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**Camus's Absurdism: Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958), Amiri
Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's
Funnyhouse of a Negro(1964).**

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To

the memory of my beloved cousin Aghiles and my grandmother Ferroudja,

my beloved mother Katia who has always been here for me,

my sister Saida, who was of a great help, Alicia and my brother Sofiane,

my Aunt Zahra , my cousin Ania and my beloved angel Silas,

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Abstract:

This dissertation explores the philosophy of the Absurd in Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* (1958), Amiri Baracka's *Dutchman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) in light of Albert Camus's theoretical concepts of the absurd as developed in his essay "*The Myth of Sisyphus*" (1942). To unveil common aspects of Absurdism, in the three plays, I divided this dissertation into three chapters. In the first chapter, I have dealt with the crisis of identity that the main characters in the three plays have suffered from. In the second chapter, I focused on character's alienation and how they isolate themselves from the real world as they see it devoid of meaning. The last chapter examines violence, death and race relationships within the three plays that ironically led them to commit suicide. The main objective of this dissertation is to expose the struggle of modern man, more precisely American one against his absurdist existence. In fact, all characters within the three plays are alienated from the rest of the world. They are tortured by their real world; therefore, each one tries to find a way out. Unfortunately, they resort to verbal violence at first, which becomes latter on physical, leading to their death. Like any Absurdist character as explained by Camus, our characters are struggling to give meaning to their existence and escaping their isolation. Furthermore, the characters' loneliness greatly affected them. They had resorted to violence to escape their isolation.

***Key words:* Absurdism; loneliness; violence; suicide; Albee; Amiri; Adrienne.**

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I-General Introduction:

Human beings are in a constant search for reasonable and effective methods that will make their everyday life interactions easier. This seems strange and difficult to argue but this is real. This absurdity and complexity is an outcome of the two world wars. The latter, especially the Second World War(1939-1945) made human existence meaningless and absurd because of its devastating consequences. In addition to a frightening rate of deaths and an infrastructure buildings' destruction, many war survivors were left with a deep psychological damage. In other words, many suffered from a psychological trauma.

Many scholars as well as literary critics and philosophers believed that they had to “rescue man from this sense of hopelessness and absurdity.”¹Through their writings which reflected the horrors of post-World War Two, they advocated that their writings would allow them to provide us with a better understanding of the world we live in. These writings would thereby help them reduce the state of loneliness, Absurdism and alienation which most humans were left in.

One of the leading figures of this literary movement of Absurdism is the French philosopher Albert Camus. He argues that “Man stands face to face with the Irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world.”² According to him, human existence has become meaningless for we are in a constant quest for happiness and self-satisfaction which ironically has become a never ending journey. This has given birth to this movement of absurdism.

“Absurdism is a philosophical doctrine that is constructed around the idea that the world we are living in is meaningless. It is believed that the most fundamental philosophical

problem articulates around the meaning of existence”³. That is the question that Camus worked on in his novels, plays and essays. In his essay “The Myth of Sisyphus”(1942), Camus defined the absurd as the futility of a search for meaning in an incomprehensible universe, devoid of God, or meaning . This idea reinforces the idea that post WWII era has lead humans to question their old values which are no longer useful to create a modern society.

Through history, the concept of Absurdism has been subject to discussion in the works of Soren Kierkegaard, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Their ideas on the absurdity of human existence and the alienation and meaninglessness of human being is mostly summarized in the words of Albert Camus in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* where he suggested that:

view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning, and to represent human life—in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came toward the nothingness where it must end as an existence which is both anguished and absurd.⁴

Both philosophers and the literary works of that era supported that idea that modern world lacks any sense of purpose, and that man is trapped in a futile search of meaning for a world that does not offer any rational explanations.

It is; therefore, this sense of despair and uncertainty that characterized the Twentieth century and influenced many writers and playwrights in their descriptions of society and social relationships. Among them, we find the founder of the Black Arts Movement Amiri Baraka in his play Edward Albee’s *Zoo Story*(1958), *Dutchman*(1964), and Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Nigro*(1964). These plays have successfully demonstrated the state of despair

and meaninglessness of post World War modern American society devastated by a status of uncertainty and isolation.

Review of the Literature:

Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958) ,Amiri Baraka 's *The Dutchman*(1964), and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Nigro*(1964) have been the center of interest for many critics for their portrayal of society.

To begin with, Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* (1958) has been subject to a great deal of criticism. Jose Rivera in his essay *An Analysis of Dramatic Conflict in Edward Albee's Zoo Story* argues that "the conflict between character vs character generated through the different class background of peter and Jerry. "5 In the one hand, Peter is a well-to-do family man with little worries in life. In the other hand, Jerry is a troubled and confused man who is looking for a closer interaction with other people.

Another criticism of Albee's plays was provided by Nasrullah Mambrol in his article entitled *Analysis of Edward Albee's Plays* where he advocates that Albee:sometimes demonstrates , especially in the plays from the first decade of his career, the rather strident and accusatory voice of the angry man.....recognizing the disparity between what human beings could become and what they have settled for "6

However, according to Mabrol Albee cherishes the traditional values of society such as "the necessity for human contact and communication, for family ties and friendship"7This implies that despite his revolutionary ideas of questioning society and humans' attitudes, Edward Albee values family, friendship and communication.

Amiri Baraka's literary works have also been subject to criticism. In their review of

Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964), reporters of The new York Times suggest that the play "isn't a nice play. Beyond its difficult racial politics there's a deep-dyed misogyny that appears present and even attractive"⁸. In other words, the play suggests that certain social problems are "insoluble"⁹ and are "destined to recur"¹⁰. For example, after Clay's death, another young black man appears in front of Lula. This ironically suggests that he is destined to be killed by Lula.

In her article: *The Dilemma of the Black Man in Le Roi Jones's Play Dutchman*, Sabah Atallah focuses on the problem of identity of the Blacks within the American society. She argues that Clay is not living as he wants to in the United States of America. She states that "He surrenders his black identity. He adopts the dress, speech and manners of the white bourgeois society. His aspirations enslave him."¹¹.

This implies that Clay is living according to the white culture, so he is afraid to face his identity. He is reading books to face that stereotypical idea of black's literacy. Atallah thereby affirms that the main character of the play rejects his own true identity by adopting another personality which, in one way or another has lead to his death by the hands of a white woman Lula.

After its publication in 1964, Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* was the center of a large interest. In her article entitled '*The Art of Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro(2013)*' Angela White argues that "the African American identity of the main character, Sarah, is ambiguous"¹²This is illustrated in the status of Queen Victoria next to her bed as well as the fact that " she lives in a world where she has been taught everything that is good is white"¹³

Another criticism of this play is provided by Emilio Ramon in his article *Funnyhouse of a Negro: Rejection of womanness and Blackness as a "Melancholic" cry for a true Diversity in American Society.(2011)*.He says that the play "highlights the struggle of Sarrah whose black skin

evinces a lack of identity and a lack of social placement in the dominant society”¹⁴ This idea better illustrates Sarah’s four different selves she created and her struggling inner thoughts “leading her to reject Blackness and femaleness as well , and eventually commits suicide ”¹⁵

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

It follows from the above review of literature that a large number of critics have explored Edward Albee’s *Zoo Story*(1958), Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman*(1964) and Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964) in terms of identity crisis and race. They identified each protagonist’s quest for identity. However, they overlooked studying them together in terms of the then dominant theatre of the Absurd. They overlooked the dominant feeling of isolation and loneliness in a post world war American society whose people were traumatized. In fact, they were attempting to escape their harsh meaningless social status.

Therefore, the aim of my research is to investigate how each playwright has presented his/her ideas on Absurdism in his/her play through the analysis of major themes, style and characters’ description. In other words, I intend to reveal the techniques and methods of each writer questions toward the dominant psychological trauma of post World War Two. It is also my concern to show how each character is in a quest for recognition as well as freedom of sometimes biased and stereotypical ideas mainly when it comes to the representation of blacks in Kennedy and Baraka’s plays. I also intend to discuss themes of alienation, social disparity, miscommunication, violence, death and meaninglessness as well as an endless search for happiness and satisfaction. This is done through the analysis of the characters within each play by demonstrating their psychological status. In fact, all characters suffer from an identity crisis due to their isolation. This leads them to attempt to establish contact with others, but they fail.

To deal with this topic, I intend to use Albert Camus’s ‘*The Myth of Sisyphus*’ (1942) to

unveil aspects of the theatre of the Absurd in the three plays. They were questioning their existence for they were seeking a way to give meaning to their lives. Like the protagonist in Camus's essay, each main character within the three plays is dead at the end ; murdered like Clay and Jerry in Baraka's and Albee's plays respectively or committing suicide like Sarah in Kennedy's play.

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6-Rivera, Jose. An Analysis of the Dramatic Conflict in Edward Albee's The Zoo Story.

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12-Atallah, K.A.Sabah. *The Dilemma of the Black Men in Le Roi Jones' Play Dutchman*
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13-Whites, Angela, *The Art of Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of A negro*(2013),1

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II-Methods and Materials:

A-Methods

a- Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*(1942)

Similarly, we intend to use Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*(1942) to unveil present aspects of Absurdism in the three plays. The "*Myth of Sisyphus*" (1955) is a philosophical essay that analyses the nature of the absurd as a central subject of the modern philosophical thinking. He makes use of the Greek legend of Sisyphus, who is a king condemned by the Gods for eternity to repeatedly roll a boulder up the hill as a punishment for betraying Zeus. This is a metaphor for humans' constant struggle to give meaning to their life.

For Camus, the main conflict in life is the confrontation between the expectations of man and the reality of the universe in which man wonders and does not get answers. This estrangement between human existence and the universe leaves man in alienation from everything. He fails to both integrate into the real world and leave the fictional world he is living in.

Moreover, Camus is wondering whether life is worth living? Is suicide a legitimate response to the meaninglessness of life? To answer these questions, Camus establishes three major paths that man can take in confronting the banality of existence. The first path is suicide, which is a form of escape from suffering and an inability to cope with the confrontation between one's self and the universe such as the main character in Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* 'Sarah. The second path is the philosophical suicide. It refers to the construction of a fictional system of beliefs and ideas that serve as a means to go beyond the harsh truth of existence. The third path, therefore, is rebellion; rebelling and facing the absurd to create meaning is Camus'

most recommended path. According to him, revolt is what gives life its value. By accepting and embracing the absurd, man creates meaning.

Indeed, the theatre of the Absurd isn't concerned with the narration of the characters' adventures but rather presents their basic situation. It criticizes severely the absurdity of human lives, those who lived with complete unawareness and unconsciousness of an ultimate reality.

For Camus, the Absurd man is characterized by anxiety which grows as he meets the strangeness and absence of all myths. His reaction towards such facts is interesting. He doesn't submit to his meaninglessness. Instead, he revolts in spite of being uncertain and desperate. According to Camus, the absurd man carries the struggles against the nonsense of life. He supports his idea saying:

One of the coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt. It is a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity. It is an insistence upon an impossible transparency...it may be thought that suicide follows revolt-but wrongly...in its way, suicide settles the Absurd.²⁰

Materials:

a-Summary of Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958)

Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* is an American act played in 1958 in Schiller Theater. It is about two characters Peter and Jerry who meet in a recreation area seat in New York city's Central Park. It explores themes of isolation, miscommunication, social disparity and loneliness in a materialistic world.

Peter is wealthy publishing executive who seems to lead a stable life compared to the isolated jobless young Jerry who is desperate to have a meaningful conversation with someone. He thereby intrudes into Peter's life forcing him to know why he has visited the zoo and asking him personal questions about his life. The later is frustrated because of this strange man rudeness and eventually tries to leave but is threatened by peter who shows a knife and "challenges him to fight for his territory"²¹. The quarrel ends with Peter running away and Jerry dying bleeding on the bench.

b-Summary of Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964)

Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* is a Afro-American play which was first presented on stage in New York in 1964. It was his last play to be presented under his name as he latter on became known as Le Roi Jones.

The one act play narrates the dramatic story of a black man Clay and a white woman Lula who represent two different components of the American society. It's based on the stereotypical ideology that has been the main concern of the Black Movement.

The two characters meet in a subway and board the same train. It's revealed that

Lula boarded the train for she was curious to look at Clay. Once sitting together, the two characters share a conversation but things turn violent when Lula starts making racial- based remarks. This angers Clay who slaps her and decides to leave the train. However, when he tries to reach for his belongings, Lula stabs him with a knife. Together with the other passengers, they throw his body off the train. Ironically, another young man carrying books boards the train and might be Lula's next victim.

c-Summary of Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964)

Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* is a one-act play presented in 1964 at the East End Theater in New York City. It narrates the last hours in the life of Sarah, a young black woman . the play was revolutionary and received an Obie Award for its unique portrayal of what it "was like to be black and a woman in the United States in the 1960s"²².

Sarah has created four imaginary characters: Queen Victoria, the Dutchess of Hapsburg, Jesus, and Patrice Lumumba. It's revealed throughout the play that Sarah idolizes her white mother and despises her black father. She accuses him with being a black beast who raped her mother and who is trying to do the same to her. The play takes place inside Sarah's mind and each character she created represent a side of her inner thoughts. The play ends with Sarah committing suicide by hanging herself.

Endnotes:

17-*A definition of Formalism: Including Properties and Checklist of Formalist Crititicism.*

adapted from basic concept.com.

18-ibid

19-Ibid

20-Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*(1942).53-54

21-Albee, Edward, *Zoo Story*, 1958, 32

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III-Results and Discussion:

A-Results:

While carrying out this study, I have reached interesting findings. Throughout the research, I have analyzed the plays of Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958), Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964) as well as Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964) in light of Albert Camus's philosophy of Absurdism chiefly theorized in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The concept of the absurd fits well my work since its major features which are: the absurdity of human existence, alienation, the failure of communication, and failure to find and give meaning to life are all explicitly displayed within the three plays mentioned above.

The key findings of this research demonstrate that American society is deeply ascribed with Absurdism. In fact, within each play the more the character is financially comfortable, the less meaningful his life becomes. In other words, fortune and wealth have changed nothing in a disillusioned and traumatized society. The characters of each play exemplify features of the theatre of the Absurd. In fact, the characters of each play carry a quest to give meaning to their life but they fail. In analyzing the effects of Post World War II, I came to the conclusion that living in a highly technologically advanced society doesn't necessarily mean that citizens have reached peace of mind. They live in a violent world devoid of sense and meaning. In analyzing the effects of these advances, I have used Albert Camus's philosophy of Absurdism mainly demonstrated in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*(1942).Therefore, I will argue that the degeneration of meaning and the appearance of a fake reality in today's world have resulted in people attempting to give meaning to their void and empty lives.

In addition, I have demonstrated how the characters are alienated and marginalized in

their society. Though they are either surrounded by their families or someone they came across to meet, they have failed to communicate and to build lasting social situations. To cover up for their imaginary happiness, they either became intruders in others' lives or created other selves to overcome the emptiness and despair of their existence. However, their attempt to build relationships either with imaginary or real characters is just an illusion. Hence, they have surrounded to their destiny as they ultimately died at the end.

In this dissertation, I have also showed that Albert Camus's philosophy of the absurd is strongly prevalent in the plays. This is noticeable through the various aspects of the theatre of the absurd that Camus treats in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*(1942) and which I came cross in Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958),Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964) , and Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964) . I have demonstrated the similarities between Sisyphus and: Peter and Jerry *in Zoo Story*, Clay in *Dutchman* and Sarah in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* respectively. Moreover, all characters within the three plays experience a sense of alienation because they undergo a lack of purposeful activities in their lives leading to an identity crisis. This further adds more to their sense of Absurdism. Consequently, they find it difficult to express their feelings and emotions for they believe language can't transmit their genuine ideas.

Additionally, throughout this research I deduced that all characters have resorted to adopting Camus's ideas on life and existence to confront the absurd world they lived in and believed it was their prison or cage. Whether they were victims of a racist society like Clay in *Dutchman* or were seeking a change in their life like Jerry in *Zoo Story*, how people viewed them like Sarah in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* or were attempting to communicate .

Discussion:

This part of my work is the analysis and discussion of Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958), Amiri Baraka *Ducthman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964). It includes three chapters. The first one studies issues of identity and reality within the plays. I intend to break down the plays so as to demonstrate how the characters have escaped their world by creating an imaginary one to give meaning to their lives. In one way or another, they end up trapped inside this reality for it has become like a prison where people are not separated from each other with iron bars but with emotional or social ones. As for the second chapter, I intend to illustrate notions related to loneliness and alienation of the characters which came to be as a result of an emotional gap in their life. I will reveal how they attempt to make contact with other people to escape their loneliness. As for the last chapter, I will discuss issues related to culture and violence and how the characters resorted to death sometimes as their choice to give meaning to their life.

Chapter One:-Clash of Identity , Contradiction Versus Reality:

Edward Albee, Amiri Baraka and Adrienne Kennedy are recognized for their contributions to the American theatre. In the case of Edward Albee, he received several prizes for his best works including his first play *Zoo Story*(1958). The three post-modernist playwrights have shaped their works from the ties to the post World War II European theatre.

If we are to start with analyzing Albee's work, we can not deny that he is well remembered for his brilliant use of language and fearless search for meaning. This is best exemplified with his revolt against his mother's wishes to fulfill his dream of taking side with other artists and intellectuals. She wanted him to be part of the high social class.

It is undeniable not to say that *Zoo Story* (1958) came in response or revolt against the harsh depression that dominated the American scene in the thirties and the early years of the forties which correspond to the period WWII. This period was characterized by a complete loss of faith in humans. Various social classes were created and many were marginalized. Indeed, the play was attacking directly the indifference of contemporary American life. Albee states that:

I wrote *The Zoo Story* on a wobbly table in the kitchen of the apartment I was living at the time at 238 West Fourth Street, I did a draft, made a pencil revision and typed a second script, and that's the way I've been doing my plays since. I finished *The Zoo Story* in three weeks."²³

The work is in fact an absurdist condemnation of the artificial American values and the failure to communicate and event to try to do so. This leads both characters and humans in general to search for their identity in a world which seems to be devoid of meaning.

The realism of Albee is depicted in his dialogues and choice of the subjects. It is clear that

Jerry's inability to successfully establish a real relationship even with the landlady's dog will make it harder for him to do so with a man. This absurdity and impersonality can be generalized to all humankind. For Albee, the fact that people chose to live in a destructive isolation from each other is a proof that the identity of the American people is absurd. This is best exemplified with Peter, the middle class man, who prefers to reside inside his world and forget about the external world. In fact, every Sunday, he in one way or another escapes his duties as a husband and father of two girls just to sit at the bench of New York Central Park. Throughout the play, Jerry tries to intrude inside Peter's world but he is not welcomed from the beginning. However, the contact is set later as soon as Jerry evoked the theme of the "zoo".

The first conversation in which the two men are engaged seem real and natural. Indeed, at the beginning, it was a series of questions from the part of Jerry and answers from Peter. The latter notices and says: "...you don't really carry on a conversation; you just ask questions." Even if he is reluctant, he reveals to Jerry a number of facts about himself and his family. What is strange is that in the first part of the play, we know nearly all about Peter's life but very little about Jerry's. Yet, we gradually get a view of his life. His description is realistic mainly when he mentions his small collection of personal belongings: some playing cards, empty picture frames and a box containing rocks. In one way or another, the empty picture frames resemble his empty life. He lives in a rooming house, in which many people from different races and cultures live. However, he never makes any approach to know them. This demonstrate that everybody lives in his own world. This might be related to the tragic events that had tormented Jerry's life. As the play progresses, we notice that Jerry's past was harsh. As he tells the story of his family: the desertion of his mother, alcoholism, his father's fatal accident with a bus, and his aunt who had taken him . All these tragic events are the source of his despair and isolation. Similarly, despite

the landlady's advances to get closer to him, he rejects her. This implies that he is just like Peter refusing human interactions and prefers his own world. Ironically, he prefers to interact with the lady's dog rather than with humans.

Everything appears to be realistic within the play and somewhat naturalistic. We can see attempts to communicate and make difference in the world so as to build social relationships and break social boundaries which have turned the real world into cages of iron bars. All started when Jerry tries to draw Peter into his cage. The latter seems that he isn't against the idea. Yet, when Jerry tests Peter's friendship by asking him to withdraw and leave the bunch for him, Peter refuses. The absurdity of their world can be related to the fact that the two characters are fighting for an object that belongs neither to Jerry nor to Peter. This is also related to their social and intellectual status. Peter believes that for he is a bourgeois and an educated man while Jerry is a "have not and know nothing", the bunch belongs to him.

Peter is an absurd man since he doesn't care for what happens around him. According to Camus, the absurd man sees that all deeds, passion and thoughts are insignificant. This is best illustrated when he fights for the bunch though he deep inside knows it's futile. So, he wonders:

Why? You have everything in the world you want; you have told me about your home, and your family, and your own little zoo. You have everything, and now you want the bunch. Are these the things men fight for? Tell me, Peter, is this bunch, this iron and this wood, is this your honor? Is this the thing in the world you'd fight for? Can you think of anything more absurd?²³

This best supports Jerry's idea that the world they live in is fragile and it resembles the zoo. This is related to the lack of human contact. Indeed, people don't communicate, they just talk. He wonders why Peter who lives in a world where he has everything he wants. Yet, he still fights for the bunch: made of iron and wood.

In this play, we can notice that Jerry acts like the narrator while Peter is his audience. This goes well with Camus's description of the absurd man who suffers from a lack of identity. Jerry wants to have an identity. After he knew a lot about Peter's life, he reveals his own to his audience, Peter. Yet, it's in the second part that he reveals his personal life: his parents, his childhood, the story of the landlady and the dog, his personal experience with his neighbours. This demonstrates his search for human contact.

At first, he goes to the zoo. Once there, he realizes that man's situation can be paralleled to that of the animals in the zoo that are surrounded by bars. Jerry ;therefore, is satirical of Peter's life and manners. He compares him to animals in cages. Peter, without doubt, is not the only American who behaves in such a way. The play is therefore a social criticism as it explores the faults and weaknesses of the American society.

Similarly, we notice that Jerry is absurd because he plays several roles, which is central in Camus's ideal of the absurd man. He is the narrator of his stories. It's ironical how they fights for a bunch. Their struggle without hope is what defines their life for mainly in Peter's case he knows the bunch can never be his but he fights. He is aware of the situation and admits: "I'm a responsible person, and I'm a GROWN UP."²⁴ The characters according to Camus are aware of the meaninglessness of their struggle. Still, they maintain to live with integrity in the present moment choosing not to surrender for the position of the bunch. They share the characteristics of Absurdism shared by Camus: revolt, freedom and passion.

What Peter looks for in the present time is peace of mind. He wants Jerry to leave him alone inside his confined world: the book. Peter has revolted against Jerry's intrusion and fights for the bunch.

The zoo, the main story which has been told by Jerry is without doubt the greatest metaphor of life. Both characters are escaping their real world. Peter ,who is a married man responsible of two daughters ,prefers to pass his rest day being Sunday in New York's Central Park alone immersing himself in reading. In Jerry's case he creates many selves by becoming the narrator of various stories just to intrude into Peter's world. This can be said to be related to him being consumed by his loneliness.

Indeed, Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958) best describes the American society in which people are consumed by their loneliness. They reside inside fictional worlds to forget about the real world. The play is; thus, a satirical description and at the same time a social criticism of a society in which everyone seems to be behaving like an animal in a cage. But, the difference between the two is that animals are separated by iron bars while humans by emotional ones.

If we move to analyze Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964) from Camus's theory of Absurdism, we can say that it is possibly Baraka's most important play. It won him the Village Voice Obie Award for its off-Broadway production. The play has two main characters: Clay, a twenty-years-old black man and Lula, a thirty-year-old woman. They engage in a deep conversation in the subway, which grows to be sharp and aggressive. As Lula can't stop insulting Clay, he can no longer resist and both burst into a long powerful verbal attack. Their conversation ends with Clay's death in which Baraka emphasizes the need for blacks to revolt against their oppressors: the white society.

The play indeed marks the emergence of Jones's sense of racial awareness. It depicts how the black man who speaks out against his appressors, is teased and destroyed by the white society. Thus, Jones rejects the white world. Instead, he wants to establish a black community.

He aims at destroying the white culture and building a black one.

With *Dutchman* (1964), Baraka has spouted out his ideas opposing the white society. He attempted to express the blacks' struggle for equality and identity. He relies on binary categories like black versus white, unity versus individualism and self determination versus domination to explain the racial problems of which blacks like Clay suffer from. In fact, we find an opposition between language and action. It's best exemplified when Clay wants to counter-attack Lula with his articulate speech; whereas Lula answers with violent actions. What can be said is that through the play, Baraka aims at reversing the traditional signifiers of black and white and more importantly the stereotypical representation of blacks in the American society. In western societies, white symbolizes purity, goodness, life and light; whereas the black one stands for impurity, evil, death and darkness. Jones has counter attacked this theory. He considers white to be sickness and absence, while black is what Clay struggles for: it's the black identity. This comparison is best illustrated with Lula, the white woman, who is viewed as the symbol of death when she boldly murders Clay who keeps on defending his identity and culture.

It is also observed throughout the novel that there is another opposition between Clay's self-determination over Lula's domination. At the opening lines of the play, Lula forces Clay to take part in the conversation against his will. It is clear Clay is not ready to talk yet, he confesses: "well, I'm sorry, lady, but I really wasn't prepared for part talk."²⁵ But suddenly changes his mind and decides to converse with Lula, possibly because she has excited him.

In fact, the dialogues within the play reflect Baraka's ideas about the relationship between white and black societies. It's one of oppressed and oppressor. Lula attracts Clay into a conversation to play out her plan. However, she throws him with prejudice just as any white man

or woman within the American society would treat a black citizen. This suggests her racial intentions. She treats him like a slave saying: “Your grandfather was a slave, he didn’t go to Harvard.”²⁶ this implies that she actually started a conversation with Clay to mock him and his community as being without history. She cannot accept the idea like any white person that a black man can be an intellectual. This implies that her pride of her identity and world are related to the ideological misrepresentation and treatment of the blacks.

After Clay understand Lula’s hidden motives, he counterattacks her ideas by defending the black identity. Despite his persistence, it was difficult to defend his people for there were too many white passengers on board. This implies that he is aware of the situation his people are confronting everyday within the American society. He resorts to treating Lula as a woman without feelings as he has understood her aims. He wants to show to whites as well as blacks the place that the black American deserves in society.

We can say that Clay is a hero attacked by a white woman. He confronts the ideas of a whole community through his impressive speech. He intends to show to the whites that he is not insane; instead they are. He is a man of ideals and beliefs as he stands against them and their prejudice. However, his situation inside a train full of white passengers is similar to a man in a mysterious universe full of danger and uncertainties. He is an absurd character in the sense that he keeps his defensive position until the last moment of his life. He prefers to use words as a means of defense instead of physical violence. The fact that he stood against a whole misguided community tragically cost him his life at a young age.

What is also noticeable in this play is that Lula though being the only white person who converses with the young black man, she represents an entire community. In the second scene,

Lula and Clay discuss about passengers. She presumes he is afraid of them because they are white.

Clay: Wow. All these people, so suddenly. They must all come from the same place.

Lula:Right. That they do.

Clay: oh? You know about them too?

Lula: Oh yeah. About them more than I know about you. Do they frighten you?

Clay:Frighten me? Why should they frighten me?

Lula:'caused you're an escaped nigger.²⁷

It is just as if Lula is secure in the train for it resembles the world she lives in: one in which the white race is dominant while the black people are oppressed. Her last words implies that she is strongly confident in her community. She views Clay as the intruder, but she herself intrudes into his world. This intrusion refers then to threat and insecurity. The latter are essential aspects in the Theatre of the Absurd. The insecurity of characters leads to an identity crisis and isolation for they fail to leave their world out of fear from being rejected by the rest.

Other oppositions in the play which can be linked to Absurdism, reality and loss of identity are that of unity and individualism. This is well illustrated with Lula being supported by the other whites while they conspired with her to get rid of all evidence. The following passage at the end of the play well illustrates this conspiracy:

Clay: Sorry, baby, I don't think we could make it.*(as he is bending over her, the girl brings up a small knife and plunges it into Clay's chest. Twice. He slumps across her knees)*

Lula: Sorry is right*(turning to others in the car who have already gotten up from their seats)* sorry is the rightest thing you've said . Get this man off me! Hurry, now! *(the others came and drug Clay's body down the aisle)*. Open the door and throw his body out.*(they throw him off)*.And all of you get off at the next stop.²⁸

An innocent young black man was murdered by a white woman in front of many conspirators. No one of them stood against her because the dominant reality at that period is that a black man will never be equal with a white one. Sometimes and this can be justified with our play, black people do not deserve to live. This is what lead Lula to murder Clay. This murder is intended by whites to speak of their belief in their supremacy and in somehow blacks' deserved end to be death. Indeed, Baraka highlights the idea that no matter how noble the purpose of a protest is, its end is never satisfactory.

Through this contradiction, Amiri Baraka highlights the idea that it is impossible for blacks to peacefully integrate within the white society. If blacks continue to submit to the white supremacy, their African identity will be lost. So, he stresses the need to first maintain their identity in order to revolt and regain a position within the American society. When Lula tells Clay that :” you are a murderer, Clay and you know it.”²⁹this implicates that Clay's attempt to integrate within the American white society is synonymous with the death of African identity.

The play indeed portrays the plight of a black man within a white dominated society which degrades them. This forces in our play Clay to become angry and respond violently to Lula's seductive then aggressive attempts to maintain her plan.

Now, if we move to analyzing Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964), we can not but notice that the female leader Sarah is experiencing a cursive sense of personal crisis. This is caused by the racial discrimination she strongly feels as she is born to a white woman and black man. Though she resembles her mother, her curly hair like that of black people . She hates that about herself which makes her lose her self esteem and confidence. This identity crisis is well demonstrated in the title, because the protagonist is clearly possessed with the idea of finding her place in society. However, she has created many selves in a pursuit of identity.

Sarah's identity crisis is mirrored in the image of other historical figures whom she has brought. The characters are witnesses of what happens to her. They are "positioned as powerful spectators, capable of erasing Sarah's truths"³⁰. This demonstrates that what Sarah has really missed is her own identity. She seems paralyzed by a number of social and psychological obstructions that make her life devoid of meaning.

As a matter of fact, the female character appears to be experiencing a "cursive sense of personal crisis"³¹, which is caused by racial discrimination. Kennedy's division of the play into five scenes is intended to show Sarah's fragmented and disconnected identity. Her story is embodied through four historical characters: Queen Victoria(1819-1901), the Duchess of Hapsburg, Patrice Lumumba(1926-1961) and Jesus. The Duchess of Hapsburg represents Sarah's maddening obsession with the fact that she is black. She can't cope with this reality. She therefore rejects her true identity in search of one she would never be able to become.

Lumumba is another self whom Sarah has created. In reality, he is an outstanding figure in Africa for the achievements he has made. Kennedy herself admired him. He was extremely loved by his people. In the play, he represents Sarah's struggle against her African identity. He is a man whom Sarah's father views as his modal. According to Emilio Ramon, Lumumba acts "as a bridge between Sarah and her father"³². This can be illustrated with the fact that Sarah's father was in one way or another obsessed with Patrice Lumumba's ideal to the extent that he hung himself in a Harlem Hotel when Lumumba was assassinated. For many, Lumumba was that noble African man who wanted to save his people and who has lead to "the destruction of Sarah's universe of her universe of European antiques as well"³³ As one of the characters Sarah has created, he repeats her words but in a despising way. He adds the adjective "vile" to emphasize the fact that Sarah's wish to become way can never come true. He states: "It's my vile dream to

live in rooms with European antiques...They are necessary for me to maintain recognition against myself³⁴ we can say that Sarah's father and her blackness actually torment her hindering her from living her life.

However, we can not but question :Since Lumumba is a man, why has Kennedy has him as a figure created by her protagonist? This can be justified by the fact that he is a representation of Sarah's attempt to escape her powerlessness as a woman living in man-ruled society.

Additionally, the problem with Sarah is the fact that she lacks significant relationships. She is living with her white boyfriend but she never really loves him neither does he. She is just trying to fill in the gap of her life and identity. For her, being with a white man would enable her to gain power, identity and recognition. She believes that being accepted from the white society means that she has gained power. Being black has in one way or another become Sarah's nightmare.

Therefore, the play highlights the struggle of Sarah whose black skin evinces a lack of identity and lack of social placement in a male dominant society. She "projects herself into various selves who punish and betray her. Indeed, Sarah's internal struggle through her various selves portrays racial hatred that characterizes the American society. The use of a damaged personality is an embodiment of the Afro-American society dominated by white race.

It is therefore evident that Sarah's identity crisis lies in her complete loss of her self-control generated mainly by her inability to acquire a unified identity. She is living in a status of loss and chaos. This can be said to have started as her mother , who is supposed to be her source of confidence in herself and in the world, has never offered her the love and affection she needs

to grow confident. She is in need to a maternal love which has never been given to her and which she tries to compensate through the other four selves. Ironically, she considers her mother to be an idol. This sense of fear is closely related to Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex.

Yet, we can also notice that that Sarah carries a great deal of hatred towards black people. She tries not to be associated with the black community in order not to be linked with "the negative identity"³⁵ is afraid to be linked with black people. So, she denies any relationship with her father. Sarah is aware that despite her attempts to get rid of her blackness, she is bound to her father and says that she is "tied to the black Negro"³⁶

Therefore, Sarah's selves seem to be figures who symbolize the opposition of the two conflicting cultures in the protagonist's identity. The reality she identifies anticipate her failure and disappointment to end the war within her. The four selves represent the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. That's why she never succeeds to built a unified identity.

We can say that the protagonist of *Funnyhouse of the Negro* (1964) experiences a war within herself. The play therefore creates images in which Sarah experiences a crisis of identity as she is caught between the multiplicity of selves whom she tries to escape from but fails. This reflects the aggressive struggle between blackness and whiteness within and outside Sarah's selves. In the end, Sarah's quest to obtain a unified identity seems to be impossible. She thus "reckons that a tormented life without a distinct identity is not worth living."³⁷

Indeed, Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958), Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) are three modern plays which depict the absurdity of human life through the characters identity crisis which torture them.

To sum up, all the characters within the three plays have been victims of their identity

crisis. They saw that their life is meaningless, foolish and senseless. likewise, they preferred to isolated themselves and became lonely just to avoid contact and escape from their duties. Especially in the second world war (1938-1945) as of its destructive aftereffect ; mainly in their intellectual trauma.

Endnotes:

22-Albee, Edward. *My diaries for Liu Cycili*, 2001.5

23-Albee, Edward. *Zoo Story*. 1958,3

24-Ibid, 17

25-Ibid, 18

26-Baraka, Amiri *Dutchman*,1964,02

27-Ibid,

28-Ibid, 7

29-ibid,21

30-Abu.eduq.iq. Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964): Identity Crisis.2

31-ibid

32-Emilio, Ramon.*ES.Revista de Filologia Inglesa*.(2011).295

33-Ibid

34-Kennedy, Adrienne. *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964),15

35-International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies,2015.15

36- Kennedy, Adrienne. *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964),4

37-Ibid,49

Chapter two: Alienation, loneliness and meaninglessness

This chapter analyses the characters within the three plays *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, *Dutchman*, and *the Zoo Story* from a psychological perspective. All protagonists within the three plays are tormented by their identity crisis. They resort to isolating themselves from society and the real world. According to Camus, isolation and loneliness are key features within the theatre of the Absurd. They chose to carry a meaningless life just to free themselves from their duties in the real world like Peter. They even resort to intruding to others' lives just to have a meaningful discussion with anyone like Sarah, Jerry and Lula. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to reveal the reasons out of which the characters' alienation springs out and at the same time the consequences to which these reasons lead.

Presented in Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*, the theme of alienation is well illustrated within the play. According to Waleed Abid Hussein: "Isolation, loneliness and frustration are, in fact, major subjects in this realistic and symbolic drama of a lonely outcast who tries to make contact with another human being and who finally binds himself to that other in death"³⁸. The play presents characters who suffer from lack of tangible human relationships, the sense of loneliness, and from being alienated and isolated from the other members of their own society. This suffering leads majorly to agonizing life experiences and finally to the death of the main character Jerry who resorts to committing suicide to give his life a meaning as well as impress his audience.

The play opens with Peter sitting alone on a park bench in New York Central Park, reading a book. Suddenly, Jerry comes in and tries to converse and establish a relationship with him. Each of the two characters lives in isolation: Jerry lives in an imposed seclusion; whereas

Peter has chosen his isolation. The latter prefers Central Park's bunch as the best place where he can find peace of mind and where no one can disturb him. He is not only escaping people, but he even wants to be away from his family on Sunday, which is supposed to be his day of rest. Peter's isolation is justified through Camus's idea that modern man is always free and involved in choice. His life has become valuable by his resort to isolation. However, in our play, Peter's rest didn't last long because it was interrupted by Jerry, a stranger. In reality, what made Jerry attempt to get closer to Peter is his loneliness as he lives in a similar condition. Therefore, he is looking to have new friends and build new social relationships.

It's worthy to say that Jerry becomes absurd and alienated because he realizes that his existence is meaningless. It's devoid of human contact and true relationships with other people. He is deeply lost and alienated. This might be related to his harsh and difficult early life. Things have started as his mother left them at an early age. But things aggravated as his father became alcoholic and tragically died in a bus accident. This has left a great gap in his life. Things didn't stop here. His aunt who took care of him after his parents' death died on the day of his high school graduation. He subsequently lacks parental guidance aggravating his sense of alienation and despair.

Similarly, when he enumerates his personal belongings, he tells Peter that he has two empty picture frames ,but he does not have pictures of anyone to put in them. Even his parents hadn't left behind them any sort of memory .The emptiness of the frames reflects that his parents are nothing now but "shadowy and superficial memories hardly flashing in his own mind"³⁹.The absence of their pictures represents the shallowness of their present memory in his life.

Jerry's intrusion into Peter's life is another proof of Jerry's isolation. He wants an

audience or more importantly a person to communicate with. Nevertheless, he keeps on repeating the word *Zoo* more than 17 times in the play to show that people in America live just like animals in the sense that they are barred by self-interest, and indifference to one another. Animals in the zoo are kept apart by iron bars, but Americans are separated from one another by the absence of real human relationships. From such a horrible environment emerges the notion of alienation that Jerry as an American suffers from. He repeats this sentence "I have been to the zoo" to make Peter respond to him. Yet, the latter hardly responds for he is preoccupied with the world he has created and which lies in the book he reads. Later on, Peter is forced to get out of his world and even ends up telling things about his private life to Jerry: a stranger. However, it is important to mention that Peter got out of his world as soon as Jerry mentioned the word "zoo". It is ironic to say that in the play, the word zoo for Jerry symbolizes the American society. In other words, Americans for Jerry are just like animals because they never communicate :they just talk.

It is important also to say that in one way or another , Jerry stands for Albee's voice in which he expresses his accusation of the whole world. All things seem unwilling to be in harmony or even slight contact. Albee therefore emphasizes the dilemma of modern man "who seeks to live in a chaotic world where there is nothing except indifference, disintegration, and alienation."⁴⁰. This quotation highlights the extreme state of alienation that Jerry exclusively suffers from. He seems like one who has reached a state of despair, but who is hoping to get attention from man.

Additionally, the choice of setting is crucial in the analysis of the play. Albee has chosen New York Central Park on purpose since it's a miniature of the city of New York but even more importantly of the American society. In this city, people know and hear about others' existence, but they never try to make any contact with their neighbours, nor with the people in the external

world. The rooming –house , in which Jerry lives is great evidence. The rooming house in Columbus Avenue is inhabited by people from different races and cultures. But, Jerry doesn't make any approach to know his neighbor tenants, nor do they. Everybody lives in his own world which marks the human isolation. It's here that Albee is actually satirical of the American society. *Zoo Story* is symbolic as Edward Albee considers the whole city of New York as a zoo in which the people live in their respective cages, isolated from others. The people know that there are others also who live in their confinements in their neighborhood but they can't communicate with each other. This leads to ultimate tragedy of human life – the tragedy of human isolation, loneliness and lack of communication. In fact, "Jerry inhabits a world devoid of any meaningful human relationship. He lives not just alone, but in a state of isolation and alienation."⁴¹. This quote illustrates well the situation of Americans and how Albee is desperate. He stresses through Jerry the need for man to break out his isolation and to stay with people that surround him. He longs for communication. While he meets Peter, he confesses to him: "But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk, like to get to know somebody, know all about him."⁴²...

This is why all of Jerry's references to other people were mostly like animals. For him, people are behaving like animal; they are talking but not communicating. When he mentions the landlady, he says that she is ugly like an animal, whose sexual temptation urged him to hate her and keep himself away from her lust. Even if he is looking for a human contact, to free himself from his isolation, he rejects the landlady's advances. He is like Peter in refusing human interaction and preferring his own isolation and loneliness. It's actually this episode in Jerry's life that can be considered to be an introduction to his story with the lady's dog.

Within The play, the only creature which looks for Jerry's affection is the landlady's dog. At first, Jerry was indifferent and he reacts in a pitiless way towards the dog's friendly attacks.

The dog's biting is a metaphor for American society. Though the dog looks for affection and communication, Jerry does not react to him. The latter does not stop here. Jerry decides to even kill the dog because he has misunderstood its behavior. This can be justified that for Jerry, the dog and the landlady are similar. The dog's story can be related to be a lesson about the nature and importance of human interaction and communication, which was hostile at the beginning. With time, Jerry's attitude toward the dog changes from hatred to friendship, especially when he has nearly killed him with poison. Acquaintance is established gradually as each one is seeking the other's love, but fear prevents them from doing so. Here they resemble the American society as each one is in one way or another unable to get out of the world he has created even he knew it was poisonous as it lacks meaning and communication. Jerry expresses his feelings when he says: "We neither love nor hurt because we don't try to reach each other."⁴³ It is crazy how Jerry has failed to make contact with a human being. He is absorbed by his loneliness.

It is also noteworthy to say that Jerry's story are like his way out of his loneliness. He looks for recognition and resorts to telling stories as his way out. He is looking for both an audience and a person to communicate with. In Albee's *Zoo Story* (1958), he is the narrator while Peter is the audience. It is worth mentioning that Jerry tells and plays out his stories. Accordingly, he can be himself, a narrator and an actor. If we consider Camus's types of absurd man, we can say that when he plays different roles, Jerry becomes absurd. Further, he can be a writer who invents different stories, and in this case Jerry can even be considered as an absurd creator. In fact, most of the play represents his creation. He is so talkative, and Peter confesses that: "You're ... you're full of stories, aren't you?"⁴⁴ Just to mark a point, while Jerry is telling his stories, Peter is listening unwillingly, but when Jerry mentions the zoo, Peter wants to hear it: "Yes, yes, by all means; tell me what happened at the zoo."⁴⁵ Now, Jerry has attracted his audience attention to his

plan. Subsequently, he carries on playing his roles till the end of the play.

Nevertheless, Jerry is cautious as he tells Peter about his personal life. As we already know, the play is a set of questions and answers. In our play, Jerry has intruded into Peter's life. He came to realize a lot about Peter's personal life, his family and work. It is up to here that he decided to tell his audience about his own life. He was lonely to the moment he visited the zoo and saw how animals were put into cages to separate them from not only other animals but also from humans.

If we analyze Jerry from another perspective, we notice that Jerry is absurd because he plays several roles, the fact which is central to Camus's ideal of the absurd man. For Camus, an actor always tries to express himself and be understood." What is counted for him is the quantity of different experiences he lives instead of the quality and value of a long or an eternal life"⁴⁶. Jerry in *Zoo Story* behaves as if he cares for Peter just to have contact with him and keep himself out of his isolation. Furthermore, Jerry is always prudent and controls himself in order not to be lost in affection. The only creature he cared for a little bit was the landlady's dog. According to Abdelli Fatima, "Camus asserts that the absurd man cannot commit himself fully to any activity, but awareness of ones actions is extremely futile"⁴⁷. In fact, Jerry shows love and sociability to Peter in order to maintain the contact with him. First, he tells him many details about his private life like the death of his parents, the little objects he possesses, his homosexual act with the boy, his experience with the landlady and her dog and about his last visit to the zoo. He aims at gaining Peter's attention. He behaves as if he cares for Peter just to maintain contact with him, and to create a certain friendliness that will keep him out of his isolation. Furthermore, Jerry is always cautious and controls himself in order not to be lost in affection. According to Camus, the absurd man cannot commit himself fully to any activity. In other words, Jerry shows sociability

to Peter to sustain contact. It happens that after he tells the story of the dog and how they came close as he almost killed the animal, he treats Peter as a friend. He knew that he failed at gaining the dog's affection, so he hopes to gain Peter.

The death of Jerry is another aspect of his loneliness. The play started with a discussion and ended with a fight over a metal and wood bunch. He knew that the bunch he was fighting for with Peter does not belong to any of them. Yet, the fight persists. He took the knife and threw it between Peter's feet. Though Peter did not respond at first, Jerry started to insult him. This angered Peter and things ended with Jerry's death and Peter's escape from the scene. We can therefore say that Jerry deliberately knew how the fight would end. I believe he wanted to make his death memorable. In fact, Jerry aims at creating a memorable story in the present moment and feels like he has to forget about the past. According to Camus, the artist lives for the present, and of all the artists, the actor's (Jerry's *in Zoo Story*) fame has the shortest life-span and his fame dies with his death. In other words, Jerry knew his life was meaningless. He chose not to cry behind closed doors nor to commit suicide. Rather, he wanted to be creative by dying at hands of Peter :his audience and the witness of his death. Indeed, we can say that Jerry's death symbolizes his sacrifice for all humans at all ages. It is Albee's way of proving that by Jerry's death and Peter's escape, the gap between humans is getting wider. By killing himself, Jerry has freed Peter from his own cage and even freed himself from his world of isolation.

Now, if we are to analyze Peter's character, we can say that he is not different from Jerry. Though our characters come from different social backgrounds, they are both absorbed by their loneliness. The difference is that Jerry is aware of his loneliness while Peter is not.

The first lines of the conversation give us an idea about Peter's reluctance of any acquaintance,

and he refuses his peace to be disturbed:

Jerry: I've been to the zoo.(Peter doesn't notice). I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I HAVE BEEN TO THE ZOO!

Peter: Hm?...What?...i'm sorry, were you talking to me?⁴⁸

In this part of the play, Peter appears to be absent-minded, as if he was away from the actual world living in another one, or as if he was asleep and Jerry has awakened him to face the undesirable real world. When Jerry started the conversation, Peter was upset and disturbed. The only subject that attracted him is that of the "zoo". Here a kind of relationship is established between the two characters. It's as if both of them knew he was living in a zoo. The difference is that Jerry admits that while Peter is reluctant.

It is important to mention that Peter has chosen his loneliness. He prefers Central Park's bench as the best place where he can find peace of mind and where no one can disturb him. He is not only escaping people, but he even wants to be away from his family in Sunday, which is supposed to be the day of rest. Peter's resort to his isolation may be explained, as Camus agrees, in the "fact that modern man is always free and involved in choice. His life has been rendered valuable by his aspiration to isolation and indifference"⁴⁹. But his rest does not last a long time for the reason that Jerry, a stranger, comes and messes up his rest. As he seems to be uninterested in carrying a conversation with him, Jerry decides to rely on his harsh past.

Peter has a good position in society; he lives with his wife and two daughters, in a beautiful and well-furnished house. He has an interesting job in a publishing house with an important salary. However, he gets away from his family each Sunday to New York's Central Park to read his book there. Sunday is the day of rest ;so, instead of staying with his wife and daughters at home, he escapes to get into his cage; that of the Park, or more specifically that of

the book.

Peter's preference of his isolation, as it is already mentioned before, reveals his absurdity because an absurd man is for all time involved in choice. Real relationship and affection do not interest him; he just lives with self-satisfaction. He does not love from all his heart; he does not lose himself in feelings. Peter's separation from his family leads Jerry to call Peter's family a little zoo for the reason that everyone lives in his own cage, separated by bars of indifference and loneliness from each other. In fact, Peter's isolation, loneliness, empty existence, and solitary life from his family and his society are described through the image of the zoo. This is why the only theme which interests him is that of the zoo.

Similarly, Peter lives under protection of his own ordered existence, away from conflicts, danger, physical or emotional untidiness, in isolation avoiding human contact. His refusal to get any relation or contact with anyone is expressed in many passages, and the first sentences of the play are good evidence. In addition, Peter usually repeats some words, expressions and even sentences where he reveals his will to be alone. When Jerry asks him if he minds to talk, Peter answers: "Why ... no, no."⁵⁰ and he is asked if he minds being asked some questions, Peter responds: "Oh, I don't mind at all, really."⁵¹ Indeed, Peter confesses that he refuses to tell Jerry anything, . To discover the name of Peter, Jerry would carry a great deal of conversation with Peter, and he introduces himself simultaneously. Until now, Peter is conversing with certain reluctance, mainly when Jerry tells Peter about the landlady and her dog, Peter screams: "I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE. I don't understand you, or your landlady"⁵² this illustrates well his isolation and will to stay so.

The play starts with Peter sitting in his drawing room, which he shares with his wife and two daughters. He was shown sitting reading a book while Ann insists saying: “we should talk.” This highlights that Peter is immersed in his world of alienation. He isolated himself from his family. That’s why he chose to take his “world” each Sunday on the day of his rest to the bench in Central Park. Though he is a family man, still he is lonely but not lost as Jerry is.

The zoo, the main story which has been told by Jerry, is without doubt the greatest metaphor for life. Peter, the-would-be responsible father of a family, prefers to pass his Sunday afternoons in New York’s Central Park alone. He is living in a cage of alienation and indifference. Jerry is aware of Peter’s situation which is similar to many others, especially after his visit to the zoo. When he comes to converse with Peter, he aims at telling him to what extent people’s life is analogous to that of the animals inside their cages in the zoo. But the greatest reality that is hidden behind the zoo is that the world at large is a zoo.

We can’t therefore deny that the characters within Albee’s *Zoo Story* are his way of criticizing the American society. First, Jerry’s death is a metaphor that the death of the protagonist is just a beginning. He is satirical of what the society has become. As for Peter, Albee emphasizes the social gap between the social classes. Though they carry a luxurious life, they themselves are ironically isolated and alienated from the rest of society and in the case of Peter even from their families. They get immersed into a fictional world. Similarly, Albee by presenting contrasting characters like Peter and Jerry wants to convey that no matter where both characters come from, both of them suffer from loneliness. Jerry has a series of failed relationships due to his difficult childhood. The only relationship he was able to maintain was his homosexual adolescent companion. Peter failed even to make a solid relationship with his family

If we move to analyze the themes of alienation and isolation within Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964), we can't deny the fact that the play exposes the absurd behavior and revolt of a black American in front of his oppressor. His confrontation to his condition results in his death. Consequently, the main character Clay represents an oppressed man on earth, and so his death is a sacrifice meant to motivate his fellowmen to stand against the racist white society.

It's undeniable to say that black Americans used to carry a hard life. They were enslaved and subject to racial segregation. Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* is set in a subway train where the two main characters, Lula and Clay, meet. During their talk Lula seduces and then mocks Clay for accepting the standards of the white society and suppressing his black identity. Clay responds to her declaring that he does not need her approval. Infuriated, Lula stabs Clay to death, then orders the subway passengers – who were passively watching – to throw the body off the train and they comply. Another black man boards the train at the next stop and Lula repeats the same pattern of seduction. The play is an extended metaphor of the temptation and the murder of Clay, a twenty-year-old black American, by Lula, a thirty-year-old white woman. The words of Lula symbolizes her racism and hatred towards people of different colors; her lines are contrasted with Clay's innocent and naïve responses that reflect his slave mentality. The subway journey taken by Lula, Clay and the silent passengers mirrors a racist society that leads toward the illegal murder of an innocent young man: the murder of Clay. The play; thus, denotes the racist nature of white race and urges black men to stand against any form of abuse.

As it is highlighted before, the absence of harmony and tolerance within the American society lead to the isolation of its components. White Americans could not accept the idea that Black Americans could be cultivated, smart and well mannered. This is related to prejudice. Black people were always associated with violence, slavery and savageness. After the Black Art

Movement protests as well as the success of many figures to raise awareness, black people started their uprising and decided to free themselves from such stereotypical description.

Similarly, the play explores the tension between black and racist white society which suffers from racial discrimination. Amiri Baraka successfully mirrors the status of the blacks in a white dominated society. He insists that the blacks need to revolt and stand up for their rights against the status of insecurity they are victims of. Therefore, in one way or another, he portrays the plight of blacks trying to live in society which attempts to exclude them. Some were left traumatized while others attempted to revolt in their way like Clay who at the beginning tried to ignore Lula's seduction and provocative words.

If we are to analyze the character of Lula, we can say that her loneliness led her to show off her white skin supremacy over a young black man. She knew she would be supported by her race who were on board of the train, that is why she resorted into provoking the young Clay. Otherwise, why would she put herself in such a situation which started with her trying to seduce Clay who rejected her. Ultimately, she decided to murder him and with the help of other passengers have hidden their crime. This implies that her character is living in isolation. She can't cope with the fact that things are starting to change in society. In her world just like that of many, a black man or woman has no right to board the same train as them nor to get closer to them. In such an isolated world, tolerance and accepting the presence of another self is not accepted. She can not free herself from her lonely world where prejudice dominates. She targets Clay viciously and confronts him that a black man will never succeed to integrate in their society. This makes us questions: Why had she to speak for others? Others on board of the train were careless about the presence of black man on board.

Indeed, Clay and Lula represent two very different sides of a society's struggle for racial power, equal and unequal. Lula is empowered by her white supremacy. She challenged then killed a young man just to prove her dominion. Her isolation; therefore, lies in her society which excludes other races. It is not about the color of skin but might even widen the scope to gender and sex. She repeatedly exposes and tries to make Clay feel ashamed by him trying to integrate himself in their society. As for Clay, his attempt to change his situation as well as that of his community is the reason behind his alienation. At first, he struggles emotionally and verbally as he attempts not to care about Lula's provocations. Later on, his struggle and alienation are well demonstrated as his violence changes from being verbal to physical. He slaps Lula and swears to kill anyone. His isolation is then related to his fear not to be accepted .

As we move to analyzing the characters within Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, we notice that Sarah the protagonist has created many selves to free herself from her isolation. The characters she created are in one way or another a reflection of her inner thoughts and struggle as she can't escape the world she lives in. She struggles to integrate within the white society as she rejects her own identity.

Her mixed origins as she was born for a white mother and black father, she has mixed ideas about which heritage she represents. Her mother always accused her father of being the negro who raped her. Those thoughts have influenced Sarah's ideas about which side to choose.

This just reinforces Adrienne Kennedy's status as a contemporary African-American playwright who addresses issues of race and gender. The choice of protagonist is very significant. Sarah, a young woman from mixed origins, who is in a position of un-belonging. Her suffering has affected her well-being: her hair has fallen down.

Sarah accuses her father of being behind all her issues. She keeps on associating her father with rape. She can not overcome the idea that she was victimized. She can not imagine herself being raped. She refers to her father as: “a wild black beast who raped my mother.”⁵³ For her, she is tied to a “black negro”⁵⁴ from whom she has inherited “one defect: a frizzy hair unmistakably Negro”⁵⁵. Indeed the use of such expression demonstrates that our protagonist lives in a status of denial which has lead to her loneliness. She fails to join the white race and never accept to take part in the black one.

We can also relate Sarah’s isolation to her job as a poet which makes her more sensitive. Perhaps, she chose those white papers to write in and fill the gap in her life. She “is dreaming of a day when her mother smiles at her”⁵⁶. Thus, she lacks affection and love. So, she searches for it in the four selves she has created.

Similarly, it’s as if Sarah’s mind is in a status of war. She portrays the image of a woman with mixed origins who suffers from racial hatred and fear to join any side. Throughout the play, Sarah identifies herself with her mother’s world. She is a white American. So, she isolates herself, and hides in her room where she dreams of living with European antiques, photographs of Roman ruins, and oriental carpets. She spends her days longing for living in a white European culture where all her “friends will be white”⁵⁷ this is why she chose Queen Victoria and the Duchess as two of her imaginary selves.

Additionally, though she lives in an apartment with her Jewish boyfriend, she is isolated and tormented by her origins as a black woman. She is disconnected from the world and cannot find a place for herself. From one hand, she has assimilated herself into the dominant culture; she majored in English; she writes poetry in imitation of a white woman. This is symbolic. She

attempts to suppress her African American culture through her studies and white boyfriend whom she pretends to love. However, her African American identity haunts her because her father's status defines her in a white dominated society. For Sarah, being white is synonymous with the top of the pyramid. This is a stereotypical image which associates blacks with brutality while whites with supremacy.

Indeed, Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) is her attempt to show the struggle of black people in a marginalized society: one which is dominated with the white presumed supremacy . this leads our character Sarah to feel marginalized carrying a meaningless life. She resorts as any absurd character to create or more precisely live various fictional lives through the interpretation of different roles.

After all,our characters resolve to violence while attempting to give meaning to their existence that would ultimately lead to their death.

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Chapter three: Revolt, Social Struggle and Death as Key Features of an Oppressed Society and Individual

Within the previous chapters, I have dealt with themes of reality, meaninglessness, isolation and absurdism within Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958), Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) relying on Albert Camus's theory of Absurdism. Other themes related to Absurdism include violence and death. The three playwrights share a significant technique and that is to express their political ideas through art. They resort to integrating violence whether physical or verbal whether as a feature of their characters or a scene in order to show to which extent they want to reach peace and understanding among people. They are against oppression and exploitation which dominated the post war American society.

If we are to start with Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958), we can't deny that our characters are isolated. In fact, the choice of characters is meaningful: two characters from two different social classes, but who are similar as they are tormented by their real world living status. While Peter is an ordinary publishing executive who is leading a very calm and settled life, Jerry lives alone with no family or friends. This difference in the portrayal of characters can be related to the fact that Albee wants to highlight the misery and sense of despair within a post-war American society tortured by the loss of both souls and identity. Somehow, they are tormented by the reality of the world they live in. Their status of insecurity lead them to escape their world and create another one.

As far as Jerry is concerned, he is described as 'nothing and have nothing'. He is an unmarried young man in his thirties. He has no girlfriend or fiancée. In reality, he has no contact

with anyone. He lives in an apartment with many people from different cultures. Yet, instead of searching for contact at first in the apartment he lives in for he constantly feels insecure. So, he searches for security elsewhere. His resort of going to the zoo is symbolic. He is reviving his childhood. I believe the only moments he felt secure is when his parents were alive. That's why he believes that the American society resembles a 'zoo': no one cares about how others are doing or feeling. It is as if everyone is living in a protective shield. What matters is your social status. Indeed, Albee advances the idea that animals in a zoo are separated by bars made of iron, while humans are separated by bars of indifference and refusal to accept how the others are. That's why Jerry is estranged from the rest of people. He has many neighbors but made no contact with them. I think he views them as if they were contaminating society. He only approaches Peter because he knew he is like him. He also wants to give meaning to his life and make his death memorable by being reported in the media.

The play as mentioned before is a series of questions and answers between the two characters. Jerry wants to intrude into Peter's world. He is inquisitive for he wants to force his company upon Peter. At first, he tickles him but the latter seems to be angered. This action can be related to Jerry's homosexuality and lack of belief in himself. He lacks affection. However, he was misguided. Instead of searching for love and affection with a female, he did the opposite and looked for it with a male. Additionally, He keeps on repeating some questions and expressions several times to establish a contact with his audience: Peter. This can be justified by the fact that Jerry is like a desperate creature who is eager to establish contact with someone, but more importantly to be heard. I think this has worked. He succeeds into breaching the walls of Peter's world when he mentions the story of the word 'zoo' which as it is said is symbolic of the American society torn apart by racial and social differences. He starts telling Peter stories about

his early life as soon as he knew about his. He was looking for an audience to make his stories memorable so that he will be immortalized. He is looking for an escape from his alienation and he knew the only way out is media. She tries to get closer to him, but he refuses. More precisely, he runs away from her. He is indeed neglected and ultimately dehumanized. He is like a caged soul which can only find freedom either by resorting to establishing contact or by committing suicide.

Before Jerry met Peter, the latter knew nothing about his existence. But, as soon as the two met, Jerry decided that he must transfer his memories and make himself memorable. This further reinforces Camus's belief in the absurdity of man as our character is in a quest to give meaning to his life. He wanted to make his end memorable by choosing Peter as both his audience and an actor in his death.

Additionally, another aspect of death is revealed through the relationship between Jerry and the landlady's dog. In fact, it was a strange one as it made Jerry lonely. At first, Jerry thought of poisoning the dog for it constantly kept on attacking him; and so he did. But, the dog recovered two days after. So, Jerry decides to establish a relationship with him but fails several times. Indeed, we can relate the dog's survival to that of the American society. In one way or another, Albee seems to be skeptical about Americans survival but he wishes they would succeed. After failing to establish a relationship with the dog, Jerry decides to come to the zoo. He wants to have an audience to whom he would narrate his stories, then end his life. As he met Peter, he calls him 'mister' then moves to friend. A relationship was thought to be built.

Peter was desperate. He argues that he needed to make contact with anyone even if it was an animal. The only creature which was in a way attracted to him was the landlady's dog. At first, their contact was partially violent. The dog attacked Jerry each time he saw him. So, the latter

decides to poison him. This action of poisoning an animal is a reflection or mirror of Jerry's mind which seems to be full of ideas on death and violence. An animal has no brain to think with, but Jerry pretends to forget about this. So, he resorts to killing the dog to show off his superiority. The latter surprisingly survives two days after. So, Jerry decides to make contact with the creature ,but he fails. He fails to establish any relationship with both humans and animals.

When Jerry finishes telling Peter about the landlady's dog story, he suddenly starts challenging him for the bunch. Consequently, with their fight over a bunch of iron and wood, this relationship wasn't possible and is doomed to fail. What is strange in their fight is that they both knew the bunch was not theirs. Yet, they insisted on their quarrel which can be considered as a pretext in order to find a way to kill himself. To make his death unforgettable, Dr. Harith Ismaiel Turki asserts that Jerry wanted "his death to be reported in the media for being murdered"⁵⁵. In other words, Jerry preplans for his death. He wants someone to kill him so that his death will be reported. He will be at last identified. He believes that his death would enable him to achieve meaning in his life. So, he takes off a knife and throws it to the feet of Peter. The latter didn't respond at first. Their violence was at first verbal. However, Jerry has stepped over the line as he started insulting Peter. The latter was rendered angry and their fight becomes physical. Jerry stabs himself with the knife showing as if it was done by Peter. As he was dying, he believes he has reached his aim in life for the first time ever. So, he thanks Peter. His thanks are not for ending his life but for witnessing it and being an actor. What is also observable is that he didn't plan at all to integrate Peter in his death because he asked him to leave before the arrival of the police. The latter runs away . life continues just like it should be: everyone running for their business. This is then a powerful example used by Albee to criticize the harsh American society.

Moreover, Jerry lacks affection in his life. He was torn apart by his tragic and difficult childhood. He lost his parents at a young age then his aunt who took care of him and who died

the day of his high school graduation. Within the play, he is also described as an unmarried young man in his thirties who was unable to establish any relationship with anyone even the landlady's dog. He lives in the fourth floor in a rooming house where he knows and talks with no one. However, he was a victim of sexual harassment by the landlady. According to Dr. Harith Ismaiel Turki, Jerry speaks about the landlady who was seductive just like an animal as she wanted to use him "to gratify her sexual desires whenever she wants. She does not care about his existence and about his feelings."⁵⁶

If we are to say, I believe that the absence of meaning in Jerry's life is what caused his death. He was just like a caged soul who wanted to be free. He resorted to Camus's theory of suicide and used Peter as a witness for both the story of his life and death. While telling his story, we can say that he was foreshadowing his death. His poverty as well as the fact that he is socially isolated and haunted by a traumatic past are three factors that put individuals at risk of committing suicide

As far as Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman(1964)* is concerned, the play explores themes of masculinity, death and violence which are best illustrated in the characters' interactions. It demonstrates the violence committed by white race towards black people who are condemned to death as they try to defend themselves.

Within the play, Amiri Baraka highlights the idea of being pessimistic about race relationships. He believes that as long as black African Americans try to respond peacefully to white people's provocative attitudes, they will remain humiliated and tortured. For him, "white supremacy will still eventually find a way to impose itself upon them and ultimately destroy them; such is the case with Clay and Lula"⁵⁷ [This then demonstrate how stereotypical](#)

[description and prejudice dominated the relationship between white and black. According](#) to its title, the play is a reference to the ghost ship the “flying Dutchman”. This symbolizes that no matter how unifying races is sought, the attempts are doomed to fail. This has been proved through the interactions of our characters and the death of the innocent Clay at the end of the play.

Lula in this play is a young white lady in her thirties who takes the train subway. Just like Eve who is represented as the doom of Adam, Lula’s seduction and belief in her supremacy lead to Clay’s murder. Lula’s intentions are revealed from the beginning. She can be related to Eve especially when she was eating the apple. The apple is associated with sin for Adam was sent out of heaven because he and Eve ate from the tree. Similarly, Lula repeatedly insults Clay because of his origin and background accusing him of being a slave and mocking him for attempting to integrate himself within their superior society. She ,from the beginning, was targeting him. She was the one who started the conversation. At first, Clay didn’t respond to her pretending not to have heard her. But, she kept on sexually taunting him until he got into the discussion. She was provocative especially when she wanted to humiliate him reminding him of the white race supremacy.

Clay: Wow. All these people, so suddenly. They must all come from the same place.

Lula: Right. That they do.

Clay: Oh? You know about them too?

Lula: Oh yeah. About them more than I know about you. Do they frighten you?

Clay: Frighten me? Why should they frighten me?

Lula: ‘Cause you’re an escaped nigger.

Clay: Yeah?

Lula: ‘Cause you crawled through the wire and made tracks to my side.

Clay: Wire?

Lula: Don’t they have wire around plantations? **58**

This confrontation foreshadows how Clay's end would be. The violence was at first verbal. Accusing Clay of being afraid from him being in a train full of white people is Baraka's way of highlighting the impossibility of changing racial hatred and belief in the presumed white people supremacy. No matter how well mannered or cultivated a black man is, he will never overcome this obstacle. The use of the word frightened is symbolic because it reveals the status of fear the blacks had to face especially those who attempted to integrate into the American society. Similarly, the reference to Clay as "an escaped niger" is of high importance. Before the Emancipation Proclamation, black people were enslaved and forced to work in plantations. The fate of anyone who escapes is death. It's as if Lula reminds Clay that his fate is death as he was attempting to escape his identity as being a descendant from the inferior race.

Indeed, Lula's destructive spirit might be the result of white man's belief that the death of the blacks is the natural outcome of their attempt to deny their black identity in order to be part of the white society. In other words, death awaits any black man when tries to blend inside white culture. Thus, black man is doomed to death in all cases: if he advocates for separation from the whites and highlights the importance of his black nationalism, he is dead. If he attempts to ignore his black identity and blend in and, he will be offering himself as a sacrifice to the white. Moreover, death is also recurrent in the play through several ominous words, foreshadowing the final murder, like "grave", "ashes", "tomb" and "morbid"⁵⁹

Additionally, things aggravate When Clay refuses to join Lula in the dance. She becomes angry, mocks and insults him even further till he is finally enraged. She can't accept the fact that he isn't a doll in her hands or more precisely just like an animal for he has no identity nor culture of his own. She mocks his origins and clothes. Thus, his rage is intensified when she tells him "You're afraid of white people"⁶⁰. Thus, he "slaps her as hard as he can, across the mouth... Lula's head bangs against the back of the seat. When she raises it again, Clay slaps her again"⁶¹.

He, then, foolishly, threatens to murder her and tells her that he could kill her and any of the passengers on the spot but he keeps himself from cutting their throats. Clay, thus, oversteps the limits of the presumed racial white society. He is unaware of the extent to which Lula and the other white men will go to maintain their dominance. His speech was his way of fighting oppression. It's as if he believes that black people can fight the belief in white supremacy through art. Unfortunately, he was mistaken because at that time it was as if he threatened a lion in its cave.

Similarly, the description of the characters is of high importance. It is usually the oppressed 'black man' who kills the oppressor 'white man', and sometimes the oppressor resolves to violence to impose and maintain his superiority. Instead of asserting his manhood, Clay, through his declaration of being non-violent, ironically made himself the perfect victim. He has no idea that Lula is a killer but, by the end of his speech, he realizes his deeply buried hatred for the whites. So, he asks Lula to stop on acting because her plan of enraging him has succeeded. The fact that as he stood up to leave the place and reach his books is his way of finally attempting to reach his African identity. He was in one way or another doomed to die mainly when he confronts Lula stating : "Sorry, baby, I don't think we could make it"⁶² Lula confirms his statement, and, since role playing has ended and he was about to get off the train, she stabs him twice while he was reaching for his books. With the conspiracy of other white passengers, the body of the innocent man is thrown out of the train. Tragically, the same fate awaits another young black man who boards latter on the train. This; therefore, is Baraka's attempt to foreshadow the tragic end of any peaceful protest against oppression.

Amiri Baraka's play indeed highlight the violent nature of white race. Despite their supremacy and dominion, they resort to killing anyone who confronts them. This is perfectly demonstrated with Clay who was at first careless about Lula's seduction which turned out to be

an evil plan. The quarrel between the characters started to be verbal than became physical violence first with Lula being slapped then by her stabbing Clay at the end.

Lastly, death and violence is also prominent in Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964.) this can be well associated with the characters' description. In fact, all of Sarah's selves are dead historical figures, and she is haunted by the image of her father's death. Sarah also reveals her desire to kill her father as well as the blackness inside of her.

If we are to start, we cannot deny that Sarah is tortured mentally by the fact that she is from Black African origins. Not only this, but also that her mother, whom she perceives as a modal, was raped by her father:” a black beast” as both of them describes him. All his attempts to approach her seem to be like a nightmare. She even accuses him of trying to rape her.

By portraying the inner struggle between Sarah's four created selves, Kennedy wants to showcase the dilemma faced by African Americans. They fail to accept their origins and defend for their oppressed identity. So just like Sarah, they resort in believing in the supremacy of the white race: one in which they must integrate.

The play in fact portrays the last hours in the life of Sarah. The latter , a young lady, born to a black father and white mother fails to accept such reality. She accuses her father of raping her 'white' mother. This is a stereotypical representation of black people who are always accused of being criminals in the white society. Similarly, despite her attempts to integrate in the white society, Sarah fails. She relates this to her 'frizzy hair' which proves her true identity: a black woman. This becomes her nightmare and will eventually lead to her death.

The only way out of this dilemma was for her to create four selves to save her. Yet, this was a failure. They tortured and betrayed her even more. Among the characters she created, we have Queen Victoria and the Duchess of Hapsburg who represent her racist side. She created Jesus, who was portrayed as a dwarf, as her way of salvation. The only self she hated was that of

Patrice Lumumba: a man of value whom her father respected the most. For Sarah's father, Lumumba was the savior of black Africans. His assassination deeply affected him. So, he hanged himself. Though Sarah states that she was the one who killed her father, maybe to feel as she got vengeance for both her and her mother, it is the lady who comes in and announces that Sarah's father actually hanged himself in a Harlem Hotel once he heard about Lumumba's murder. This death is in fact a surrender to the alienation and the father's way out of being torn apart by his inability to accept Lumumba's death, and his daughter's harsh accusations of him. What is also noticeable is that at one scene all selves appear claiming they wanted their father to be dead, and how sorrowful they were as their mother was touched by a black man. This is indeed an inner crisis Sarah is victim of.

At the end, the lady informs Raymond; Sarah's boyfriend; that the latter hung herself in her room. Death here was Sarah's way out of her troublesome world: one in which she failed to gain a position in the white society, but also one in which she can't accept and live with a black origin.

Sarah's death was indeed predictable. She could not accept her African identity. So, she resorted to creating many selves. However, it's noticeable that her selves are dead figures. Kennedy; thus, stresses the idea that Sarah's death is related to her inner crisis.

Endnotes:

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General Conclusion:

Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*(1958), Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*(1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*(1964) are viewed among the best plays under the theater of the Absurd.

As asserted by Camus, the theatre of the Absurd is not concerned with the narration of the characters' adventures or explaining the events of a story. Rather, it presents the characters' basic situations. It neither gives any solution nor communicates moral or social lessons. All actions within the theatre are symbolic and communicate a poetic image. It also attempts to express man's attempts to accept the world as it's or free him from illusions.

The three playwrights share a significant technique through which they express their political beliefs. This is done through art. They are against the oppression and exploitation of the minorities they represent.

The themes that are common in the three playwrights are related to the inner crises that touch modern man and his relation to his/her society, such as: alienation, isolation, violence, identity, and communication.

As far as Albee's *Zoo Story* is concerned, we can say that the characters' alienation is result of their pitiless society. Jerry and Peter are from two different societies. To give meaning to his life, Jerry searches for an audience to make his life meaningful. He resorts to suicide to make his short life worthy and memorable, he uses Peter as his witness. The theme of violence here is used to portray Jerry's wish to be reported in the media. The play is indeed a piece of art exploring issues of internal conflict leading to suicide as a last solution to make life meaningful.

As we move to Baraka's *Dutchman*, we can't prevent ourselves from associating it with the ghost ship "the flying Dutchman" as issues of inner struggle of the main characters. Lula who wants to prove and support her belief in the white race supremacy resorts to provocative ways of

seducing the innocent young man Clay. Though he didn't respond at first, but Lula's plan of mocking him and his attempt to deny his African identity have started a verbal violence between them. The latter developed latter on and became physical. This violence has cost Clay his life with the conspiracy of other passengers on board of the train.

Finally, Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* is no different from the two mentioned plays. It explores issues of identity crisis related to her protagonist Sarah. The latter feels tormented by her black origins and believes in the white supremacy. The fact she created many selves is proof of her loneliness. Similarly, she accuses her father of being a beast niger. She desires to be freed from her African identity as she believes it tortures her and prevents her from reaching the top of the pyramid. Ironically, she resorts to committing suicide just like her father at the end.

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