from that time I have been unable to love[…] I am incomplete… I can feel nothing. (138-139)

Albee underscores the fact that if one cannot love another person truly, he will not be a complete being. Love is the emotion that starts relationships. If man does not love someone or is not loved by someone, he will remain all alone like Young Man.

Respect is another lost value in this play. Grandma does not respect Mommy as a guest in her house, and Mommy is not respectful to her though she is her

mother. Besides, they mistreat each other at the presence of Mrs. Barker who is an outsider. When Mommy tries to keep Grandma quiet, Grandma calls her "Nuts", and Mommy apologizes to Mrs. Barker saying that "she's [Grandma] rural" (118). In their house, such attacks go on, and they never stop. They do not treat each other in a civilized manner. It is as if they aim to break each other's heart.

Albee mocks the hospitality the way it is in the society. The scenes that the characters exhibit hospitality are highly absurd and comic. At first, the hosts try to make Mrs. Barker feel at home asking her: "Would you like a cigarette, and a drink, and would you like to cross your legs?" (113). She seems to feel so comfortable in their home that she even removes her dress (114). After a while, this artificial hospitality fades away. When Mrs. Barker wants some water Mommy replies: "if you'll be so good as to come into the kitchen, I'll be more than happy to show you where the water is, and where the glass is, and then you can put two and two together, if you're clever enough" (130-131). Mrs. Barker acknowledges that this is the way a visitor should be treated, and helps herself. Their lives are full of artificiality. This indifference and disregard for the visitor reveal the hollowness of their values.

Albee portrays the loss of loyalty, affection and hospitality in *A Delicate Balance*, too. Tobias cheated on his wife with her sister. Claire always reminds him of their past relation. She says that one of the common points of Tobias and his friend Harry is to cheat on their wives with the same girl, who is herself (29). Tobias' infidelity reflects the ills in the society. Loss of fidelity is like a curse that each generation is subject to. Julia is also cheated by her husband. Claire mocks Julia with a song:

> Claire: Philip loved to gamble.
> Charlie loved the boys,
> Tom went after women (37)

Being the cheated wife, Julia lacks self-esteem. She cannot establish a true relationship with any one of her husbands. She becomes a castaway. Her case troubles the family, which means that such cases disturb the well-being of others as well.

The household members in this play do not love each other. They are tied together by blood not by love. Claire summarizes the lack of love in the family as

follows: “Love is not the problem. You [Tobias] love Agnes and Agnes loves Julia and Julia loves me and I love you. We all love each other; yes we do. We love each other” (40). What she implies is that they do not really care for one another or love each other. Moreover, love is replaced by hatred in some cases. Claire remarks that she hates herself and everybody else: “Hate, and oh God! You want love, l-o-v-e, so badly –comfort and snuggling is what you really mean, of course—but you hate” (31). It is impossible for her to love anybody while she hates and pities herself. Agnes hates Claire as she possibly senses her sister’s infidelity. She does not refrain from announcing her hatred for Claire: “Oh, God. I wouldn’t mind for a moment if you filled your bathtub with it [alcohol], lowered yourself in it, DROWNED! I rather wish you would” (34). As a result, their quarrels never cease, which becomes a source of the discomfort in the family.

During the visit of their friends, Harry and Edna, none of the family members is hospitable to the guests. Julia cannot bear the presence of the guests. She asks her parents: “What are they doing here? Don’t they have a house any more? Has the market gone bust without my knowing it?” (50). She wants to be the only visitor in that house. Although Harry and Edna are there as they are frightened in their own house, Julia cannot consider what it would be like to be in their shoes. Likewise, Agnes is also irritated when Edna asks, “Can I go to bed now? Please?” (47). Hospitality is not just giving a room for the visitors to stay. It means more. Rather than helping Harry and Edna with their problem without upsetting their own household, Agnes and the others wait for the time that the guests will depart.

3.3 Broken Human Relationships

Albee exposes that as a result of materialism and loss of values, human relationships are distorted. He handles especially familial relationships and friendships to reveal how people cannot cope with each other. “Albee has the claims of friendship and family conflict and suggests that neither rests upon a secure moral base” (McCarthy 81). Jerry’s description of his neighbors reflects that he could not build any relationship in the rooming house. He does not know some of his neighbors, and he has never seen some of them (*Zoo* 22). He refers to one of his

neighbors as follows: “Oh, wait! I do know that there’s a lady living on the third floor, in the front. I know because she cries all the time. Whenever I go out or come back in, whenever I pass her door I always hear her crying, muffled, but… very determined” (25). He has never tried to visit her or to console her. He does not know why she cries all the time. There must be some problem in her life; but Jerry does not bother himself to find it out.

Jerry cannot build strong relations with people. He finds it difficult to come out as a homosexual. He tries to be with the opposite sex only for a short time (24). Possibly, he cannot even make love to them. So, he chooses to be friends with the dog of his landlady instead of one of his neighbors or any other person. He calls the animal “my doggy friend” (29). He tells Peter that he could not manage to communicate even with the dog. Conventionally, a dog is man’s best friend; but in a world of broken relationships, even that becomes impossible.

Peter, who appears to have an ordinary life compared to Jerry’s life, probably does not have a sexual relationship with his wife anymore. When Jerry tries to explore this situation, Peter gets angry:

> Jerry: And you’re not going to have any more kids, are you?
> Peter: (A bit distantly) No. No more. (Then back, and irksome) Why did you say that? How would you know about that?
> Jerry: The way you cross your legs, perhaps, something in the voice. Or maybe I’m just guessing. Is it your wife?
> Peter: (Furious) That’s none of your business! […] Well, you’re right. We’ll have no more children.
> Jerry: (Softly) That *is* the way the cookie crumbles.
> Peter: (Forgiving) Yes… I guess so. (18)

Sunday is the day when the families generally gather and do some activities together. Peter could have chosen to be with his family or to come to the park with his children; yet he chooses to be alone. He is estranged from his wife and from his children.

The relationships among the characters in *The American Dream* are shattered, too. The parent-child relationship between Grandma and Mommy reflects how they disregard each other’s well-being. For instance, Grandma reminds Daddy that she warned him before marrying to Mommy in order to “stay away from her type” (107). She does not think of the effect of what she says, or she deliberately tries to shatter her own daughter’s marriage. Mommy does not care for Grandma’s

well-being, either. She always threatens Grandma with the van man or nursing home (120). She wants to break off with Grandma and abandon her in a state of loneliness.

Mommy and Daddy experience a breakdown in their sexual relationship. Daddy is possibly a sterile man as he has had an operation. He says that he is sick and adds that he does not want to sleep with her anyone (108). Mommy is pleased that she does not have an argumentative husband (123). Arguing with someone can be a way of communicating; but Mommy and Daddy do not have such kind of communication. Daddy does whatever Mommy orders him to do. When Mommy wants him to break Grandma's television, he says: "If I must… I must" (123) and does so. His passivity under the domination of his wife shows that he does not care whether his relationship with Grandma will be broken or not.

The characters in *A Delicate Balance* suffer from the breakdown in their relationships. The family members have their own separate shells, and they prefer remaining in those shells rather than establishing relationship among them. At the beginning of the play, Agnes and Tobias, each with a glass of drink, seem to talk to each other; yet they do not communicate anything at all. When Agnes expresses her discomfort with the presence of Claire in her home, Tobias feels uncomfortable and moves to another chair. This irritates Agnes:

> Agnes: Why are you moving?
> Tobias: It's getting uncomfortable.
> Agnes: Things get hot, move off, huh? Yes? (21)

They do not get pleasure from each other's company or discourse. They are cold towards one another though they have been living together for over thirty years. Agnes is jealous of her sister, Claire, for having a better relationship with her husband: "We must always envy someone we should not, be jealous of those who have so much less. You and Claire make so much sense together, talk so well" (94). Claire lives with her sister like a parasite; yet, Agnes is jealous of the relationship between her and Tobias because she has not established such a relationship with her husband.

Tobias and Agnes do not have sex any more. Agnes suffers from this break up. When Tobias has to stay in *her* room as *his* room is occupied by the guests, Agnes recalls their past relationship. She relates her suffering to Tobias:

> Agnes: I remember, when it was a constancy, how easily I could fall asleep, pace my breathing to your breathing, and if we were touching! Ah, what a splendid cocoon that was. But last night – what a shame, what sadness – you were a stranger, and I stayed awake. (92)

There has been almost no interaction between them for a long time. Each one is a stranger to the other. Agnes yearns to turn to those days when they used to sleep together; yet Tobias remains indifferent to her pleas. He says that he is sorry for disturbing her sleep (92-93). Even staying in the same room, if not in the same bed, is a chance for Agnes to start their relationship again; but Tobias rejects such an opportunity and lets their marriage go on unsatisfactorily.

The couple's relationship with their daughter is also a failure. When Agnes announces that Julia is coming home and leaving her husband, Tobias is surprised: "But, wasn't Julia happy? You didn't tell me anything" (36). He does not know anything about Julia's marital life. Possibly, he does not even wonder whether she is happy with her husband or not. There is an emotional gap between him and his daughter. Like him, Agnes keeps distant from Julia. She calls Julia a "hanger-on"; she states that she does not want such "hangers-on" in her home referring to Julia and Claire (36). Julia is just a burden to her parents with her disoriented life. They do not want to upset their peaceful live with Julia's marital problems.

Although Claire lives in her sister's house, she does not interact with her as a caring sister. She hates Agnes. She even asks Tobias to kill them all starting with Agnes:

> Claire: Why don't you kill Agnes?
> Tobias: (Very offhand) Oh, no, I couldn't do that.
> Claire: Better still, why don't you wait till Julia separates and comes back here, all sudden and confused, and take a gun and blow all our heads off?... Agnes first – through respect, of course, then poor Julia, and finally – if you have the kindness for it me? (26)

It seems that the people, who cannot take control of their own lives, cannot form good relationships even with their closest kins.

Albee puts forth the failure of friendship in this play. Harry and Edna are unwelcomed in the home of Tobias and Agnes though they have been friends for a long time. When they suddenly appear, Agnes asks them several times if they have been to the club. Agnes hopes that they just dropped by as they were returning home from the club, or maybe they are having a party that she forgot about (42-43).

She questions the reason why they came. When Harry tells them that they were scared at home and adds: "We couldn't stay there, and so we came here. You're our very best friends", Agnes states that they did the right thing; yet after taking "a deep breath" and trying to keep herself under control (46-47). The visit of the very best friends becomes a problem for the family. With the shock the visitors give the family, the dinner is spoiled for them all:

> Agnes: (Composed, chilly, standing in the archway) I believe that dinner is served.
> Tobias: (Vacant) Yes?
> Agnes: If any of you have stomach for it. (65)

The idea of hosting their friends for more than one evening drives Agnes crazy. She does not want to deal with them.

Beside the family members' cold attitude towards the visitors, Harry and Edna's selfishness in other people's home also signals the hollowness of their friendship. In a discussion with Julia upon their visit, Edna lists their expectations from the household:

> Edna: We come where we are wanted, where we know we are expected, not only where we want; we come where the table has been laid for us in such an event… where the bed is turned down…and warmed… and has been ready should we need it. (89)

She believes that they have some rights in the home of their friends. In fact the rights turn into demands and orders. So, she takes friendship as an egoistical means to benefit from when needed.

The friends are rejected in the family. Tobias tries to dismiss them from his house though unwillingly and indirectly. He says to Harry that he does not want them in his house and adds that "I find my liking you has limits" (116). Thus, it turns out that their forty-year-old friendship means nothing. It has no value in itself. They will possibly go on gathering together in clubs and in parties; yet when they face a serious problem or when they need help, they will not be supported by their friends.

Albee dramatizes the broken human relationships in the social groups such as neighbors, family and friends. His characters do not have any kind of genuine interaction in any one of these groups. They do not care for each other's agonies. They do not bother themselves with the problems of other people. Even the closest

relatives suffer from this state. Married couples are alienated from each other in their casual lives and sex lives. Parents and children are indifferent towards each other, too. Thus, they are doomed to suffer more and more in their lonely separate shells.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Edward Albee is deeply influenced by the Absurd Drama of Samuel Beckett; yet he created his unique style blending Beckett's absurdist ideas with a realist dramatization of the middle class American society and aiming to criticize the deformity of the society that he depicted. Beckett produced his works with the impact of existentialism, and Albee followed Beckett's existential ideas in his plays.

In Beckett's works everything is obscure. There are no clear answers to the questions about identity or existence. Beckett assumes that one's identity is not fixed. His characters are conscious beings; yet they suffer due to being conscious and desire to be non-conscious beings. While portraying the uncertainty of identity of the human being, Beckett uses several techniques. For example, the names of his characters are not recognizable, and they change during the play. They do not have a chronological background. The reader does not know anything about their past lives as the characters refute each other when they talk about an event that both of them experienced. The minimal possessions of these characters reveal their blurred identities as they do not remember possessing a certain property, or as they are not sure about the features of their belongings. Moreover, Beckett's characters have identity problems, which add to their blurred identities. They experience memory failures, and they do not know the motives for what they do, say or feel. They play roles to make up an identity. Beckett also involves the uncertainty of the Other among the factors that make his characters more unsure about themselves and the outer world, and the Other is a mysterious being for his characters. Besides, it presents a menacing or an indifferent being. However, the characters need other people around them to be sure about their beings.

Following Beckett, Albee dramatizes the characters whose identities are uncertain. Their physical agonies or their desire for madness show that they yearn to be non-conscious beings. Although they are realistically portrayed, they have fragmented or contradictory past lives. Albee moves a step further than Beckett at

this point and criticizes his characters who take their social roles as their own identities. His characters try to belong to a social group, and identify themselves with the group so as to acquire an identity. Albee also handles the outer pressures such as family or the conventions of the society that hinder one's establishing a whole identity. The Other is dramatized in his plays as a strange, threatening or indifferent being; but like Beckett's characters, his characters need other people to confirm their identities and existences. Albee's depiction of the Other is far more violent and cruel than that of Beckett's.

Beckett analyzes the uncertainty of existence by putting the characters on a stage where they do not know anything about place or time. The outer world is a dangerous place for his characters. His characters believe that life is meaningless since it will end one day, and they are always anxious when they question their existence as nothing is certain in their world. Being subject to the dilemma of existence, his characters try to prove that they exist. They need another peer to look at them or to listen to them, and they tell stories about their past lives to recall that they are there. Furthermore, the cyclic structure of the play and the fusion of tragedy and comedy signal that everything is blurred in the lives of the characters.

Uncertainty of existence pervades Albee's plays, too. Space and time are obscure for his characters, and the offstage is a void. The outer world is also full of menace. Besides, life is devoid of meaning for them. They endure anxiety due to being on earth. So, they try to find evidences to prove that they exist, and they look for someone to pay attention to them, or they revert to narratives. Love or sex may be another proof of existence; yet they are absent in their lives most of the time. His plays start and end where they start. Hence, the structure of his plays mirrors the meaninglessness of life. The elements of tragedy and comedy are also mixed in his plays to reveal the ambiguity of life.

Beckett presents the illusions that his characters build for themselves, which adds to the sense of uncertainty. His characters try not to question their beings; instead they try to pass the time with word plays or absurd games. Beckett's usage of oppositions such as day and night, being awake and asleep indicates the illusions the characters live in.

Albee's characters live in an illusionary world, too. His characters conform to the society and become inauthentic beings. They try to build a peaceful life,

which is just so in appearance. Albee's dichotomies like day and night, being drunk and sober point out the tendency of his characters to live in illusions. Unlike Beckett, Albee uses a surface realism; so, when it comes to shatter the illusions of the audience and make them face the realities of their lives, he is even more forceful.

Beckett handles alienation which is a factor of the human condition. His characters are alienated from themselves and also from the society. Their desire to be non-existent, their look for the validation of others about their identities and their being unsure about themselves alienate them from themselves. They are outcast characters. They do not believe in God, or God is indifferent even if he exists according to these characters. The indifferent Other or other people cause them to be excluded from the society, and the prejudice of others isolates them from the society. Besides, the stories they tell, which are about death or cruelty, refer to the alienation that they experience. They attempt to make contact with another character; yet it is of no help for most of the time. Due to their loneliness, their behaviour patterns are unusual. For example, they are aggressive or easily offended. Beckett shows two ways to eradicate this sense of isolation: love and suicide; but neither of them is available for his characters.

Albee's characters are also alienated beings, and his alienation is inner and outer. Their conformism alienates them from themselves; thus, they refer to themselves as if to another person. Some of them are castaway characters who do not have a home or a family. Beside this, they are skeptical about God, which contributes to self-alienation. In the society that Albee portrays, people are indifferent towards each other. Although they have a family, they live in separate shells. Albee deals with the alienation of the elderly, too. They are not wanted at homes; so, they are excluded from the society. The prejudices of other people also lead to loneliness in these plays. They reflect their sense of estrangement even in their narratives, too. As a result of being alienated, they have excessive behaviour patterns. They attack and criticize each other. Love and death, which may be remedy for their loneliness, are absent in their lives. Albee also explores the alienation between married couples. His couples lack sexual desire, which is another cause of alienation. Although the alienation of Beckett's characters is

perceived immediately, in Albee's plays, the domestic and the superficial relationships disguise it for a while during the course of the play.

Lack of communication plays a major role in the estrangement of Beckett's characters. Beckett underscores the devaluation of language as a convenient medium for communication by using monologues instead of dialogues. The statements of his characters are unfinished, fragmented or interrupted. The questions are left unanswered, and thus, the characters do not comprehend each other, which sometimes results in comic scenes. They repeat the same sentence, or change the subject matter rapidly. Besides, silences in Beckett's play reflect the communication problem. Language is used to disguise the problems of existence or to control other people rather than to communicate each other.

Albee's characters do not have a genuine communication, either. As they do not pay attention to what the Other says, they talk to themselves. Their utterances are interrupted, and questions are not always answered. They misunderstand each other, and restate what they have said. They do not stick to one subject matter at a time; so, their speeches are inconsequential. Albee's pauses are the echoes of Beckett's silences that reflect the communication problem of his characters. Language is a way to avoid confrontation, change unpleasant topics, escape from real issues and dominate others. Compared to Beckett, Albee uses less fragmented language to give the sense that his characters seem to have some communication. Furthermore, Albee does not devaluate language as much as Beckett does. His silences and pauses are fewer and shorter than those of Beckett's to complement the domestic realism.

In Beckett's play, the alienated characters are entrapped, and this enhances their agonies. Beckett's settings, the repetitive speeches and movements of his characters, and the habits of them all give the sense of imprisonment. Other people present a limit on the actions and choices of his characters. They are also encaged in the present time because time does not bring any change to the lives of his characters.

Parallel to Beckett's, the characters of Albee are imprisoned in their small worlds. Albee's indoor or outdoor settings give the impression of a prison. Even a seemingly peaceful living room can be a cage for his characters. Albee uses stage props such as bars and boxes to enhance the feeling of imprisonment. His characters

utter the same or similar sentences and do repetitive movements. So, they are entrapped in their daily routines which are formed of habits. The cells they put themselves in are also self-made to protect them from others. Besides, they are entrapped for the fact that they cannot go back in time to correct their mistakes or forward to control their future; thus, time is another trap for them.

Freedom is another important theme in Beckett's play. His characters are on their own to use this freedom; yet they try to reject being free. They are alone to choose one possibility among several ones, and this causes a dread of freedom and unbearable anguish. They halt before making a choice. The reason for their indecisiveness is that they know that they will be responsible for their choices. They attempt to evade responsibilities. Nevertheless, their choiceless situation does not save them from anguish as choosing passivity is indeed a choice itself.

Albee follows Beckett in the exploration of the theme of freedom. Albee's characters are indecisive or reluctant at the scenes that they are to make a choice. They reject being responsible for their past and present deeds. Even though they opt for withdrawal from life, it does not eradicate their anguish. They know that they will be responsible for what they do and also what they do not do. Albee extends this theme further by analyzing the characters' abuse of their responsibilities and rights. His characters do not care for others. The characters, who are irresponsible to each other, distort the rights they have, and their rights turn into demands that they impose on the other characters in order to attain them.

Beckettian characters believe in the futility of action. They do not want to act in a definite way to change their lives for the better because they do not have any hopes for the future. Even when they start acting out their plans, they fail. This makes them more pessimistic. They have no clear judgments to verify what they do is right. Hence, rather than bearing the intolerable results of a definite action, they choose a passive stance in life.

Although Albee favors being a man of action, his characters, who do not have any expectations for the future, are passive agents. They appear to believe that their lives will not be better than it is at that moment. Thus, they choose inaction or withdrawal. When they avoid action, they are content. When there are no changes, life is the same old routine, which they are familiar with. Acting to change anything frightens them, and even an action is performed to secure inaction.

While following Beckett in his existential concerns, Albee criticizes the society he portrays. Beckett presents the human condition as he perceives it; yet Albee challenges his audience for reformation. Pointing out the distinction between American and European absurdist dramatists, Hurley suggest that "Americans do not, perhaps cannot, relinquish their belief that man and society can be changed and improved", and also adds that Albee takes the "social improvement" as the mission of literature (635, 638). Albee has some targets while criticizing the modern American middle-class, which are materialism, loss of values and broken relationships.

Albee targets the materialist and consumerist society in his works. His characters regard money and wealth as the most important criterion in life. His female characters are fond of shopping, and they believe that they can relieve themselves from the deeper worries through consuming. The characters marry for pragmatic reasons. Even their children, who are expected to be a source of satisfaction, become properties. Furthermore, they can do any job including prostitution in order to be richer. As they entirely depend on money, they expect to be rewarded by being paid when they are asked for help. An economic problem can affect them as much as a problem in their family.

Due to their materialism, Albee's characters experience loss of values. They do not trust each other. Couples cheat on each other, and they do not treat each other with affection. Besides, they are not respectful to elderly people. Hospitality becomes an artificial value in their homes. No one can bear the presence of a visitor or even a relative in his or her house.

As the values are lost, their relationships are not based on strong bonds. The characters do not know anything about their neighbors or relatives. They do not communicate with each other, or try to have a good time together. Couples do not have sex as they are isolated from one another, and perhaps as they do not love their spouses. Moreover, they do not want to bother themselves with another character's problem even though she is their own child. Love is replaced by hatred on several occasions,and they would even want the others to be dead. They do not have true friendships. When the demands of friendship oppose their own benefits, or when it disturbs their comfort, they become strangers to each other. Therefore, they are to endure their existential plights on their own.

Albee follows the absurdist ideas of Beckett in a domestic setting, which means that his plays are not a replica of Beckett's. However, even in these domestic settings, absurdity is present because it is an element of the human condition as Simone De Beauvoir remarks: "between birth and death there is absurdity" (qtd. in Oliver 196). Although absurdity haunts the human being according to Beckett, Albee aims to force his audience to make it a better life since the term "absurd" does not mean "unworthwhile" for him (Luper-Foy 97). The techniques and themes of Beckett's Absurd drama become the means for Albee to show the audience the deformity of 20th century American life. Compared to Beckett, Albee is optimistic in his playwriting as he believes that there is still a chance for individuals to face the reality of their condition and to act in a self-aware way. He believes that a better society will be formed only by awakened individuals. No doubt, Beckett, also, deals with materialism, loss of values and broken human relationships in his plays. However, in his works, these themes are used to depict the universal concerns of the human kind. Albee adds his social concerns to these universal problems.

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