

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
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Bodies That Matter in Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965): A Comparative Study.

Presented by:

AKLI Nabila

ALIOUANE Malika

Supervised By:

Mrs. ABDELLI Fatima

Board of examiners:

Chair: Dr. CHABANE CHAOUCH Sarah, MCB, Department of English, M.M.U.T.O

Supervisor: Mrs. ABDELLI Fatima, MAA, Department of English, M.M.U.T.O

Examiner: Mrs. BADJA Fariza, MAA, Department of English, M.M.U.T.O

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Dedications

I dedicate this work

To my beloved father and mother.

To my dear twin brother Nabil.

To my brother Azdine and his wife.

To my sisters, nieces, and nephews.

To my fiancé Samir and his family.

To my mate Malika and her family.

Nabila

I dedicate this work.

To my beloved father and mother.

To my dear sisters and friends.

To my best friend Mohand.

To my mate Nabila and her family.

Malika

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Abstract

This dissertation is a comparative study of two literary works: Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965). The purpose of this study is to unravel how men and women are judged in relation to their physical and biological distinctions, and highlight that the human body is depicted as a surface in which events occur and unfold through characters' experiences in both American and British societies. To reach our purpose, we have relied on some theoretical concepts from Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits Of Sex* (1993) and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). We have explored how both Edward Albee and Harold Pinter handle the matter of the body in their respective works. Our work consists of two chapters, the first chapter discusses the subject pertaining to the human physicality, while the second one focuses on how genders perform and act their gender roles in society. In light of our findings, we have uncovered that the two respective playwrights in their works hold the same points of view regarding the focus on characters' external attributes, rather than their internal ones. Yet, men and women establish new roles to act and behave.

Keywords: Biological distinction, Bodies That Matter, Performativity, Gender roles.

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Introduction:

The present research paper falls within comparative literature. It aims to draw a comparison between Edward Albee's and Harold Pinter's presentation of the concepts of Body's Materiality and Gender Performativity respectively in their selected plays *The American Dream* (1961) and *The Homecoming* (1965). These two playwrights provided us with an opportunity to delve deeper into our understanding of the plays through the framework of Butlerian concepts. Our objective in this dissertation is to explore the affinities between the two selected works. This study will focus on the Body's Materiality between the two categories: women and men.

Throughout history, the human body has experienced changes across various periods of time. Within the realm of ancient Greek literature, the male body was commonly equated with physical perfection, strength and form, while the female one was associated with fertility and heightened sensitivity. In medieval societies, individuals have been evaluated based on their external characteristics. Their bodies have performed distinct functions with accurate performances. In this respect, it is instructive to note that bodies were gendered. The medieval American scholar Caroline Walker Bynum states, "medieval thinkers essentialized body as matter or essentialized body or matter as female. Indeed, philosophically speaking, body as subsisting was always form as well as matter"¹. Medieval thinkers held the belief that the physical body had a strong association with femininity. By examining medieval thinking, Caroline Bynum brings attention to the widespread inclination to link the body with femininity and perceive its existence through a gendered perspective. The cultural and religious beliefs exerted a notable influence on the correlation between the body and femininity.

In the later centuries, namely the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a notable shift in the perception of the body in literature. The Enlightenment period, the incorporation of scientific inquiry had a profound impact on how the body was perceived, prompting a deep exploration of its organs and biological functions. One of the most prominent figures of the early modern period is the philosopher Rene Descartes who explored the human anatomy, devoting himself to unravel the relationship between the body and mind and how it functions. The seventeenth century witnessed the notion of Cartesian dualism. It is established within the distinctions between the Body and Mind binary opposition which are two distinct substances that exist separately from one another². Additionally, this philosophy established the distinction between Nature and Culture, aimed at highlighting the difference between men and women. On the one hand, men tend to be closely linked to attributes of the Mind/ Culture, often assigned roles that involve intellectual endeavors and making decisions. On the other hand, women are commonly associated with the realms of the Body/ Nature, typically prescribed roles pertaining to pregnancy, childbirth and domestic responsibilities.

The nineteenth century was the period of Victorian era. The period saw the emergence of numerous writers, philosophers, and theorists who engaged in the exploration of new concepts and ideologies that changed people's perceptions and challenged established beliefs in various fields such as gender roles and religion. Specific expectations were imposed upon the bodies of men and women. Victorian women's bodies were portrayed as submissive and frail, they used to wear corsets (stays) to conform to social ideals of femininity. Men's bodies were portrayed as possessing physical strength and form³.

In the Twentieth century, the body became an emotive subject of profound debate. With the emergence of literary movements, authors and philosophers explored the body through the lenses of identity, human experience and sexuality. The Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud asserts, "Anatomy is destiny"⁴. From the point of view of Freud, masculinity

is characterized as a superiority of male over female in the sexual relations. Men are predisposed to dominate women in partnership. In fact, males and females possess different anatomies, particularly in their reproduction organs or genitalia. To state it differently, the biological categories: male or female are distinguished typically by the production of sperm or eggs that differentiates the two sexes. The nature of men and women, which is socially predetermined with a particular emphasis on their biological features, holds substantial importance in shaping individuals' character and determining the roles they are expected to assume and fulfill.

Moreover, certain recognizable writers and gender theorists who have tackled themes in relation to the concept of the body, notably in gender studies such as gender and sexuality, are Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990), Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985). Through our comparative investigation of both plays *The American Dream* (1961) and *The Homecoming* (1965), we are going to examine the two works belonging to similar historical backgrounds to investigate the affinities between them in relation to the topic of our dissertation.

Review of Literature:

Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965) have received critical attention from different perspectives since their publications. To begin with, Edward Albee's critical corpus of *The American Dream* is fledged at the time of its publication . In "Albee's *the American Dream* and the Existential Vacuum" (1966), Nicholas Canady J.R considers the play as an illustration of the absurdist theater, where Albee reflects his society. Canady captures the realities of both the past and the present to describe everyday existence. Canady says:

The American Dream is what might be called a textbook case of the response of the American Drama to his existential vacuum, and at the same time this play of 1961 is perhaps our best example of what has to be known as the Theatre of the Absurd.⁵

According to Canady, Edward Albee attempts to paint a realistic portrait of the false values of the modern American capitalist and materialistic society. The play is contemplated as a kind of critique and irony that explores the absurdity, hollowness, and emptiness of the Americans in a flawed society in the post-war era, and the quest for meaning is futile.

In *Edward Albee: A casebook*, Bruce J Mann investigates the notion of autobiography in Albee's play. He states that Albee's plays are at once autobiographical and archetypal which deal with the personal life of the playwright⁶. Edward Albee's childhood wounds are stored in his reservoir, and they are manifested through his canon. One should refer to Albee's personal background to better understand his plays. Edward Albee has revealed the complicated and fake relationship between him and his adoptive mother Frances. He associates himself with the adopted child (The Bumble of Joy) of *The American Dream*, since the adopted child does not bring satisfaction and fulfillment to the middle-class couple: Mommy and Daddy. Similarly to Albee's inability to create a successful communication with his adoptive mother. This resulted in the isolation and unhappiness of Albee.

Harold Pinter is a British dramatist who has produced several plays, as *The Homecoming* (1965). The latter has been a center of attention of many critics. In "Harold Pinter: Presence and Narrative", Alice Rayner states that dramatic strategies, including silences and pauses, led to the inadequate communication skills in the character's conversation. Rayner writes,

Such silences create atmosphere and mood, to be sure and they may indicate something about characters, but they are also part of signifying structure. I'm less concerned with meanings of his silences, however than with how such devices take part in a broader Pinter problem: that of origins, ends, and meaning: and with how they indicate the places where meaning becomes a problem and gaps occur in coherence of events.⁷

According to Rayner, Pinter has used dramatic strategies in most of his plays such as silences and pauses, especially in *The Homecoming*. The use of plenty words leads to the concern of misunderstanding. These dramatic devices play an important role in communication; they are as meaningful as words. Rayner considers the use of pauses and silences as factors that disorder the context and the meaning of the play. For instance, if we take the play *The Homecoming* as a concrete example, we may see that the family struggles with the lack of communication; this results in a disconnection from one another.

In “The Theatre of Harold Pinter” (1965), Bernard Dukore asserts that the ridiculous existence portrayed in Pinter’s plays depicts manifestations of the disordered mind of the bulk of Europeans during the post-war period. Dukore asserts:

But this shock of recognition that we find in Pinter’s plays is not only a matter of isolated details. It is not only a matter of realistic dialogue or of idiosyncratic behavior. The very texture and tone of these plays is the texture and tone of the world we live in⁸.

Dukore assumes that Pinter was a potential contributor to the British theater. Most of his plays paint a vivid and realistic portrait of the turbulent and chaotic existence and the absurdities of the deteriorating norms and beliefs of the British society that profoundly affected human beings after the Second World War. He also assumes that every play Pinter had produced refers to a piece of his life and the horrific events he had experienced; Pinter suffered a lot with his family for being a Jewish. Pinter’s literary works are substantially influenced by his Jewish cultural background, more specifically in *The Homecoming* (1965). The play explores various family issues such as sexuality and dominance through the eyes of Jewish tradition.

Issue and Working Hypotheses:

From the above review of literature about Edward Albee's and Harold Pinter's plays, we have noticed that they been examined from different perspectives. However, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no preceding comparative investigation of the two works in the exact alignment with our topic in terms of Body's Materiality. Our research is centered on the assumption that despite the fact that the two plays were produced by different playwrights in distinct areas though at the same period of time 1960s, they can be examined within a single work since they share some common points and themes. The purpose of our study is to reveal the harsh reality that both men and women are primarily valued according to their physical or biological distinction, while the focus will fall on the body as a "surface of events".

In order to accomplish our study, we intend to refer to some theoretical concepts from the American feminist Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits Of Sex* namely, Body's Materiality and Body As a Surface of Events. Besides, we will rely on the concept of Performativity which is borrowed from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990)*. This theoretical framework will reveal how men and women are living in the sexiest culture, where the materiality of bodies is essential. It also shows how the two genders act and perform their gender roles in society.

Methodological Outline:

To give our work a methodological outline, we intend to follow the IMRAD method. Our dissertation consists of four sections. The first section is the Introduction, in which we have stated our purpose. The latter is followed by Review of Literature and Issue and Working Hypotheses. The second section is devoted to the Methods and Materials. In Methods, our intention is to explain Judith Butler's concepts of body in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits Of Sex* (1993) and the concept of Performativity in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). In the Materials part, we are going to provide the historical backgrounds of the conditions of middle class white women in the Fifties and Sixties in both American and British societies. Then, we will provide succinct biographies of the authors along with the summaries of their plays. In the Results section, we intend to present the main findings of our research. The Discussion section comprises two chapters. The first chapter will be put on the study of Body as a surface of events in the plays and how the notions of marriage and motherhood are portrayed as new jobs for women. In the second chapter, we intend to explore the concept of Performativity through the characters' behaviors. Finally, the Conclusion will restate the key points of our work.

Endnotes:

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Methods and Materials:

1-Methods:

In order to undertake a succinct study, and as a theoretical framework, we have singled out some concepts from the theoretical guidelines of Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). We have opted for these theories due to their ability to provide a comprehensive framework that encompasses the necessary concepts which are suitable for the prosperous investigation of the chosen subject matter. Judith Butler is an American comparative literature professor, philosopher and gender theorist of the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries. She has introduced some theoretical concepts in relation to gender studies, philosophy, politics and even feminism. Butler is influenced by Hegel's essentialism. Her study centers on sex and gender materialization in terms of the human psyche as well as the physical body. Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) is contemplated as an attempt to respond and even clarify all the original misunderstanding of the criticism of her previous work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). She debates some philosophers' thoughts and ideas, among them Aristotle, Michel Foucault, Plato, Irigaray, and Simone De Beauvoir who claim that the body is a matter, a material, or a corpus with sexual characteristics. According to her, the body does not exist outside the cultural construction; that is, the body is socially and culturally formed and created¹.

A- The Body As a 'Surface of Events':

We, as human beings, can forcibly let our bodies exist, appear, and even materialize in some way. The body is a fundamental core to control in history. Men and women have the

option of choosing and preferring how to act with their bodies; namely, they can exploit and use their sexuality in the way they find most suitable to them. Thus, the French poststructuralist and historian Michel Foucault states that the human body can be understood as a 'surface of inscription' of past and current systems of political power, making the body a legible object in the study of history.² Foucault can be seen as a catalyst for post-structuralist studies, provoking the production of new ideas³. His ideas are discussed in Butler's *Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions* describing the body as something pre-given. To speak in this way invariably suggests that there is a body that is in some sense there, pre-given, existentially available to become the site of its own ostensible construction."⁴ Simply put, the biological nature of both man and woman is socially pre-determined; it also indicates that society shapes people into the notion of femininity and masculinity, and assigns women and men standards to follow. Therefore, society determines man's and woman's path of action from birth to death. Foucault states that the body is the inscribed 'surface of events' and a site of cultural inscription individuals experience⁵. Individuals are society's creatures, their bodies function as a medium for how they perceive the life experience. Women are created for reproduction and masculine satisfaction. Society dictates which activities and duties that are suitable for them to do with their biological body.

B- The Body's Materiality:

The Body's Materiality holds significance for the reason that it impacts the way people engage with the external world surrounding them pertaining to the way they appear physically. Butler states, "The materiality of the body will not be thinkable apart from the materialization of that regulatory norm."⁶ In other words, the materiality of the body cannot be conceived apart from the materialization of that regulatory norm or ideal; it is socially and culturally prescribed. The concept of matter has a history about sexual difference; according

to Aristotle, “matter is potentiality [*dynamēos*], form actuality.”⁷ In reproduction, women are said to contribute the matter; men, the form.⁸ Matter is described as a site of generation or origination⁹. Women are perceived as a matter and demarcated to the reproductive system that contains the overtones of materiality using the term womb (matrix) to designate the mother body or what is called in Latin “mater” and its functions which reveal that women’s body is perceived as a maternal object. Men are said to be the “form”; they seem to have physical attributes that allow them to present in the public sphere.

C-Performativity:

Judith Butler introduces the concept of Performativity in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990). She maintains that gender is a dynamic concept which is performative, and that gender and sexuality are socially and culturally created. She asserts:

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender.¹⁰

From the above quote, one may deduce that men and women act and perform their genders the way they find suitable to their souls by which this sequence of actions and performances are being socially created roles. Additionally, gender is established through the reiterative and repeated performances and behaviors that individuals perform and act unintentionally on which they have no choice. We provide a concrete example of individuals who carry out specific acts repeatedly, our perception of what is appropriate for young boys to put makeup on their face would change if they began to put it suddenly and continue to do so.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler claims that “Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood in part as a culturally

sustained temporal duration.”¹¹ Butler discusses the process through which gender performances are being reproduced repetitively, establishing and creating what are called habits. She asserts that these behaviours and actions are socially prescribed rather than being produced naturally. For example, women who stay at home and assume the responsibility of the housewife and the mother makes them as their natural role which is in reality an assigned role.

Butler assumes that one can identify with gender not only through the associated and related role play that each gender is prescribed with but also through the repetitive actions that gender performs and does.¹² For instance, a boy is expected to be dominant and decisive, whereas a girl is supposed to behave in a shy and sensitive manner; these features are expressed through her body language which makes her as her proper role instead of a fixed role that society has constructed. Further, Butler contends that gender does not determine who we are; it is something we perform every day; in other words, no subject can decide on its gender¹³. In fact, gender roles are the product of society, which assigns us roles and conducts standards to follow. In this case, the feminine and masculine genders may perform a series of unusual behaviors that are inconsistent with the rigid norms and ideals that society has constructed. To illustrate, a man who occupies the home, practicing home tasks such as cookery and laundry; he may seem weird and strange because he is supposed to play a masculine role, not a feminine role beyond the walls of the house.

D- Gender and Sex Differences:

Numerous individuals misinterpret the concept of gender, and they frequently associate it along with sex. Sex and gender are not synonymous or equivalents. Judith Butler emphasizes the distinction between the two. Sex denotes a person’s biological features¹⁴. At birth, a person’s sex is classified as either male or female; in other words, sex describes the

state of being a male or a female; males are born with a penis and testicles, while females are born with a vagina and ovaries. However, gender refers to both masculine and feminine various roles which are constructed by society. Males and females may adopt a series of new acts according to their own will by breaking society's fixed roles. Each gender possesses its identity and a set of functions, which are referred to as femininity and masculinity. We illustrate our definitions by providing the following example, it is worth remembering that society determines if the child wears pink or blue, and if the child plays with a doll or a toy car.

Judith Butler defines gender "as a corporeal style, an "act", as it were, which is both intentional and per-formative, whereas "performativity" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.¹⁵ Gender is not a fact, but rather a sequence of recurring behaviors and performances that the two categories: "men and women" act and perform in their daily life by which these performances are regarded as being culturally and socially forced roles. Moreover, Butler argues that everyday actions, gestures, enactments, speech, dress, and behaviours produce what is perceived as men and women or gender in general. Because of these actions, the gendered body is performative otherwise gender would not exist.¹⁶

2- Materials:

A-Historical Backgrounds:

This section focuses on cultural characteristics and features of the middle class white women in the Fifties and the Sixties in both British and American societies. We intend to explore the conditions of white women focusing on various aspects such as: marriage and childbearing which were their priority at that period of time. These assigned roles had significant consequences on women's lives.

1-In the United States of America:

In the 1950s and 1960s, America has experienced what is identified as marriage and baby boomers. Marriage has become the first priority for middle class white women¹⁷. The post war era was best exemplified and illustrated by the idealized image of the pleased and content housewife, which is frequently referred to as the golden days of the American nation, when the middle-class white women were expected to be intrinsically content and delighted in their new life. However, the reality of the situation was subtly the opposite. Additionally, the birth rates were skyrocketed, and divorce rates plummeted at the end of the Second World War, a flourishing society was an objective that many Americans aimed to establish after the Great Depression.¹⁸

The period of the 1950s and 1960s was also known as the age of conformity when middle class white women adhered and followed rigid gender roles. Although all social categories contributed to the baby boom, it was the values of the white middle class that shaped the dominant political and economic institutions that affected all Americans¹⁹. A comfortable suburban home and successful children reared by a mother was perceived as the epitome of the perfect image of life. Women were specifically instructed that being a wife and mother should be their main life concerns and priorities, and childbearing was a woman's greatest accomplishment and satisfaction. Also, having children nearby would offer a sense of stability and comfort to the nuclear family that was constituted of the parents and their children. Women were expected to be domestic and dependent on their husbands. Furthermore, they were forbidden to pursue any other interest outside the home with the hope that the home would be instead a freeing space of satisfaction and a safe place away from potential threats within the external world²⁰.

Moreover, college encouraged women to get married young; education provided them with courses in housekeeping and cooking to prepare them for life beyond school. They were informed that their chance of getting married would decrease if they waited too long. They were often discouraged from serious educational pursuits and careers for marriage and family.²¹ Furthermore, in the Fifties the media, especially television's programs, were contributed to the production of inflexible stereotypes about what good middle class white women have to be. This was through encouraging them to revive their primary functions as mothers and housewives. The most popular sitcoms were destined for women such, as *The Adventures of Ozzy and Harriet* and *I love Lucy*.²²

2 -In Britain:

In Britain, the conformity era in the Fifties was a period of stability. Many people saw the post war era in Britain as the golden age. The institution of marriage during the 1950s and 1960s held a prominent position in British society, and it was considered as the priority for many young white women, as the divorce rates decreased compared to the subsequent decades and abortions were prohibited. The additional household duties that middle class white women found themselves obliged to fulfill were rearing children, taking care of the husband and housekeeping. In the 1950s, the British society manifested the desire to restore marital family life.²³

The family during the conformity era was firmly conservative and traditional. Middle class white women began to be attached with the home and family private sphere. The only difficult task faced by those women was raising children, even though they have more spare time than they did in the previous decades thanks to the improvements in the household, such as washing machine and the vacuum cleaner. In the Fifties and Sixties, the majority of British citizens possessed televisions with no lack of material luxuries; technology became more

affordable, which created pleasure to become more centered at home. Yet, women were compelled to conform to socially prescribed norms. Britain experienced the emergence of shows such as *Special Pete Murary* and *Billy Cotton*.²⁴

B- The Biographies of the Authors:

1-The Biography of Edward Albee:

Edward Franklin Albee is one of the most creative playwrights of the Twentieth century in America. He was born in Washington D.C on March 22nd, 1928 and died on September 16th, 2016. Albee's biological parents left him. A prosperous couple Reed and his second wife Frances Loring Cotter Albee adopted him as a child and raised him in wealth in Larchmont, a suburb about twenty-five miles from New York city²⁵. Additionally, in his childhood, he was expelled from the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey after attending the Rye Country Day school in New York. In 1934, he had been sent to Valley Forge military academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

Edward Albee was adamant about not accepting his adoption by wealthy couple, as he always held a grudge against his biological parents for leaving him. He struggled with his mother-in-law Frances throughout his adolescence. The latter intended to elevate him in society, but he preferred to spend time with artists. He was an anti-conformist and he was identified as a homosexual (gay) in the age of conformity when homosexuality was severely unacceptable. Indeed, he had several relationships with playwrights, among them Terrence Mc Nally and the sculptor Jonathan Richard Thomas.²⁶

Edward Albee became famous for his aesthetic vision and unique creativity in writing extraordinary absurd plays during his lifetime. He wrote numerous plays which mainly focused on the issues of family and the social politics in American society, for which he received numerous prizes. Among his well-known works are: *A Delicate Balance* (1967),

Seascape (1975), and *Three Tall Women* (1994) for which he received three Pulitzer prizes. His performances earned him a Tony Award in the plays: *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) which has been turned into a movie in 1966, and also his masterwork *The Goat, Or Who Is Sylvia?* (2002).

Albee pioneered in revealing the image of the desired child in the adoptive parents' thoughts; for example, the homosexual or infertile couples in his plays, like the middle-aged couples: Martha and George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ?* (1962), and Mommy and Daddy in *Sandbox* and *The American Dream* (its sequel). His life circumstances have significantly affected these plays. Thus, Albee was among the absurd dramatists who received a widespread attention in the contemporary world.²⁷

2-The Biography of Harold Pinter:

Harold Pinter is one of the most talented playwrights in the Twentieth century. He was born on October 10th, 1930 in London. He was the only child of the tailor Hyman Jack Pinter and Frances, who was a housewife. Pinter attended the Hackney Downs Grammar School, and then joined the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. He was a cricket lover; he supported Yorkshire Cricket Club. He got married to the English actress Vivien Merchant who bore him a child called Daniel. However, their marital union turned out to be short lived. Pinter opted to start over with Antonia Fraser. He was happy and satisfied in his second marriage and preferred to spend time with his family.²⁸

Pinter's background and familial surrounding had an impact on his writing. At the beginning of the Second World War, he suffered from unemployment, poverty, and even racism because of his Jewish stock. According to him, these distractions largely nourished his writing career. Moreover, during the Second World War, Pinter left London for the

countryside when he reached nine years old, as other children, in order to live in safety and came back three years later.

Concerning politics, as Pinter rejected the ideologies of the Cold War, he decided to become a conscientious objector refusing to serve in the British Military and instead fought against the Nazis in the Second World War. In his final twenty five years, he was a member of the World Wide PEN (Pennsylvania Environmental Network) and his works were published in PEN International. Concentrating on political matters, Pinter continued struggling with the War of Iraq and other issues. Pinter was awarded a Nobel Prize in literature in 2005 and a European theatre prize in 2006, and other honorary literary prizes. Furthermore, he wrote twenty nine plays and fifteen dramatic skits that received numerous honors such as *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Dumb Waiter* (1959) and *The Caretaker* (1960). Pinter established a pattern in the characters' marital relationships. For instance, the marriage of the couple Ruth and Teddy in *The Homecoming* (1965), and Robert and Emma in *Betrayal* (1978) was a failure. Pinter focused on the spouses' infidelity to their wives in these plays. Along with writing plays for the stage, he also produced radio and television shows and a number of popular movie screen plays, among them *Accident* (1961), *The Servant* (1963), and *The Go-Between* (1970). Harold Pinter died on December 24th, 2008 from a liver cancer.

C-The Summaries of the Plays:

1- The Summary of *The American Dream*:

The American Dream (1961) is a one act play written by the American playwright Edward Albee. It was first performed on January 24th, 1961. The play depicts a middle class married couple, Daddy and Mommy. It takes place in a city apartment. Mommy and Daddy sit on their armchairs in the living room, having a pointless and tedious discussion, particularly when Mommy narrates the story of her journey to buy a hat. Daddy is rather

uninterested in her story. In addition, the marriage of the couple is deprived of any genuine compassion, no physical attachment, connection, and even progeny. Mommy's witty mother, Grandma, came back bearing boxes to live with them; she has been treated in a dreadful manner by Mommy and Daddy, and she is presented by Albee as a figurehead for the older generation. The couple's sterility led them to adopt a child. They adopted the Bumble of Joy. The parents' expectations are not met. Thus, Mommy and Daddy commit an infanticide.

The chairwoman of the woman's club, Mrs. Barker, who twenty years ago brought the couple a foundling²⁹ unexpectedly, arrives to the apartment of the couple. Grandma narrates her story of Mommy and Daddy's unsuccessful adoption of the Bumble of Joy. At the end of the play, a muscular and cute Young Man appears to the family to take the place of the previous child. He appears to be the embodiment of the American Dream that everyone desires. Mrs Barker declares that the Young Man is the substitute for the malfunctioning child and the problem is settled.

2-The Summary of *The Homecoming*:

The Homecoming (1965) is a two acts play written by the British playwright Harold Pinter. It was first performed in London and in New York in 1967, directed by Sir Peter Hall. All its scenes take place in an old house in North London, precisely in a large room. The play depicts a houseful of males who have not had a woman living on the premises since the death of the matriarch.³⁰ The first act starts with a discussion between Max, the father of the family, who is a retired butcher, and his son Lenny, who is a pimp. As soon as their discussion moves to another subject, which is about Max's friend Mac, Sam, the brother of Max, who is a taxi driver, enters and begins to assert that he is the brightest in the business. However, Max does not seem overly interested. Then their conversation shifts to a conflict. Joey, the youngest son, who is a boxer, enters.

In the second part of the first act, Max's eldest son, Teddy, who is a philosophy professor at an American university, enters with his wife Ruth. They return home from America to visit Teddy's family without having told anyone that they were coming.³⁰ The couple left their three children in the United States. Therefore, their discussion reveals their hostile and unhappy relationship. Thus, Ruth refuses her husband's suggestion that they go to bed together because she wants to go for a walk to get some clean air. While Ruth goes to walk out, Lenny arrives. Then, they talk for a while about Lenny's life, such as his work as a pimp. Ruth feels relaxed with Lenny, as she dances with him. As Max awakens, he finds Ruth at home, and he thinks she is a tart. Hence, Teddy makes it clear to everyone that she is his wife.

The second act begins with the family members having dinner and discussing Teddy's job as a professor, asking him questions about philosophy. Then, Ruth interrupts them by talking about her body. Besides, Teddy decides to return to America, but his wife Ruth refuses his proposal, she rather wants to stay in England. In addition, Lenny and Max suggest that Ruth should stay with them and buy her an apartment in London to earn money for them through prostitution. At the end of the play, Teddy decides to return to his children in the United States and leaves his wife with his family as a whore.

Endnotes:

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- 2-Hayaert, Valerie and Pawelski, Melissa. “Tattoo, Michel Foucault and the Body: Questioning the Paradoxes of Juridical and Political Inscriptions”. Lecture Series at the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), University of Warwick, UK, 2022, p.7.
- 3- Spargo, Tamsin. *Foucault and Queer Theory*. United States,1999, p.10.
- 4-Butler, Judith. Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscription. *The journal of philosophical*. 83, 10, 4, 1989, pp. 197-220.
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- 9-Ibid. p31.
- 10-Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p23.
- 11-Ibid. p14.
- 12- Ibid.p17.
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Results:

In this dissertation, we have conducted a comparative analysis between Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965). Through the examination of these two literary works, we have endeavored to explore and unfold the affinities regarding our subject matter, mainly bodies that matter. To achieve our aim, we have implemented Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) relying on its main concept of Gender Performativity borrowed from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). For better understanding of the aforementioned matter, we have structured the discussion section into two main chapters. The first one discusses the body as a matter in both plays, the second deals with the concept of gender performativity.

In the first chapter of our discussion, we have illustrated how the two categories: men and women are represented in relation to their physical anatomies and attributes. The characters in both plays are represented in terms of their physical distinction and attractiveness, rather than their internal characteristics. The body is depicted as a surface of events that both genders experience. Additionally, the concept of marriage for middle-class white women is a form of prostitution, while the concept of motherhood is perceived as a new job for married women.

In the second chapter, we have explored gender performativity in these two literary works, shedding light on characters' actions, speech, and gestures. We have noticed that the gender roles are inversed in both plays. Individuals strive to perform their gender by defying social norms that fit into their respective communities, thereby creating and establishing new gender identities through the new gender roles. The plays align with Butler's perspective,

affirming that a person's gender is not an inherent truth, but rather a reflection of social norms.

This comparative exploration between *The American Dream* and *The Homecoming* has allowed us to identify the points that are mutually shared between the two works, highlighting the incorporation of Butler's concepts in addressing the issue of our study. Edward Albee and Harold Pinter capture and represent their societies by producing these plays to unveil everyday existence in the post-war era. Even though the plays were produced in distinct areas and different backgrounds, they tackle similar issues and themes.

Discussion:

Chapter One: Body As a “Surface of Events” in Edward Albee’s *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter’s *The Homecoming* (1965)

The notion of the body might be conceived as a mere surface of constant occurrences that individuals experience in the outside world that depends primarily on their interactions involving their physical beings. The human physicality is incapable to secure a daily existence entirely empty of troubles and struggles. In this chapter, we will discuss Body’s Materiality as a subject matter, as revealed in both plays: Edward Albee’s *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter’s *The Homecoming* (1965). The body appears to be an important physical entity that is impacted in different ways by cultural values. We intend to unravel through the plays’ themes and characters that this material substance is a source of struggle when both men and women become a surface of social events. We also intend to illustrate the way female characters face the notions of marriage and motherhood as new jobs for middle class white women.

I. The Body As a Matter

1- The Body As a Matter in Edward Albee’s *The American Dream* (1961):

The American Dream is a one act play by the American dramatist Edward Albee. The play consists of a middle-aged sterile couple, Mommy and Daddy, Grandma, Mrs Barker and Young Man. It takes place in a city apartment, exploring the dysfunctional family life after the Second World War based on the false values in a flawed modern society. It also tackles the issue of body’s materiality as a significant topic. The body as a matter holds a great importance in society; people are often evaluated based on their physical appearances including attractiveness and form, neglecting other essential qualities such as a person’s character which is important.

In *The American Dream*, the couple is having a wired discussion in the living room. Mommy tells Daddy that she can reach satisfaction, but he cannot due to his physical limitations and his loss of control in performing household tasks that require physical strength. Mommy reveals that with her material substance, she can get whatever she desires. Her body fulfills her needs. In contrast to Daddy, he is unable to reach fulfillment; he does not possess a physique to fulfill activities in the house. Edward Albee writes,

Mommy: You can't get satisfaction; just try. I can get satisfaction, but you can't.

Daddy: I've been trying for two weeks and it isn't so much for my sake; I can always go to the club

Mommy: It isn't so much for my sake, either; I can go for shopping

Daddy: It's really for Grandma's sake¹.

In the play, Daddy is emasculated; his wife describes him as a weak character due to his operation, which consists of the removal of his male's reproductive organs: the phallus or penis and the testicles. Thus, she mistreats and dominates him; she is depicted as strong and ruthless. Daddy is deprived of his masculinity; he does not feel like a complete man, his manliness makes him different from other men. Albee writes,

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 Governor... it would be nearer the apartment, you know.

Mrs.Barker: You're fortunate, Daddy.

Daddy: Yes, indeed; except that I get these qualms now and then, definite ones².

The preceding passage implies that Daddy divulges his experience concerning the surgical procedure he undergoes to Mrs.Barker where his genitals are transformed, replacing his male anatomy with a female one; his sexuality is affected by his past event, rather than being centered as a biological feature. Additionally, Daddy wants to be a Governor next to his house to be near his partner. However, he has a lack of manhood that renders him incapable of political leadership

In Albee's play, Mommy says that Daddy had tracts before, but following the operation he now has tubes in his body; tubes may refer to the fallopian tubes or tubal ligations which are an essential component of the reproductive female anatomy, while tracts refer to male genitals. In the play, Daddy is deprived of his masculine essence and qualities, which affect his sense of identity.

Daddy: Don't mention tubes to me.

Mommy: Oh! Mommy forgot!

(To Mrs Barker)

Daddy has tubes now, where he used to have tracts.

Mrs Barker: Is that a fact!⁴

From the above passage, Daddy experiences a sense of disconnection, his body's appearance does not align with his masculinity, and he seems to have women attributes. In this context, Michel Foucault writes,

The body is historically and culturally specific entity', that is, it is viewed, treated and indeed experienced differently depending on the social context and the historical period. In this sense, bodies are always subject to change and can never be regarded as natural; they are rather experienced as mediated through different social constructions of the body³.

According to Foucault, an individual's body is not fixed and natural, but constantly influenced and shaped by various social constructions. Simply put, the way in which a person perceives his or her physical appearance is not only molded by physical features, but it is also impacted by historical and social conditions including health conditions and the process of aging. Additionally, the body is controlled by different peoples and cultures through time.

Edward Albee portrays the middle class couple Mommy and Daddy pioneering in getting the bumble of joy, "a bumble of their own"⁵. Hence, the child returns to be the scariest nightmare for them, since their expectations are not met. Grandma recounts to Mrs. Barker the couple's story of the child they adopted from the Bye -Bye Adoption Service twenty years ago, and how the bumble underwent through a process of disembodiment at the hands of a frightened Mommy in which all his organs were removed. Analyzing Mommy's

character, we can notice that she is a cruel mother who has no feelings towards her family.

Albee writes,

Grandma: Weeeeelll... in the first place, it turned out the bumble didn't look like either one of its parents. That was enough of a blow, but things got worse. One night, it cried its heart out, if you can imagine such a thing.

Mrs.Barker: Cried its heart out! Well!

Grandma: But that was only the beginning. Then it turned out it only had eyes for its Daddy.

Mrs.Barker: For its Daddy! Why, any self-respecting woman would have gouged those eyes right out of its head.⁶

From the above conversation between Mrs Barker and Grandma, the domineering Mommy breaks the connection between the father and the son by blinding its bumble. In this context, Judith Butler states: “to know the significance of something is to know why it matters, where “to matter” means at once “to materialize” and “to mean”.⁷ According to Butler, the body functions as a conflict in history, it could not ensure a life free from troubles. Human beings can forcibly let their bodies exist, appear in a bodily form, and even to materialize; that is the case with the bumble of joy, when it started to experience its body and developing infant stages, his Mommy tortures it, and renders it dematerialized. Thus, individuals live their bodies in relation to the other's view or gaze. Albee writes,

Grandma: That's what they thought. But then, 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.⁸

Mommy notices that her adopted child starts to touch his “sex”, she cuts off “its hands off at the wrists” and his tongue.⁹ When satisfaction is not reached with the bumble of joy, the couple gets rid of it like an unwanted object. In the context of that era, specifically about the Fifties, America was identified as an age of consumerism and conformism, the middle-class couple's relationship revolved around fulfilling consumer goods, instead of fostering emotional connection. Since the body is commercialized as a goods; people can buy and sell it to reach satisfaction and fulfillment. Accordingly, Albee succeeds in revealing the

deteriorating norms and beliefs of the American society after the war by portraying the state of married women at that period.

In *The American Dream*, Albee represents American society in the Fifties that placed considerable emphasis on the physical appearances of both men and women. The Young Man is depicted as a perfect human being due to his outward appearance, including muscles and form.

Grandma: Unh- hunh... will you look at those muscles!

Young Man: (Flexing his muscles)

Yes, they're quite good, aren't they?

Grandma: Boy, they sure are. They natural?

Young Man: Well the basic structure

was there, but I've done some work, too ...

you know, in a gym.

Grandma: I'll bet you have. You ought to be in the movies, boy.

Young Man: Yes I know.¹⁰

The preceding excerpt highlights that the Young Man's body allures Grandma. In her eyes, he is perfect and flawless. This becomes observable when she says, "You ought to be in the movies, boy."¹¹ This signifies that the Young Man's physical substance is like the ones Grandma watches in the movies. Thus, we can deduce that Grandma lives in a superficial society, where the focus is on the outside not the inside, the focus on the appearances rather than whom a person is really. Additionally, the Young Man represents the new generation of Americans imitating television models through copying the clothing fashions, hairs styles and engaging in activities at the Gym. This imitation reflects how deeply the media has impacted American society.

In the play, the Young Man appears in the apartment to replace his murdered twin. Grandma is astounded by his attractive beauty and freshness; he embodies the image of what a nuclear family seeks to have in a son. Even though the Young Man is physically perfect, he constantly feels empty and sterile because he is unable to feel anything since his brother is murdered.

Young Man: No, no. It's part of the interview. I'll be happy to tell you. 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.

Grandma: What do you mean, incomplete? You look pretty complete to me.¹²

The Young Man is physically flawless, but he does not possess interiority. He is willing to do anything to compensate for his lack. Thus, he is reduced to the status of a servile object. Grandma calls him the American Dream, since he represents the child that a couple desires and wants to own. In this context, Judith Butler argues that: "For to be material means to materialize, where the principle of that materialization is precisely what "matters" about that body, its very intelligibility."¹³ According to Butler, the process of materialisation is what matters about the body, its capacity of being understood. In fact, possessing materiality has something to do with the procedure of materialization. The latter describes the material form of someone; one's body is what matters. When addressing the case of the Young Man, who appears externally perfect; his outward appearance conforms to social norms of perfection and beauty. Despite his appearance, he can still have difficulties in feeling entirely understood by others. The quote indicates that having a physical form is not an essential requirement for understanding and being heard. There exist other elements, including emotional and mental components, that play a significant role in a person's intelligibility.

Through our analysis of the play, we notice that Mommy, a domineering and abusive wife, considers the Young Man as an object and a means of gratification. She refers to him by using the pronoun "it" that indicates that the middle-class couple finds fulfillment. The neuter pronoun refers to satisfaction. Mommy treats the Young Man as an object and a commodity.

Mommy: (Herself again, circling the Young Man, feeling his arm, poking him)

Yes, sir! Yes, Sirree! Now this is more like it. Now, this is a great deal more like it! Daddy! Come see. Come see if this isn't a great deal more like it.

Daddy: I... I can see from here, Mommy. It does look a great deal more like it.¹⁴

Mommy merely represents the nation's desire, which is fuelled by selfishness and superficiality. According to Mommy, the Young Man exudes bodily satisfaction; he is the new American Dream that every couple desires to possess since he is the perfect image spread by the media, especially television.

2- The Body As a Matter in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965):

In the play, Max, the patriarch, employs a plenty of rude vocabularies and expressions in his speech when he first meets his son's wife Ruth. His incorporation of harsh language toward Ruth on their initial encounter reveals his chauvinist attitude. Max attacks Ruth and reduces her into an object and a body.

Max: Who's this?

Teddy: I was just going to introduce you.

Max: Who asked you to bring tarts in here?

Teddy: Tarts?

Max: Who asked you to bring dirty tarts into this house?

Teddy: Listen, don't be silly-

Max: You been here all night?

Teddy: Yes, we arrived from Venice--

Max: We've had a smelly scrubber in my house all night. We've had a stinking pox-ridden slut in my house all night

Teddy: Stop it! What are you talking about?

Max: I haven't seen the bitch for six years, he comes without a word, he brings a scrubber off the street, he shacks up in my house!

Teddy: She's my wife! We're married!¹⁵

In this sense, Judith Butler states, "And here the question is not whether or not there ought to be reference to matter, just as the question never has been whether or not there ought to be speaking about women."¹⁶ From Butler's standpoint, a woman is merely perceived through the lens of her physical being and her sexuality is associated with her physicality, matter and demarcated to the reproductive system. Additionally, the body's sexuality is materialized, through the formation of standards. In fact, this physical entity is not biologically defined, rather it is culturally constructed in a society that is trying to strip the individuality of woman, and reduce her to an instrument. A woman is born to be a matter, her materiality cannot be reduced. To put it another way, "woman represents a descent into materiality."¹⁷This suggests

that people are defined and classified by society according to their gender; a woman is minimized and reduced to the outward features and status as a commodity. However, she has an array of competencies and skills that surpasses her physical appearance by contributing to society. Thus, Ruth in the play is depicted as a matter and a body.

The home structure is centered on patriarchal values, the female character has no right to manifest, and she should be completely discrete and refrain from expressing any of her desires, while the father is responsible for the family and exerts his authority over his family members.

Max: I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since your mother died. My word of honour. (To Joey.) Have you ever had a whore here? Has Lenny ever had a whore here?

They come back from America, they bring the slopbucket with them. They bring the bedpan with them. (To Teddy) Take that disease away from me. Get her away from me.

Teddy: She's my wife.¹⁸

Pinter represents the woman character Ruth as being different; she is not only seen as a whore but also as a filthy and dangerous creature. In the play, Max declares his dominance in the household, describing Ruth as a “whore”, “disease”, “slopbucket”¹⁹ and as the figure of conflict and the disturbance of the domestic balance. She is merely an object for sex without fully understanding her personal needs. Pinter highlights the misinterpretation of the body through the male gaze. In this context, Judith Butler asserts:

No wonder then that the feminine appears for Irigaray only in catachresis, that is, in those figures that function improperly, as an improper transfer of sense, the use of a proper name to describe that which does not properly belong to it, and that return to haunt and coopt the very language from which the feminine is excluded. This explains in part the radical citational practice of Irigaray, the catachrestic usurpation of the “proper” for fully improper purposes.²⁰

The quote above implies that the feminine is permitted to be present in speech through catachresis, which results in inaccurate portrayal of it; proper pertains to guidelines and conventions that specify how language describes femininity. In this sense, Max reveals verbal violence toward Ruth through using harsh and aggressive speech to describe her femininity.

In *The Homecoming*, Lenny, a pimp, puts forward a proposition wherein he suggests that Ruth might remain in England, proposing her the role of a prostitute and striving to change her from a parental figure to a whore for the sake of earning money in the “Greek Street”.

Lenny: Eh, Dad.

Lenny walks forward.

I’ve got a better idea.

Max: What?

Lenny: There’s no need for us to go to all this expense. I know these women. Once they get started they ruin your budget. I’ve got a better idea. Why don’t I take her up with me to Greek Street?

Pause

Max: You mean put her on the game?

Pause.

We’ll put her on the game. That’s stroke of genius, that’s a marvellous idea. You mean that she can earn the money herself-on her back?

Lenny: Yes.²¹

In terms of this particular concern, Judith Butler claims:

The body that is reason dematerializes the bodies that may not properly stand for reason or its replicas, and yet this is a figure in crisis, for this body of reason is itself the phantasmatic dematerialization of masculinity, one which requires that women and slaves, children and animals be the body, perform the bodily functions, that it will not perform.²²

As noted in the above statement, there exists a specific sort of body that is connected with logic and reason. The latter seeks to undervalue other bodies, feminine ones, that do not correspond to the concept of rationality. In fact, the masculine body appeals to other bodies to carry out the bodily tasks that it considers beyond it; women are supposed to perform physical duties successfully that the masculine body rejects to perform. In the play, Ruth’s body is exposed to particular tasks that men advise women to execute, such as being a prostitute; her body is reduced to a particular object to act roles that are devalued by the masculine figure.

2- Marriage and Motherhood: New Jobs for Women in Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965):

Marriage and motherhood are common subjects in Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965). Women must produce a child as a fruit of their marriage in order to form a family filled with love and peace. Getting married and being a mother at the same time is a job. Women must assign certain tasks, including child rearing, supporting the husband, and performing domestic responsibilities. In other words, children and husbands are priorities for women. Due to their involvement with children, they are unable to take care of themselves and fulfil their objectives. In this context, Simone De Beauvoir claims: "marriage in a word is a more advantageous career than many others".²³ It is clear from the quotation that women are persuaded that marriage is a fundamental project that should be realized. With marriage, a woman can reach her wants and desires.

II. Marriage and Motherhood:

A. Marriage and Motherhood: New Jobs for Women in Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961):

1. Marriage:

At the beginning of Edward Albee's *The American Dream*, Mommy reveals that one of the primary advantages of marrying a wealthy man is to have access to his fortune to purchase goods; it is well explained in the following passage. Mommy argues,

You should. I have a right to live off of you because I married you, and because I used to let you get on top of me and bump your uglies; and I have a right to all your money when you die. And when you do, Grandma and I can live by ourselves... if she's still here. Unless you have her put away in a nursing home.²⁴

It is clear from the excerpt above that Mommy believes that money is the only thing that counts, and that marriage is the driver for her to significantly boost her commercial interests.

She offers her physique to her partner to satisfy his sexual desires in return for money. In this respect, Simone De Beauvoir claims that: “Marriage is said to be correlated with prostitution.”²⁵ According to her, the concept of marriage and the presence of prostitution are evidence that women offer themselves in marriage to men and take advantages for them. It is the case with the union between the middle aged couple that becomes a sort of agreement where both parties persist in achieving their interests; Mommy obtains financial resources she needs from Daddy.

Grandma succeeds in revealing Mommy as a greedy woman. All she wants is to marry a wealthy man who provides her with financial resources because she belongs to the new generation that values material possessions. It is revealed through Grandma’s assertions in the following conversation between Daddy and Grandma:

Daddy: I’m really very sorry, Grandma.

Grandma: I know you are; it’s Mommy over there makes all the trouble. If you’d listened to me, you wouldn’t have married her in the first place. She was a tramp and a trollop and a trull to boot, and she’s no better now.

Mommy: Grandma!

Grandma: (To Mommy)

Shut up!

(To Daddy)

When she was no more than eight years old she used to climb up on my lap and say, in a sickening little voice, “when I gwo up, I’m going to mahway 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.” And I warned you; Daddy; I told you to stay away from her type. I told you to. I did.²⁶

We can infer from the previous conversation that Grandma calls her daughter Mommy with dreadful names because she is a source of trouble. Grandma says that when Mommy was a little girl, she had the desire to get married to a wealthy old man because she was somewhat concerned with material possessions and wealth. Daddy marries Mommy despite Grandma’s caution. The institution of marriage, which was once an auspicious union has degenerated into a tool for satisfying material and sexual desires. Thus, the marriage of the couple appears to be in an unhealthy state.

In *The American Dream*, the couple's marriage appears to be undesirable from a sexual standpoint because the male character Daddy has no access to engage in sexual relations with his wife because of his sickness. The marital union between Mommy and Daddy is physically a failure.

Grandma: Humf! It's a fine time to say that. You should have got- ten rid of me a long time ago if that's the way you feel. You should have had Daddy set me up in business somewhere... I could have gone into the fur business, or I could have been a singer. But no; not you. You wanted me around so you could sleep in my room when Daddy got fresh. But now it isn't important because Daddy doesn't want to get fresh with you anymore, and I don't blame him. You'd rather sleep with me, wouldn't you, Daddy?

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

Daddy: I've been sick. I don't even want to sleep in the apartment.²⁷

From the above passage, we may understand that Daddy's sickness is due to his operation involving his sexual organs "emasculatation" that ceases from experiencing a sexual affair with women and getting fresh, especially with his wife. Indeed, the couple's marital life does not embody genuine interests for each other, leading to a convenient and dysfunctional marriage. In this perspective, the French philosopher Michel Foucault argues, "sexuality is not a natural feature or fact of human life but a constructed category of experience which has historical, social and cultural, rather than biological, origins."²⁸ In the light of Michel Foucault's argument, it is undeniably apparent that sexuality is socially constructed, and it is established by previous conditions, rather than being a biological trait that humans are born with. Accordingly, the only element that determines an individual's sexuality is his or her natural sex which may identify him or her as either male or female.

2. Motherhood:

In addition to marriage, Edward Albee weaves the play upon certain relevant issues including motherhood. He highlights motherhood as a significant theme throughout the play, Mommy's and Daddy's marital life is absurd and empty because of their sterility that

potentially leads them to experience a vapid and vacuous life. The couple has the desire of producing a child who will fulfil their dreams of becoming real Mommy and Daddy, and forming a beautiful family, but their sterility prevents them from realizing that wish. They finally adopt a child.

Grandma: Well, it was very sweet. The woman, who was very much like Mommy, said that she and the man who was very much like Daddy had never been blessed with anything very much like a bumble of joy.

Mrs.Barker: A what?

Grandma: A bumble; a bumble of joy.

Mrs.Barker: Oh, like bundle.

Grandma: Well, yes; very much like it. Bundle, bumble; who cares? At any rate; the woman, who has very much like Mommy, said that they wanted a bumble of their own, but that the man, who was very much like Daddy, couldn't have a bumble; and the man, who was very much like Daddy, said that yes, they wanted a bumble of their own, but that the woman, who was very much like Mommy, couldn't have one, and that now they wanted to buy something very much like a bumble.

Mrs.Barker: How engrossing!²⁹

In *The American Dream*, Mommy and Daddy always dream of having a bumble that may bring them a harmonious life and satisfaction. Mommy wants to be a mother, feel complete and demonstrate the cohesiveness of the nuclear family to society because mothering is what defines a woman. The couple is the representative of the Fifties.

The child does not align with Mommy's and Daddy's desired outcome. Thus, the conflict starts unfolding. The couple tortures the infant by gouging out his eyes and cutting off his hands and tongue. The trouble is ultimately finished by the death of the Bumble of Joy. Following the same idea, Wini Breins asserts, "It was argued that mothers were trying their sons to their apron strings, making babies of them, even castrating them, by being overprotective."³⁰ This means that women emasculate their children through being protective.

It is the case with Mommy when she castrates her child by removing his organs.

Grandma: Weeeeelll... in the first place, it turned out the bumble didn't look like either one of its parents. That was enough of a blow, but things got worse. One night, it cried its heart out, if you can imagine such a thing.

Mrs.Barker: cried its heart out! Well!

Grandma: But that was only the beginning. Then it turned out it only had eyes for its Daddy.

Mrs.Barker: For its Daddy! Why, any self-respecting woman would have gouged those eyes right out of its head.³¹

The above quote uncovers that the couple physically murders the baby for acting in a typical childlike behavior, expressing compassion for only one parent over the other, speaking rudely and touching its sex. The passage highlights poorly how Mommy and Daddy mistreat the child, and how the relationship between parents and children is missing genuine affection and warmth. Albee depicts Mommy as a ruthless mother who punishes her son for not satisfying her specific requirements. She perceives the child as a tool to fulfil her desires and provide her with personal satisfaction, disregarding his inherent worth. In this context, Michel Foucault argues:

The restrictions on masturbation hardly start in Europe until the eighteenth century. Suddenly, a panic theme appears: an appalling sickness develops in the Western World. Children masturbate. Via the medium of families, though not at their initiative, a system of control of sexuality, an act an objectivisation of sexuality, though thus becoming an object of analysis and concert, surveillance and control, engenders at the same time an intensification of each individual's desire, for, in and over his body. The body thus became the issue of a conflict between parents and children, the child and the instances of control.³²

According to Foucault, masturbation is a sexual behavior that is overly prohibited by the parents. Children touch their sex (masturbate) as an inherent component of their development process. However, children's sexual conducts are regulated and controlled by families to structure the development of their sexuality in accordance with social expectations. When a child engages in a sexual activity, the parents murder him. This is the case with the infant, when he starts touching his sex, his Mommy cuts off his hands.

The Young Man appears on the stage to replace the murdered twin and to bring satisfaction to the middle class couple. He is manifested as physically active, his muscularity and form unravel the strength he possesses. For Mommy, having children is not a strategy to realize her identity and duty as a woman, but rather a means to reach the fulfillment as a married woman. In this regard, Wini Breins asserts, "In the 1950s, the single acceptable goal

for women was to find fulfilment in the family as wives and mothers.”³³ To put it another way, the fulfillment for women is realized through the bonds of marriage and the joys of motherhood.

Mommy: Well, everybody take a glass.

(They do)

And we'll drink to celebrate. To satisfaction! Who says you can't get satisfaction these days!

Mrs.Barker: What dreadful sauterne!

Mommy: Yes isn't it?

(To Young Man, her voice already a little fuzzy from the wine)

You don't know how happy I am to see you! Yes siree.

Listen, that time we had with... with the other one. I'll tell you about it some time.³⁴

Mommy and Daddy are finally satisfied by owning the Young Man. Mommy pocks his muscles and admires his attractive physical appearance, but she does not experience the maternal emotions. She makes a vow to inform him about the struggles she had with the last child. It is worth mentioning that Mommy has never experienced motherhood, perhaps she does not want to experience the pain of raising a child. At the end, she seems to be satisfied with the Young Man because he is grown-up.

To sum up, Mommy's rude behavior with every character in the play is due to her unhappiness in her marital life. The basis of marriage is to keep the married couple together through the process of bearing children, and without having children, the marriage cannot be accomplished and complete. Motherhood and marriage are rejected jobs for mommy since she does not want the sense of responsibility.

B -Marriage and Motherhood: New Jobs for Women in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965:

1 -Marriage:

Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* depicts the story of Teddy, a philosophy professor, and his return to his family home with his wife Ruth after six years of absence. They come to

visit Teddy's family in London. They are Teddy's brothers Lenny and Joey, as well as Teddy's father Max, a former butcher. No one in the family knows that Teddy has a wife and three children. Teddy and Ruth arrive at night at the apartment, numerous insights into their marital life come to light when Ruth decides to go for a stroll and leave her husband at home.

Ruth: I think I'll have a breath of air.

Teddy: Air?

Pause.

What do you mean?

Ruth: (Standing). Just as stroll.

Teddy: At this time of night? But we've ...only just got here. We've got to go to bed.

Ruth: I just feel like some air,

Teddy: But I'm going to bed?

Ruth: That's alright.³⁵

This conversation between Ruth and her husband entails that there is something wrong in their marital life; it reveals how uncomfortable they are with each other and how miserable their marriage is. Teddy ascends alone to his former room, while Ruth chooses to go for a stroll to express her inner need for liberty. Her aim to discover the outer world is due to her constrained domestic life which resulted in her misery and sadness.

Marriage is explored as an important subject in the play through the protagonist Ruth. It is depicted as a new career for the feminine gender. Ruth married Teddy, a philosophy professor at an American university. She rears three children in the United States, while Teddy is the pivotal figure and decision-maker in the household. He has always been followed by his wife and children. Teddy argues,

She's a great help to me over there. She's a wonderful wife and mother. She's very popular woman. She's got lots of friends. It's a great life; at the university ...you know...it's a very good life. We've got a lovely house. We've got all... we've got everything we want. It's a very stimulating environment.³⁶

From the above quote, Ruth dedicated her entire life supporting her husband's necessities and raising her children, taking care of them and neglecting her personal needs. Her kids are, after all, the essence of her life. However, Teddy appears to be an egotistical character, as he

disregards the demands of his wife. Ruth's desires and wishes are rebuffed by her husband. Moreover, Teddy's purpose is having a beautiful and an ideal wife, who rears children and occupies the home in the suburbs which is reached. In this context, the French philosopher Luce Irigaray argues, "the feminine, to use a catachresis, is domesticated and rendered intelligible within a phallogocentrism that claims to be self-constituting."³⁷ Women are men's possessions, like dolls, and they are not allowed to express themselves in certain ways. This is the case with Ruth who experienced the same conditions as the American middle class woman of the 1950s and 1960s.

Teddy requires Ruth only because of the roles she occupies at home. He always neglects her needs; thus, she becomes a miserable wife. Ruth admits to Max that she was someone else before meeting Teddy. She intends to highlight how getting married has dramatically transformed her into a maternal and domestic figure, the woman Teddy desired. Ruth assumes, I was a model before I went away....No... I was a model for the body. A photographic model for the body.³⁸ There is a resemblance that can be drawn between Ruth and the Young Man in *The American Dream* as their past experiences align in certain aspects; Ruth pursued a career as a photographic model exploiting her body in the modelling industry, while the Young Man had a parallel stint as a photographic model. In *The Homecoming*, Ruth admits that she once worked as a prostitute before getting married to Teddy, and she explains how her life is affected after getting married. Ruth feels trapped after getting married to Teddy. She has various wants and desires; she feels unfulfilled and unhappy in her union with her husband because of the roles and responsibilities that Teddy assigns her to perform and fulfil in her daily life.

B.1 Motherhood:

In addition to marriage, the theme of motherhood is a significant subject. Jessie and Ruth are two female characters in the play, belonging to two different generations who have

had similar experiences and lives. Both are married and have three sons, but they still engage in sexual affairs with other men, which highlights that both characters play the dual roles of mother and whore. Simone De Beauvoir claims that “marriage, by frustrating women’s erotic satisfaction, denies them the freedom and individuality of their feelings, drives them to adultery.”³⁹In other words, marriage is a very challenging occurrence that frustrates both parties, more specifically women. It is perceived as a burden for them and becomes prostitution since women’s desires and freedoms are denied to them, this is the case with Ruth.

Ruth decides to stay in London with her husband’s brothers and father to perform the role of prostitute, leaving her children and husband alone in America. She accepts the proposal of her husband’s family members to become a prostitute that probably allows her to exploit her body in return for money, instead of being a depressed mother and wife. Ashley Jeanette Beard states that “Friedan’s examination led her to see the relegation of the American female to a domestic sphere in which she experienced pain, dissatisfaction, and self-loathing”⁴⁰. According to Betty Friedan, in the Fifties, women were confined and were expected to find fulfillment solely within the realm of domestic responsibilities. However, this confinement experienced by women led them to negative emotional experiences for them including dissatisfaction and pain.

Ruth: I would naturally want to draw up in inventory of everything I would need which would require your signatures in the presence of witness.

Lenny: Naturally

Ruth: All aspects of agreement and conditions of employment would have to be clarified to our mutual satisfaction we finalize the contract.

Lenny: of course.⁴¹

It is clear that Ruth breaks society’s imposed and prescribed standards and conventions by assuming the role of a whore for financial profits, abandoning her children and her husband, Teddy. It is notable from the passage that Ruth discusses about the employment conditions as a professional woman in the realm of adultery and prostitution. Luce Irigaray assumes:

To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself-inasmuch as she is on the side of the “perceptible”, of “matter”- to “ideas”, in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make “visible”, by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover up of a possible operation of the feminine in language.⁴²

According to Irigaray, mimesis is an act of resistance and defiance that involves women’s attempt to restore their reputation in society and undermine its stereotypes. In this particular situation, Ruth, the stereotype of mother and housewife, decides to remain in England, abandoning her children and husband. This can be seen as an act of resistance against the predetermined role that is placed upon her. Mommy in Albee’s *The American Dream* and Ruth in Pinter’s *The Homecoming*, are not considered as genuine mothers due to their failure to fulfil their responsibilities; their intentions lie elsewhere, not in nurturing children. Mommy’s name carries a subtle irony and conveys the image of a nurturing figure, commonly associated with motherhood, but these traits are absent. When it comes to Ruth, she actively engages in manipulation and dominance contrary to the expected traits associated with the name Ruth.

To sum up, we can say that both plays under study explore the theme of body as a matter through the portrayal of characters’ experiences. The plays investigate the notions of marriage and motherhood as projects, and as a considerable responsibility. Marriage is portrayed as a new career for women that is based and centered on financial considerations and personal interests for both partners, instead of being built on reciprocal compassion and loyalty. Home for married women is depicted throughout the plays as an unreliable refuge, which conveys a hazy feeling of domesticity and a sense of responsibility. Additionally, Motherhood is depicted in the plays as a heavy burden for women; all what female characters seek is their own satisfaction, not children’s responsibility and care. Women do not want children responsibility, only the older generation who thought it was good for them.

Endnotes:

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- 2-Ibid. p.83.
- 3-Milles, Sara. *Michel Foucault*. London and New York, 2003, p.83.
- 4-Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York : Signet Books, 1961, pp. 89-90.
- 5-Ibid. p.98.
- 6- Ibid. p.99.
- 7-Buter, Judith. *Bodies That Matter On The Discursive Limits Of Sex*. New York : Routledge, 1993, p.32.
- 8-Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York : Signet Books, 1961, p.100.
- 9-Ibid. p.100.
- 10-Ibid. pp. 106-107.
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- 13-Buter, Judith. *Bodies That Matter On The Discursive Limits Of Sex*. New York : Routledge, 1993, p.32.
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- 33-Ibid. p.33.
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- 36-Ibid. p.40.
- 37-Buter, Judith. *Bodies That Matter On The Discursive Limits Of Sex*. New York : Routledge, 1993, p.39.
- 38-Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. New York : Grove Press, 1965, p.44.
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- 40- Jeanette Beard, Ashley. *The Happy Housewife Fulfillment and the Role of Mother Post World War II*. Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Department of History of Vanderbilt University, 1999, p.1.
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Chapter Two: Gender Performativity in Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965)

This chapter explores Gender Performativity in Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965). It focuses on the manner in which gender is manifested and constructed through characters' behaviors, conducts, gestures, and speeches. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler exposes her theory of Gender Performativity. She asserts that gender is performative which implies that the reiterative actions and performances carried out by men and women are socially prescribed in a given culture. Gender is not natural, but it is a social and cultural product. To say it differently, men and women are permitted to behave and perform their gender identity the way they find suitable for them, since it is not inherent.

1. Gender Performativity in Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961):

Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) examines the notion of Gender Performativity through the portrayal of these characters' performances and deeds on stage. At the beginning of the play, Edward Albee portrays the main character Daddy as being weak, passive and unable to experience satisfaction. He remains in anticipation for someone to come and mend the leak, the icebox, and the doorbell. The following passage illustrates this point:

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...

Mommy: And one month's, security...

Daddy: ...and one month's security. They were quick enough to check my references; they were quick enough about all that. But now! But now, try to get the icebox fixed, try to get the doorbell fixed, try to get the leak in the johnny fixed! Just try it... they aren't so quick about that.

Mommy: Of course not; it never fails. People think they can get away with anything these days ...and, of course they can. I went to buy a new hat yesterday.¹

From the above excerpt, we can deduce that Daddy's act of waiting for someone to do household tasks indicates his passivity. Despite being a man, he is unable "to fix the leak, the icebox, the doorbell"² and find assistance in resolving these problems. His act illustrates his emasculation in performing household tasks that typically require physical strength. In this regard, Judith Butler asserts, "gender qualities are not expressive but performative."³ According to her, the recognition of one's gender relies on the habits and performances that he or she engages in. In order to gain an understanding of the cultural significance of the human body, one should pay more attention to the acts of the reproductive behaviors. For instance, Daddy's attributes are associated with femininity, and the lack of physical strength is due to his advanced age. He experiences the challenges of diminished abilities, and he has lost all control within his household tasks, even simple activities such as repairing the leak, the icebox and the doorbell are beyond his capabilities.

Daddy is portrayed as a weak and submissive character throughout the play because of his emasculation and surgery; he is deprived of his masculinity. Thus, he frequently asks Mommy to confirm about his masculinity, and she responds with the positive, which is in reality the opposite. Daddy's inquiry to his wife regarding his decisiveness suggests that he reveals his doubts and insecurities about his masculinity and manhood.

Mommy: Open the door.

Daddy: Was I firm about it?

Mommy: Oh, so firm; so firm.

Daddy: And was I decisive?

Mommy: So decisive! Oh, I shivered.

Daddy: And masculine? Was I really masculine?

Mommy: Oh Daddy, you were so masculine; I shivered and fainted.⁴

In this context, Judith Butler claims:

The body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities, a complicated process of appropriation which any phenomenological theory of embodiment needs to describe. In order to describe the gendered body, a phenomenological theory of constitution

requires an expansion of the conventional view of acts to mean both that which constitutes meaning and that through which meaning is performed or enacted. In other words, the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts.⁵

From the aforementioned statement, we can say that society has an invaluable impact on gender identities. Butler makes the claim that the respective functions that people perform are not innate realities; they are rather socially assigned ones that establish their boundaries and restrictions. To put it more plainly, humans must be aware of how they can decide and choose their gender. In this case, Daddy performs his gender identity that does not align with his biological sex through his performative act, which is revealed in the play when he goes to open the door. It is clear through Daddy's statement: "Was I really masculine?"⁶ that his manner of expression demonstrates his lack of self-confidence and his doubt of his masculinity.

Mommy is initially portrayed as strong, materialistic and ruthless. She behaves rudely with her husband Daddy, imposing her control over him. Mommy compels her husband to listen and pay attention to her speech to realize how attentively and carefully Daddy listens to her. However, Daddy is not genuinely interested in Mommy's speech, and he displays a lack of concern toward her requests. The point is highlighted in the following conversation:

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.⁷

In this regard, Judith Butler asserts that "Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood in part as a culturally sustained temporal duration."⁸ From Butler's perspective, gender performances which are produced repetitively, establish what is identified as habits. To put it differently, Judith Butler believes that these performances resemble rituals when they are repeatedly enacted and performed.

Mommy mocks her husband's passivity and manipulates him like a doll since he accepts mommy's request. When Mrs. Barker arrives, Mommy asks Daddy to open the door and he obeys. However, Grandma does not want to stare at him while opening the door because of the reversal of the traditional gender roles. In her conversation with Daddy, she says:

Mommy: Oh look at you! You're turning into jelly; you're indecisive; you're a woman.

Daddy: All right. Watch me now; I'm going to open the door. Watch. Watch!

Mommy: We're watching; we're watching.

Grandma: I'm not.

Daddy: Watch now; it's opening.

(He opens the door)

It's open!¹⁰

In this light, Judith Butler claims that: "Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporal acts to express signs and other discursive means".¹¹ The quote suggests that individuals' actions are not solely authentic representations of themselves, but rather they are shaped by physical expressions. These actions form an identity that may not necessarily align with people's inherent nature. Daddy complies with whatever Mommy requests him to do which means that his identity is not an inherent aspect of his personality, but rather it is constructed through his acts.

In *The American Dream*, Mrs. Barker is a female character who enters into a discussion with the overbearing Daddy's wife. Mommy inquires Mrs. Barker if she would be interested in having a cigarette, drink and crossing her legs. In western culture, when a woman crosses her legs, it is commonly associated with both physical comfort and a sense of personal freedom. It is stated in the subsequent passage:

Mommy: Would you like a cigarette, and a drink, and would you like to cross your legs?

Mrs. Barker: You forgot yourself, Mommy; I'm a professional woman. But I will cross my legs.
Daddy: Yes, make yourself comfortable.
Mrs. Barker: I don't mind if I do.¹²

The excerpt above indicates that Mrs. Barker is persuaded by the socially enforced norms of culture. Despite the cultural restrictions imposed on women concerning smoking, drinking and sitting with crossed legs, she defies these norms and embodies the stereotypes of contemporary women by engaging in such behaviors. In this light, Butler asserts that "Women need not to be the cultural construction of the female body."¹³ We can infer from the statement that women have the right to establish their new roles to fulfill according to their own will, not social ones.

Mommy invites Mrs. Barker to remove her dress in front of Daddy, and she complies. By behaving in this manner, she demonstrates to the reader of the play and the audience that she is an emancipated woman who is unconcerned with conforming to the standards of her society. It is pertinent to note that Daddy ejaculates in his pants upon seeing Barker undresses.

Mommy: Yes, I do, don't I? Are you sure you're comfortable?
Won't you take off your dress?
Mrs. Barker: I don't mind if I do.
(She removes her dress)
Mommy: There. You must feel a great deal more comfortable.
Mrs. Barker: Well, I certainly look a great more comfortable
Daddy: I'm going to blush and giggle.¹⁴

In this regard Judith Butler states:

The task for women, is to assume the position of the authoritative, speaking subject- which is in some sense their ontologically grounded "right"- and to overthrow both the category of sex and the system of compulsory heterosexuality.¹⁵

The previous statement implies that women and men have the freedom to reject and deviate from the predetermined social conventions and norms. It is for individuals to subvert and live autonomously without social burdens. Mrs. Barker diverges from social norms by adopting

masculine attributes and engaging in traditional man's actions, including undressing in the presence of a man. There is a switch in gender roles.

Mommy consistently compels Grandma to comply with her instructions and remain silent. Grandma is treated as an infant by Daddy and Mommy. She does whatever they want. It unveils a situation where Mommy prevents her mother from uttering a single word and observes silently. From this behavior that Mommy embodies the figure of the mother earth, and as being a mother to everyone including her own biological mother.

Mommy: Well all right, you can watch; but don't you dare say a word.
Grandma: Old people are very good at listening; old people don't like to talk; old people have colitis and lavender perfume. Now I'm going to be quite.¹⁶

From the above passage, Grandma is not accorded the respect she deserves from her family members due to her adherence to traditional values and her advanced age. However, Mommy and Daddy in their midlife distance themselves from the old values, and they actively embrace their gender roles in a way that deviates from traditional norms. By doing so, Mommy exhibits a disrespectful behavior towards Grandma and treats her in an unacceptable manner when she commands, "you can watch; but don't you dare say a word."¹⁷ This implies that she treats her as a child by constantly dictating to her what to do.

Mommy attacks Grandma with her rude utterances by asserting that elderly individuals lack meaningful words to say. Grandma holds the belief that her daughter lacks certain qualities and subtly reminds her that she is a middle aged woman. This point is highlighted in the following conversation:

Grandma: Well, you got the rhythm, but you don't really have the quality. Besides, You're middle-aged.
Mommy: I'm proud of it!
Grandma: Look. I'll show you how it's really done. Middle-aged people think they can do anything, but the truth is that middle-aged people can't do most things as well as they used to. Middle-aged people think they're special

because they're like every body else. We live in the age of deformity. You see? Rhythm and content. You'll learn.¹⁸

Grandma asserts that middle aged people are unable to accomplish a great deal of tasks. Middle aged people are representatives and archetypes of their societies; they witness a decline in their physical capabilities, lacking strength and energy compared to their earlier years. Additionally, we attain an understanding of Grandma's claim that "we live in the age of deformity", which refers to the deteriorated society that has forsaken its values and principles and even strayed from its initial state. Within the play, the characters struggle to defy social norms and highlighting the deformity that can emerge from gender roles.

Grandma attacks Mommy using rude and aggressive words, saying that she was born with a deformed head, banana head, which implies that she pertains to physical abnormalities which refers to her decreased cognitive deficit.

Grandma: She means enema bags, but she does not know the difference. 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.

Mommy: You ungrateful- Daddy? Daddy, you seen how ungrateful she is after all these years, after all things we've done for her.

(To Grandma)

One of these days you're going away in a van; that's what's going to happen to you.¹⁹

Grandma frequently insults Mommy to debase her. In a similar context, Butler argues that: "Performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names."²⁰ According to Butler, performativity is an ongoing process that unfolds repeatedly over time rather than being confined to a singular event. It implies that performativity's essence lies not only in individuals' actions, but in the repetitive nature of the practice embedded within discourse including language and social norms to produce and describe a particular effect. Examining Grandma's acts through the framework of performativity allows us to understand her aggressive speech that generates effects that align with the names she attributes to

Mommy. In this case, Grandma's comment to her daughter's head can be interpreted as an example of gendered language, possibly suggesting that the daughter's head appearance does not conform to the social codes of femininity.

2. Gender Performativity in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*:

In Harold Pinter's play, the first act reveals a one sided discussion between Max and his son, Lenny. Max seeks the attention of Lenny through his quest for scissors to cut out a paper, and Lenny does not respond to him, shedding light on their distinct traits. This is elucidated in the subsequent exchange:

Max: What have you done with the scissors?

Pause.

I said I'm looking for the scissors. What have you done with them?

Pause.

Did you hear me? I want to cut something out of the paper.

Lenny: I'm reading the paper.

Max: Not that paper. I haven't even read that paper. I'm talking about last Sunday's paper. I was just having a look at it in the kitchen.

Pause.

Do you hear me what I'm saying? I'm talking to you! Where's the scissors?

Lenny: (looking up, quietly). Why don't you shut up? You daft prat?²¹

Lenny remains irrespective of his father's conversation by requesting him to refrain from speaking and remain silent. Through the performance of this action, we notice that the imbalanced conversation reveals the lack of a harmonious relationship between them; Lenny's relation with Max is similar to the relationship between Mommy and Grandma in Albee's *The American Dream*, both of Lenny and Mommy display a lack of concern for their parents' speech. Taking this context into consideration; Judith Butler argues, "The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body"²². From her standpoint, gender performativity is not something predetermined at birth, it is rather constructed and created through performative acts. These acts include the way individuals manifest themselves. Max repeats whatever he says to Lenny. By doing so, his

reiterative words establish what we call gender performativity. In other words, this repetitive act of speech can be seen as a form of performative language.

Max, the head of the household and his brother, Sam, assume and embrace the responsibilities that are typically attributed to mothers and wives including cooking and cleaning. Max fulfills the role of a caregiver to his sons. As it is mentioned in the following excerpt:

Max: I hate this room.

Pause.

It's the kitchen I like. It's nice in there. It's cosy.

Pause.

But I can't stay in there. You know why? Because he's always washing up in there, scraping the plates, driving me out of The Kitchen, That's why.

Joey: Why don't you bring your tea in here?

Max: I don't want to bring my tea in here. I hate it here. I want to drink my tea in there²³.

It is apparent from the passage that Max enjoys being in the kitchen, but his feelings change when he discovers his brother's presence in there. He performs and participates in feminine tasks since the death of the matriarch who used to do them for him. Through Max's and Sam's acts, we observe a reversal of traditional gender roles that are typically associated with women, but they are now embraced by men.

Ruth engages in a discussion with Teddy's family members in the living room, crossing her legs, and trying to draw the gaze and the attention of the male characters with her tempting movements through describing her physical motions and movements using a seductive language, and displaying the passion she possesses for her inner desires. Ruth says,

Don't be too sure though. You've forgotten something. Look at me. I...move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear ...underwear...which moves with me ...it ... capture your attention, Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg...moving. My lips move. Why don't You restrict...you're your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant... than the words which come through them. You must bear that ...possibility ...in mind.

Silence

Teddy stands.²⁴

The passage above illustrates how Ruth's act is deliberately designed to seduce and attract male characters' sexual desires. She also attempts to adopt a set of standards that indicate her complete break from conventional beliefs and assigned behaviors that are dictated for women. In a parallel way, Mrs. Barker in *The American Dream* acts and behaves like Ruth. Both of them challenge and subvert the predefined gender roles assigned to women and men. In relation to this, Butler writes:

The gender reality is created through sustained social performances, means that the notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames or masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.²⁵

Hence, according to Butler, it is imperative to surpass the limitations of socially constructed behavior. In her view, there is no intrinsic reality that inherently denigrates women while elevating men. Both genders should be entitled to equal rights, a reality that remains elusive in society. Both characters share common attributes and represent the image of the contemporary women, willingly subverting the social conventions placed upon them.

Ruth exerts dominance over Lenny during their sexual game through dancing and flirting. Subsequently, she initiates in foreplay with her brother-in-law Joey in the presence of their family members, Max and Teddy, disregarding any display of respect towards them.

Joey: Christ, she's wide open.
She's a tart.
Pause
Old Lenny's got a tart in here
Joey goes to them. He takes Ruth's arm. He smiles at Lenny. He sits with Ruth on the sofa, embraces and kisses her.
He looks up at Lenny.
Just up my street.
He leans her back until she lies beneath him. He kisses her.
He looks up at Teddy and Max.²⁶

Ruth openly flirts with her brother-in-law in the presence of her husband Teddy and her father-in-law; and she fearlessly expresses her sexuality without any sense of shame. Her act

reflects her effort to assert her independence and autonomy. In this specific context, Butler argues:

Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts there would be no gender at all.²⁷

In this sense, Ruth embraces a code of fundamental principles that starkly diverge from conventional beliefs and standards, which show her deviation. She challenges socially assigned activities which are associated with one's gender, in an attempt to demonstrate that gender is not a natural essence; it is rather something that is constructed through the repetitive performances.

Ruth appears dominant on the stage when she expresses her strong desire for food and drink, and Lenny willingly complies by providing her a whiskey. This act shows that Lenny follows her instructions and obeys her requests; his extreme obedience to Ruth puts her in complete command of his every move.

Ruth: I'd like something to eat. (To Lenny). I'd like a drink. Did you get any drink?

Lenny: We've got drink.

Ruth: I want like one please.

Lenny: What drink?

Ruth: Whisky.

Lenny: I've got it.²⁸

Through Ruth's choice to consume whiskey, an act that deviates from cultural limitations, contradicts her assigned biological position, and then she constructs her new gender identity. This situation highlights the idea that gender is a social construct, rather than determined by biology. The social roles attributed to both categories: men and women are derived from the reiterative performances of certain habits resulting in the formation of their gender identity. In this light, Simone De Beauvoir claims,

On the other hand, Simone de Beauvoir suggests in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one." For Beauvoir, gender is

“constructed”, but implied in her formulation is an agent, a cogito, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle, take on some other gender²⁹.

According to Beauvoir, gender is socially and culturally constructed and formed. This highlights the influence of social expectations in defining the concept of womanhood, and other genders. To clarify, one’s identity as a woman or any other gender is shaped by social standards, rather than being an inherent aspect of a person’s nature. Additionally, the Latin term “Cogito”³⁰ signifies a thinking subject in philosophical contexts, which actively engages in forming women’s gender identity based on assigned social roles of femininity imposed on them. Men and women possess the ability to challenge established gender norms and adopt different gender identities.

Pinter depicts Teddy as a weak character in the play when he complies with his family’s proposal for his wife to stay in England. His decision shows his feeble personality inhibiting his essence of masculinity and distancing him from traditional ideals of manhood. Additionally, Ruth agrees to remain in London, leaving behind her children and her husband. This point is effectively expressed in the following excerpt:

Teddy goes to the front door.
Ruth: Eddie.
Teddy turns.
Pause.
Don’t become a stranger.
Teddy goes, shuts the front door.
Silence.
The three men stand.
Ruth sits relaxed on her chair.
Sam lies still.
Joey walks slowly across the room.
He kneels at her chair.
She touches his head, lightly.
He puts his head in her lap.³¹

In the passage, Teddy remains silent in response to Ruth's speech, "Don't become a stranger"³², then he departs. Pinter depicts Ruth as a woman who abandons her fate by leaving her role as a wife and a mother. Hence, she does not adhere to the conventional duties assigned to her gender, she is rather a character who establishes for herself a path that fits her personality by creating herself an identity that fits her best. By doing so, she actively shapes and constructs her own gender identity. In this sense, Butler claims:

That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body. The gender border control that differentiates inner from outer.³³

In her theory, Judith Butler has supported the idea that each individual has the freedom to fulfil and determine his or her gender roles regardless of the social constraints. Gender itself is a social product, rather than a natural or inherent aspect of identity. In the play, Ruth recognizes the artificial nature of gender roles imposed on women and chooses to behave in a manner that subverts from social standards by defying her husband and challenging the institution of marriage.

Based on the discussion surrounding Butler's concept of Gender Performativity, we conclude that the gender roles prescribed to men and women are not inherently innate. According to Judith Butler's perspective, gender is not what people represent to the world; it is rather what they act and perform in their daily life. The gender roles are reversed in both plays. The characters perform their gender roles that they deem suitable for themselves by defying social standards that fit into their respective communities, which allow them to assert their true identities with authenticity and confidence and following their personal desires and satisfaction.

Endnotes:

- 1-Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York: Signet Books, 1961, 57- 58.
- 2- Ibid, pp. 57-58.
- 3-Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990,p. 9.
- 4-Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York: Signet Books, 1961, p.74.
- 5- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p.14.
- 6- Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York: Signet Books, 1961, p.58.
- 7- Ibid, p.74.
- 8-Butler, Judith. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, p521.
- 9- Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York: Signet Books, 1961,p.74.
- 10- Ibid, p.75.
- 11- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p142.
- 12- Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York: Signet Books, 1961,p77.
- 13- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p.142.
- 14- Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York: Signet Books, 1961, 79.
- 15- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p.147.
- 16- Albee, Edward. *The American Dream*. New York: Signet Books, 1961, p.72
- 17-Ibid, p .72.
- 18- Ibid, p. 100.
- 19- Ibid, p.88.

- 20- Salih, Sara. "On Judith Butler and Performativity", 2002, p.55.
- 21 -Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. New York: Grove Press, 1965, p.12.
- 22- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988,p519.
- 23- Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. New York: Grove Press, 1965, p 23.
- 24-Ibid,p23.
- 25-- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p.180.
- 26- Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. New York: Grove Press, 1965, p. 45.
- 27-Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p.190.
- 28- Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. New York: Grove Press, 1965, p. 46.
- 29- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Gallimard, 1949, p37.
- 30- Ibid, p37.
- 31- Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. New York: Grove Press, 1965, p.59.
- 32- Ibid, p. 59.
- 33- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p.173.

Conclusion:

This dissertation investigated Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965). There exists an affinity in the portrayal of contemporary issue in both works concerning the body as a matter in both British and American societies. The selected literary works have been examined from the perspective of Judith Butler's theories and concepts surrounding the body in *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits Of Sex* (1993) and her concept of Performativity outlined in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990).

In the first chapter, we have analyzed the Body's Materiality as a subject of study, as it is highlighted in both mentioned plays. We have effectively illustrated that the body becomes a core of conflict when both men and women become a focus of social events, as portrayed through the experiences of the plays' characters. We conclude from the preceding study that in western cultures, particularly in Europe and in the United States of America, individuals are often regarded in relation to their external appearances, rather than to their internal qualities. Additionally, we have demonstrated that the notions of marriage and motherhood are perceived as new jobs for middle class white women. The second chapter was devoted to the study and exploration of gender performativity in both works. Our analysis led us to the conclusion that both authors extensively explore the reversed gender roles. In fact, gender roles experienced a shift, notably witnessed in both plays; the female and male characters assume gender roles that they deem suitable for themselves through defying the limitations imposed on their genders.

To conclude, Judith Butler's thoughts on the body as a matter, and her theory of performativity are prominently showcased in the plays through their narrative characters' experiences and thematic elements. Both plays were produced by different playwrights in distinct areas and at the same period of time explore similar issues and themes. Our research

has not addressed all the topics tackled in the selected plays. Therefore, we invite students to undertake a comparative examination that explores the Butlerian concept of the “Subversion of femininity and masculinity” through the characters’ actions or to examine additional matters and issues from different perspectives.

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