



Review On Identity In The Plays Of Edward Albee

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ABSTRACT:

Edward Albee (1928–2016) may be regarded as one of the major American playwrights who dared to create an alternative discourse which openly challenged the coercive structures of society exposing the assumptions about gender, ethnicity and identity as patriarchal constructs. Albee provides us with a clinical analysis of the American Society where solitude, misgivings lie deep within while a profound complacency thrives in the outer world. His text captured the psychic fragmentation of an entire generation vacillating between the snares of capitalist ideology on the one hand and the search for an altruistic purpose on the other. In this article, identity in the plays of Edward Albee has been highlighted.

Keywords: Edward Albee, Identity, Plays.

I. INTRODUCTION:

On March 12, 1928, in Washington, D.C., Edward Albee was born. He was named after his adopted grandfather, Edward Franklin Albee, a theatre chain co-owner who was adopted by extremely rich parents when he was just two weeks old. Despite the fact that Albee frequently found himself in the company of notable theatre figures when he was a child, it seems that this fact had little bearing on Albee's later theatrical career. Albee wrote his first play, a three-act farce titled *Aliqueen*, when he was twelve years old. Albee's education was inconsistent because his parents spent their winters and summers in different locations. When he was fifteen, he was expelled from one prep school (Lawrenceville School), transferred to Valley Forge Military Academy, was expelled there as well, and eventually graduated from Choate School. The Choate Literary Magazine published his debut one-act drama. He briefly attended Trinity College, where he performed in a Maxwell Anderson piece that introduced him to another aspect of theatre. Albee relocated to Greenwich Village, New York, after graduating from college in 1947 and worked a variety of odd jobs while allegedly having trust money. He lived in an apartment with a composer, and he made a lot of contacts in the music industry thanks to him. He also produced radio station writing. He also worked as a waiter, bartender, salesman, and Western Union delivery messenger, among other odd

jobs. Albee completed *The Zoo Story*, the lengthy one-act play that established his professional career, just before turning 30 in 1958. After sending it to several theatre companies in New York, a friend forwarded it to a friend in Europe, and on September 28, 1959, it was finally staged in Berlin. In 1960, it was played at the Off-Broadway Provincetown Playhouse in New York after being a hit there and in numerous other German cities. Albee's play received a lot of positive reviews from critics but nothing from the general public. With *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, he enjoyed success on both the critical and popular fronts in 1962. The play was transformed into a very successful motion picture with minor, but occasionally significant, alterations from the dramatic script. It received the prestigious New York Drama Critics Award and every other major award, with the exception of the Pulitzer Prize. Albee continued to produce notable drama (*A Delicate Balance* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1966), but none of his other plays attracted the same level of praise from critics and audiences as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? On September 16, 2016, Albee passed away.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to Lamprau M (2020), the study draws on academics who have examined the concept of "point of view" in theatrical texts as a means by which an authoritative voice can enter the narrative and emerge in discourse. It aims to investigate how impoliteness influences the renegotiation of some specific issues in literature, such as how the human-animal bond is to be portrayed in two Greek translations of Edward Albee's play *The Zoo Story* (1995, 2015). (1958). The argument is that pragmatic components of meaning-making, such as the employment of aggression and intimacy in changing the identities of people and entities in the translated versions, are regulated by the ideological positions of the translators. The study examines how the two translators characterised hostility in *The Zoo Story*'s world by taking into account ordinary readers' assessments of the two versions. The findings demonstrate that Kaiti Chistodoulou's TTA (published in 1995) employs im/politeness methods that suggest less regard for animals and more esteem for people. In contrast, TTb (by Errikos Belies) creates a new identity for the interaction between humans and animals by implying a higher regard for animals and paying homage to zoological images. The results imply that im/politeness is a potent instrument in the hands of translators and that the narratives that permeate conversation have a vital impact on how the fictional interactants employ it. Translational data may also be useful in im/politeness research since they can offer a variety of situations for studying im/politeness in cross-cultural contact. [1]

Based on Freudian psychoanalytic concepts such as sexuality, the unconscious, the tripartite psyche, and defence mechanisms, Rakhees AA and Janoory L (2020) stated that this study explores the relationship between the personal life and Albee uses his tragedies to reveal and sublimate his life in his dramatic works. The investigation also reveals Albee's terrible childhood experiences, which had a lasting impact on his behaviour and mental health.

Additionally, it shows how the author uses his fictitious characters to reflect on his traumatic childhood, injured ego, and unconscious mind. The study also reveals the defensive posture the author adopts to justify his repressed desires and undesired inclinations. The plays listed above were chosen because they are autobiographical and self-referential in the sense that they highlight significant elements of Albee's own life and reveal the psychological effects of past experiences, which were stored in the playwright's mind since childhood, on his personality as an adult. [2]

According to Shams P (2019), thesis integrates feminist philosophy and dramatic literature to situate the creation of human subjectivity in the context of transgression and at the intersection of performativity politics and rationality ethics. I combine a theory of subject formation from Judith Butler's work with knowledge from transgression-themed dramas to examine the human outside its bounds. The subject is viewed as being based on performative and ethical ties to the material world and to that which conditions its existence in the context of these inquiries into the limits of the human. [3]

According to Samer Ziyad Al Sharadgeh (2019), the term "violence" is one of the most overused in academia since it has inspired scholars from a wide range of fields to examine its transdisciplinary nature and impacts. The same applies to literature. The current study examines domestic violence in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *A Delicate Balance*, two of the major kinds of violence. The primary types of domestic violence covered in this article include psychological, physical, verbal, and sexual. It makes an effort to look into the many violent characters in such plays. Additionally, it illuminates the various networks among the violent characters. Husband-wife and father-daughter ties are among the main family interactions. [4]

According to Mundhe J. and Das P. (2019), evaluating Edward Albee's theatre is a practise in spotting emerging potential. Albee also objects to Martin Esslin's attempt to classify Edward Albee under the general heading of "The Theatre of the Absurd" because, in Esslin's opinion, Albee "comes into the category of the Theatre of the Absurd precisely because his work attacks the very foundations of American optimism" (Esslin, 1969: 267). With a literary career spanning more than 50 years, Albee has used a variety of themes and creative devices. His plays have theatrical foundations in Samuel Beckett and social roots in the American family system, with characteristic Beckett treatment. As a result, the current study looks into how Albee used a variety of themes and tactics to criticise both American and European theatres of the absurd while simultaneously establishing his own distinctive brand of play. The report also looks into Albee's constant defence of his choice to experiment while showing little regard for public opinion. The study attempts to examine how Albee changed the genre by reorienting his plays toward the dramatisation of philosophical issues of current interest. It does this with the aid of a few selected plays. [5]

According to Rakhees AA and Al-Hajaj JFB (2019), the study looks into how the male character in Edward Albee's *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is emasculated. It makes an effort to use Freudian theories to analyse the male protagonist's problematic nature. The defects in George's character that prevent him from fulfilling his gender responsibilities as a son, spouse, or even an imagined parent are examined. It also covers the psychological factors that lead Martha to treat him with contempt and sexism. According to the study, George has failed himself on a number of fronts. He has developed lassitude and sleepiness that prevent him from taking back his role as the family patriarch. Because of his own shortcomings, he has lost both his authority and respect. Because of this, Martha assumes leadership and keeps the upper hand; she must ensure that he will never be able to ride out the storm. [6]

One of the main factors that made Albee a significant character in the history of American theatre, according to Kadhim Hatem Kaibr and Guo Jingjing (2018), is that all of his literary works address the problems that individuals encounter and the situation of American society after the Second World War. In his literary works, Albee advocated for commitment to the values and ideals in human interactions and condemned the new material conditions that predominated in American society at the time in his literary works. This essay will attempt to analyse *The Zoo Story*, Edward Albee's debut play, with a focus on Jerry. then explains the causes of this character's worry, psychological issues, and loneliness. In addition, this essay will attempt to describe the effects of American materialistic society and the absence of family roles on an individual's conduct. [7]

According to Vembu T (2018), Edward Albee established the American School of Absurdism in the second half of the 20th century after his British and European predecessors. Albee's many plays explored characteristics specific to absurdism, such as existential anxiety, loneliness, experiences of meaninglessness, emptiness, lack of faith in established institutions, and the breakdown of communication in relationships. But *A Delicate Balance* dives deeper into a subject that other absurdist writers haven't addressed: hegemony. Tobias and Agnes' longtime friends move into Tobias and Agnes' home and disrupt the delicate balance that has been existing there. The latter couple is already dealing with the death of a young son and the need to deal with two women: a severely alcoholic spinster sister named Claire and a recently returned, much divorced daughter named Julia. The visiting couple, who enter as uninvited guests and depart as relieved hosts, bring into play power play, domination, hegemony, and other related colonial features. Their forced presence had a similar effect on the locals as did colonisation, and when they left, there were emotional scars and an identity crisis akin to what post-colonial people went through. The research article replaces absurdum with realism by studying the post-colonial dynamics that are present in a play that is supposed to be absurdist. The power dynamics communicated through the verbal dialogues and language exchanges between characters show how the

descent of a first friendly, then tyrannical force on a suffering family or country can have irrevocable consequences. In American Drama, Edward Albee creates a postcolonial language that goes beyond the domain of absurdity. [8]

According to Malik R (2018), Albee's plays are developed through a variety of verbal methods (pause, quiet, gaps, dots, gestures, and postures) and subtextual undertones, depriving them of a satisfying conclusion. Albee's plays are therefore characterized by ambiguity, ambivalence, and polyphony in their dramatic expression. Albee's characters, like Beckett and Pinter's, escape and resist meaning or finality, bringing the post-structural communication to a close. Thus, although it is a feeble attempt, the plays of Albee's understudy may be understood from a post-structuralist perspective. [9]

According to Saxena N (2018), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* suffered a number of critical and audience criticisms when it made its Billy Rose Theatre debut in 1962. Although it presented a dying marriage in an unexpected way, no one could resist, and the play finally became a great Broadway success. It solidified Edward Albee's status as an avant-garde dramatist in American theatre. The drama serves as a reflection of modern American culture, which at the time was under the false illusion of the much-touted "American Dream." The play's action progresses via the antagonists' bloody conflict and concludes in an exorcism. The play's brutal language serves as a tool to keep the audience riveted to the action. Albee and Antonin Artaud have a similar goal of seizing the audience's attention with heightened bodily language that is laced with cruelty, cries, grunts, groans, gestures, and is supported by light and sound effects, props, and music. Analyzing *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* through Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" philosophy offers a comprehensive perspective for comprehending how cruelty functions in the play to make it a thought-provoking masterwork of theatre. [10]

According to Agarwal S. (2017), modern American society is an attack on both an individual's integrity and the social contract that supports that individual in his relationships with others, leading to estrangement. However, if alienation weakens a sense of the real and encourages conformity as a method of behaviour, it also generates a vague, disconnected remorse that acknowledges the failure of community and organic relationships that is the very nature of alienation. In an effort to raise awareness and a sense of brotherhood among his fellow Americans, Albee writes: "Sometimes it's essential to go a long distance out of the way in order to return back a short distance appropriately." (12) *The Story of the Zoo* [11]

According to Prohászka-Rád, B. (2016) stated that *Hey there! I'm called Otto*. [...] I want to stir trouble because I want to make the situation here even more complicated so that maybe I may escape it with my family and everything else. OTTO is my name. Let me see. My brother and I are identical twins. In Edward Albee's play *Me, Myself, and I*, one of the identical twin brothers (both named Otto) says, 'I'm trying to get rid of him, of all of them, but it's not easy:

you know how twins are; well, maybe you don't.' The play is dominated by Albee's wit and razor-sharp irony, which captivate, disturb, and torment spectators and readers. In this essay, I look at how Albee uses meta- and intertextual strategies to transform the theatre into a meta- and intertextual realm, challenging any belief in language and identity as solid, stable, and useful things. [12]

According to Maheshwari VK (2016), Edward Albee, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, is one of the important authors of American theatre from the 20th century. Alongside O'Neill, Miller, and Williams, Albee is a new force in American theatre. Albee's plays provide evidence of his obsession with theatricality and his steadfast desire to identify the social and psychological issues that have dominated so many American plays. Albee is frequently praised as a master of absurdist theatre. Albee was influenced by absurdist drama, particularly that of Samuel Beckett, and the existentialist movement. This inspiration was transformed into the American domestic drama by him, giving rise to his distinctive absurdist aesthetic. [13]

According to Ouiza B (2012), the dissertation is a discursive analysis of *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee and *The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter, two absurdist plays from the 20th century. The study looks at the conversations of the characters from linguistic viewpoints in order to understand how the language of the characters generates violent consequences in the two plays that were chosen and how the characters' identities are portrayed by their discourse. The study also aims to provide more light on the presumptions made in the current critical literature that the conversation in the two plays is "meaningless" and that language has been "devalued." The constructionists' theories concerning identity development, Grice's theory of Conversational Implicature, and relevant literature on the subject of violence served as the foundation for this study's investigation. The analysis of the data focuses on the different ways that the characters disregard the cooperative principle and its four ancillary maxims, namely the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner, as well as the meaning that is produced as a result of the characters' disregard for the precedent maxims. The research shows that the playwrights' violation of the cooperative principle allowed them to communicate the characters' identities. By extending the characters' disregard for the four conversational maxims, the playwright effectively used the cooperative principle to create the violent consequences in the two plays. Finally, the study shows how the critics' presumptions about the language in the Theatre of the Absurd miss the intriguing point about the unorthodox use of language and how the Theatre of the Absurd deserves to be called The Theatre of Language. [14]

According to Kittredge JF (2006), Edward Albee's late-career plays have realistic characters who fight to forge their own identities in a country that is still clinging to outdated cultural ideals from the 1950s (such as power, money, and the "perfect" family), among others. The goal of this thesis is to properly investigate these relatively unstudied later pieces. Through

an analysis of articles on post-World War II American domestic social views, Albee's idea of the American Dream is defined there. The biography of the playwright is also looked at. In order to understand how Albee's commentary on American cultural mythology has evolved since the beginning of his career, I then discuss Albee's stylistic and thematic foundation through criticism of several early plays (The Zoo Story, The American Dream, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?) and original textual analysis of three later plays (Three Tall Women, The Play About the Baby, The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?). [15]

III. CONCLUSION:

Albee's theatre portrays the story of this broken self, a self that is not only torn apart by WMDs but also by a loss of faith in others. In his theatre surfaced the images of atrocities at the face of an insensitive nation "seven hundred million babies dead in the time it takes, took, to knead the dough to make a proper loaf" (CP, vol.1 p.254). Adopted at birth, Albee was always restive to know about his natural parents and the locus of his origin. His growing sense of rootlessness, his inability to find a persuasive answer to the questions of identity, his own private yowl goes on to become the voice of multitudes. In his work, therefore, one can locate the angst of a young artist seeking 'an act, a definite act that will give him power over his doubts and self-questionings.' The examination of his personal uneasiness is what led to subjectivism in theatre, and for Albee, the stage served as a natural setting for self-examination and a path back to himself. Albee set out to explore stage, text, and identity in a single canvas of unrealized possibilities because she saw the American theatre as a blank slate on which her identity had yet to be imprinted.

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