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**“American Literature”**

**Albee's Women Representation from *The American Dream* (1960) to *The Goat*,  
or *Who is Sylvia?* (2000)**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Habib and Fatma Mahmoudi whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. First and foremost, I am dedicating this thesis to a beloved person who has meant and continue to mean so much to me. Although he is no longer of this world, his memory continues to regulate my life. His love for me knew no bounds and, he taught me the value of hard work. Strength and faith during the last months of his life gave me a new appreciation for the meaning and importance of life. Thank you so much “papa”, I will never forget you. I dedicate this work to my Loving Mother too, for being the source of guidance and strength as I prepare and hand over this research paper. I also dedicate this dissertation to my daughters, Chanez and Malak who have supported me throughout the process. They kept me working when I wanted to give up. I will always appreciate all they have done.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines Edward Albee's position and views toward women and their real status from the late 1950s to the late 1990s by analyzing four plays written between 1960 and 2000, over a span of some forty years. All the four play share similarities at the gender level. The truth is that the American society is essentially dominated by males and still is regardless of the many successes garnered by women throughout time. My view is that Albee should be regarded as an early feminist playwright rather than as a misogynist one. He is rather combating to modify cultural attitudes that are still abusive and misogynous. I imagine that some women would say that they have come a long way in 40 years. They lived through the earlier times, and have seen the changes in the American economic strength and their repercussions on society. Albee was describing the conformity that happened to be common during the 1950s in the American society. Family is an indispensable ingredient of Albee's drama. The home is the setting for most of his plays, and the relationship of married couples, is of primary interest to him. Naturally, being part of a deep American domestic life tradition, wives and mothers have a significant role in his work. However, Albee's characters belong mainly to dysfunctional families. It is imaginable that this fact contributes to the tendency to read his drama as misogynist, since the common opinion holds the woman responsible for the integrity of the family and believes that if a family is dysfunctional, then something must be wrong with the woman of the family, the wife, the mother. Albee's representation of women in two different periods (early 60s and mid-90s to early 21st century), did not change much. Instead of the misogyny he was purportedly blamed for, it has been argued so far that he was not anti –woman at all but simply an eye-opener to the societal gender crisis lurking as early as 1960s. Mommy and Martha represent (ed) the “new liberated” American woman. Albee's early women are wives not single women; hence his so-called “ attack” on women was rather targeted to those involved in family life and partnership. His negative representation of such kind of wives as authoritarian, bossy, unethical, or even immoral aimed to reveal Albee's fear of “emasculatation” (to use his own term). Still, in the two later plays, his women look slightly different from the first ones but the author's position does not seem to differ much. Albee has always been a rebellious playwright, shaped by an era of social reform. It is difficult to imagine him unaware of American women's feminist movements from the very beginning of and during his career. It would be helpful to regard Albee's drama not as a "confrontation", but "as an attempted dialogue" between the different cultural and social realities of his age, including the ongoing struggle between patriarchy and women's movements.

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

### **General Introduction**

While focusing, in this dissertation, on the Edward Albee's vision toward women and their real status from the late 1950s to the late 1990s, I will try to see how the characters of the four plays are represented and how they help to illustrate the way society shapes them as reflected in Albee's dramatic world.

I consider that these characters represent clearly the American social character. All the four plays, all surely unique and all surely different in various ways, and yet share a definite similarity noticeable at the gender level. The truth is that the American society is essentially dominated by males and still is regardless of the many successes garnered by women throughout time. Thus, women are continuously in subordinate positions with limited access to power and decision making.

Over the course of a long career, which ended with his death in 2016 (at the age of 88), Albee portrayed women who ran laps around their men. They also get the best lines. "Albee is one of the few major American male playwrights who really fleshed out female characters in engaging ways," says Matthew Roudané of Georgia State University. Hence, it is unsurprising to see some of the best female actors choose Albee's dramas to act in.

So if you could go back and live in America during its glory days, that were from 1945 to right 1963(1960s), as a woman, would you do it? Has the United States become a better place to live, for women, over the past 40 years or have things gotten worse? Without a doubt there are arguments that can be made both ways.

I imagine that some women would say that they have come a long way in 40 years. They lived through the earlier times, and have seen the changes in the American economic strength and their repercussions on society. These constant changes caused unavoidable changes on the social structures of the American society.

The Revolutionary rethinking of the rules for society also led to some reconsideration of the relationship between men and women. Eventually through the various feminist organisations and movements in a more structured and well framed way.

## General Introduction

Albee was describing the conformity that happened to be common during the 1950s in the American society. Young and old alike followed group norms rather than striking out on their own. Though men expected to be the breadwinners; women, even when they worked, assumed their proper place was at home. Sociologist David Riesman observed the importance of peer-group expectations in his influential book, *The Lonely Crowd*. He called this new society "other-directed," and maintained that such societies lead to stability as well as conformity. Television contributed to the homogenizing trend by providing young and old with a shared experience reflecting accepted social patterns.

But not all Americans conformed to such cultural norms. Albee, like a number of writers, members of the so-called "beat generation" rebelled against conventional values. The "beats" went out of their way to challenge the patterns of respectability and shock the rest of the culture. Musicians and artists rebelled as well, thus testifying to the increasing integration of American culture. All of these artists and authors, whatever the medium, provided models for the wider and more deeply felt social revolution of the 1960s.

One major question arises when reading Albee's plays from 1960 to 2000. Does Albee still represent women (especially wives) nowadays (2000+) the same way he did some FORTY years before? Do we still meet Marthas and Mommys? Is there any change in Albee's positions? To answer these questions, it is hypothesized that he may have changed given the long time span between the early and late plays. For that purpose, the work has been divided into 3 chapters each covering a particular task. Thus, the first one presents Albee's drama. The second one examines his two early plays, namely *The American Dream* (1960) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), while chapter 3 covers the late plays, *Three Tall Women* (1994) and *The Goat or Who's Sylvia?* (2000).



# Chapter One

## Albee's Drama

## **Chapter one: Albee's Drama**

### **I.1. Albee's Life ( 1928-2016)**

Edward was born on March 12, 1928. He has never been able or willing to trace back his natural mother. All that is known about her is that she was abandoned by the baby's father. Edward was then adopted in infancy by the millionaire Reed Albee and his third wife Frances when he was 18 days old. Reed, a short man with one glass eye, was heir to a vaudeville empire and retired in his early 40s. He was a great and known adulterer, and a lover of life. His wife Frances ("Frankie") was a tall glamorous former shop mannequin, a woman who was "imperious, demanding, and unloving", according to Albee's biographer Mel Gussow.

The Albees named their son after Reed's father, Edward Franklin Albee, a powerful vaudeville producer who had made the family fortune as a partner in the Keith-Albee Theater Circuit. Son of a famous vaudeville producer who introduced Edward to the theatre at an early age.

In 1940, twelve-year-old Edward entered the Lawrenceville School, a prestigious boys' preparatory school. During his high school days, he shocked school officials by writing a three-act sex farce entitled *Aliqueen*. He was thrown out of various private schools, was sent to the military academy that also disciplined JD Salinger, and lasted three terms at college, more because of a refusal to do what bored him than any lack of aptitude or industry; he was writing, especially poetry, but some plays.

Albee battled with his stepmother throughout his childhood. She wanted to make him a respectable member of high society, while he wanted to keep company with artists, intellectuals, and homosexuals. Albee hated school. He left college at the age of twenty and moved to New York to pursue his writing career. There he met Thornton Wilder, who encouraged the then-poet and prose writer to begin writing for the stage.

Albee's adoptive father, Reed Albee, died before the success of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but in 1965, Edward Albee attempted a reconciliation with his adoptive mother, Frances. Relations between the two were never easy, but Albee worked hard at the relationship until his mother's death in 1989.

## **Chapter one: Albee's Drama**

Edward knew he was gay from about the age of eight, he says, and though it was never discussed, it was yet another difference, and it cemented his parents' disappointment in him. In 1949 he left Larchmont for Greenwich Village. He met a slightly older composer called William Flanagan, who became his lover and his most important, most perceptive mentor.

His longtime partner, Jonathan Richard Thomas, a sculptor, died on May 2, 2005, from bladder cancer. They had been partners from 1971 until Thomas's death. Albee also had a relationship of several years with playwright Terrence McNally during the 1950s. Albee died at his Montauk, New York, home on September 16, 2016, aged 88.

## 1.2. Albee's Drama

Edward Albee's plays not only altered the trajectory of world theatre. Their impact is felt beyond the scope of arts and letters. He affected attitudes about race, sex, class, marriage, family, addiction, illness, and death. He helped shape the postwar American character. He partly defined the postwar American sense of humor. His influence is immeasurable. He influenced the world through his monumental art.

He transformed European avant-garde into American naturalism, subverted classical roles of protagonist and antagonist, broke with conventional story structure, challenged long-held and deeply felt social mores, even tinkered at the level of the sentence and created deceptively complex syntax. (Albee's lines are diabolically difficult to commit to memory, but once they're in, they are forever in.) He invented. He made works of art.

In 1959, his play *The Zoo Story* premiered in Berlin together with Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. In the history of drama, Albee has been canonized as the primary American practitioner of what critic Martin Esslin has termed the "Theater of the Absurd".

Encompassing the work of playwrights as disparate and divergent as Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, and Pinter, the term "absurdism" refers to a dramatic movement, strongly influenced by Existentialism, that emerged from Europe during the mid-twentieth century. Absurdist plays dispense with conventional notions of character, plot, action, and setting in favor of deliberately unrealistic methods. Plays of the absurdist movement examine the absurdity of the human condition and expose the experiences of alienation, insanity, and despair inherent in modernity. According to Esslin, Albee's *The American Dream* (1960) marks the beginning of American absurdist drama. Though the work was generally well-received.

A number of critics attacked the play for its immorality, nihilism, and defeatism. Their attacks implicitly suggested that a good play must be morally uplifting, inspiring, and redemptive. Albee responded passionately to his critics in a preface to the play, defending *The American Dream* as "an examination of the American Scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation, and vacuity; it is a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen. Is the play offensive? I certainly hope so; it was my intention

to offend – as well as amuse and entertain. Is it nihilist, immoral, defeatist? Well, to that let me answer that The

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## **Chapter one: Albee's Drama**

American Dream is a picture of our time – as I see it, of course. Every honest work is a personal, private yowl, a statement of one individual's pleasure or pain; but I hope that The American Dream is something more than that. I hope that it transcends the personal and the private, and has something to do with the anguish of us all. " (Albee, Edward. Preface. The American Dream and The Zoo Story. New York: Penguin, 1997. 53-54.).

Indeed, Albee is one of the most discussed and analyzed playwrights of American theater. Many books, countless reviews, and hundreds of articles have been published examining the artist and his plays. Most critics agree that Albee is an important writer whose themes include the condemnation of cruelty, emasculation, social complacency (auto-satisfaction), and vacuity. Albee is concerned with the illusions that keep people from seeing reality. He believes that he lives in a time when religious, moral, political, and social structures have collapsed. The dramatist is also preoccupied with the fear of death— a continuing motif since his first play. Albee's plays do not end happily, but he never strains to make them tragic.

In 1962, Albee won international acclaim for his play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, a tale of sadistic wrangling between a failed academic and his wife. The play received a Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize nomination. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Was particularly bold in returning explicitly socio-political criticism to the mainstream stage in a moment when the theatrical establishment had been reduced to silence by the McCarthy witch-hunts. Albee went on to win Pulitzers in 1966 and 1975 for *A Delicate Balance* and *Seascape* respectively. After a lull in the 1980s, Albee found more success in 1994 with *Three Tall Women*, which won him his third Pulitzer as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and Outer Circle Best Play Award.

The less than diligent student later dedicated much of his time to promoting American university theatre. Most recently, he served as distinguished professor at the University of Houston, where he taught an exclusive playwriting course. His plays are published by Dramatists Play Service and Samuel French, Inc.

A member of the Dramatists Guild Council, Albee received three Pulitzer Prizes for drama—for *A Delicate Balance* (1967), *Seascape* (1975), and *Three Tall Women* (1994).

### **Chapter one: Albee's Drama**

Albee was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1972. In 1985, Albee was inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame. In 1999, Albee received the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award as a Master American Dramatist. He received a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement (2005); the Gold Medal in Drama from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1980); as well as the Kennedy Center Honors and the National Medal of Arts (both in 1996). In 2009, Albee received honorary degree from the Bulgarian National Academy of Theater and Film Arts (NATFA), a member of the Global Alliance of Theater Schools.

In 2008, in celebration of Albee's eightieth birthday, a number of his plays were mounted in distinguished Off Broadway venues, including the historic Cherry Lane Theatre where the playwright directed two of his early one-acts, *The American Dream* and *The Sandbox*.

Albee remains one of the great innovators of the theater, having experimented with various genres and techniques over the years, and he has been labeled at one time or another an absurdist, surrealist, existentialist, and satirist. He avoids easy labels or descriptions; about his own work, Albee has said that he does not concern himself with thinking about his style or direction: "I'm interested in the fact that I write plays in such different styles from time to time. . . . I'm not doing it to avoid, or to revenge, or to confuse, or to be fresh in my own mind, even. I just do it because that is the way each one wants to be."

Critics and audiences think that *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* remains his masterpiece, and *The Zoo Story* remains his most popular one-actwork. Albee himself is noncommittal about naming a favorite play, but he has expressed a fondness for *The Sandbox*, which he feels is his most perfectly written play (it is also his shortest).

Albee insisted that he did not want to be known as a "gay writer", stating in his acceptance speech for the 2011 Lambda Literary Foundation's Pioneer Award for Lifetime Achievement: "A writer who happens to be gay or lesbian must be able to transcend self. I am not a gay writer. I am a writer who happens to be gay." His longtime partner, Jonathan

Richard Thomas, a sculptor, died on May 2, 2005, from bladder cancer. They had been partners from 1971 until Thomas's death. Albee also had a relationship of several years with playwright Terrence McNally during the 1950s.

Albee died at his Montauk, New York, home on September 16, 2016, aged 88.

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### **Chapter one: Albee's Drama**

Among his achievements are the following Awards:

1960: Drama Desk Award Vernon Rice Award: The Zoo Story

1963: Tony Award for Best Play: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

1967: Pulitzer Prize for Drama: A Delicate Balance

1975: Pulitzer Prize for Drama: Seascape

1994: Pulitzer Prize for Drama: Three Tall Women

2002: Drama Desk Award Outstanding New Play: The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?

2002: Tony Award for Best Play: The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?

2003 Fitzgerald Award Award for Achievement in American Literature award which is given annually in Rockville Maryland, the city where Fitzgerald, his wife, and his daughter are buried.

2005: Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement

2005: Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award

2008: Drama Desk Award Special Award

2011: Edward MacDowell Medal for Lifetime Achievement

2011: Pioneer Award for Lifetime Achievement, Lambda Literary Foundation

2015: America Award in Literature

### I.3.A Beef summery of the Chosen Works

#### I.3.1.The American Dream

Mommy and Daddy sit in a barren living room making small talk. Mommy, the domineering wife, is grappling with the thought of putting Grandma in a nursing home. Daddy, the long-suffering husband, could not care less. Grandma appears, lugging boxes of belongings, which she stacks by the door. Mommy and Daddy can't imagine what's in those boxes, but Grandma is well aware of Mommy's possible intentions. Mrs. Barker, the chairman of the women's club, arrives, not knowing why she is there. Is she there to take Grandma away? Apparently not. It all becomes evident when Grandma reveals to Mrs. Barker the story of the botched adoption of a "bumble of joy" twenty years ago by Mommy and Daddy. Mrs. Barker appears to have figured it out when Young Man enters. He's muscular, well-spoken, the answer to Mommy and Daddy's prayers: The American Dream.

**Type:** Short Play

**Acts:** One

**First Performance:** 24 January 1961, York Playhouse, New York

**Awards:** Best Plays of the 1960-1961 Season, Foreign Press Association, 1961. Lola D'Annunzio Award, 1961.

#### I.3.2.Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

A dark comedy, *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* portrays husband and wife George and Martha in a searing night of dangerous fun and games. By the evening's end, a stunning, almost unbearable revelation provides a climax that has shocked audiences for years.

**Type:** Full Length Play



**Acts:** Three

**First Performance:** 13 October 1962, Billy Rose Theatre, New York

**Awards:** New York Drama Critics Circle Award, 1962. Tony Award for Best Play, 1963. Foreign Press Association Award, 1963. Antoinette Perry Award, 1963. Outer Circle Award, 1963. Saturday Review Drama Critics Award, 1963. *Variety* Drama Critics' Poll Award, 1963. *Evening Standard* Award, 1964.

**Nominations:** Drama Desk Award Outstanding Director of a Play [Albee], 1976. Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play, 2005.

The Pulitzer Prize committee for the Best Play in 1963 recommended *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but the Pulitzer board, which has sole discretion in awarding the prize, rejected the recommendation, and no award was given that year.

### I.3.3. Three Tall Women

As an imperious, acerbic old woman lies dying, she is tended by two other women and visited by a young man.

**Type:** Full Length Play

**Acts:** Two

**First Performance:** June 14, 1991; Vienna's English Theatre

**Awards:** Pulitzer Prize for Drama (Albee's third Pulitzer Prize), 1994. New York Drama Critics Circle Award, 1994.

**Nominations:** Drama Desk Award Outstanding Play, 1994.

### I.3.4. The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?

Martin—a hugely successful architect who has just turned fifty—leads an ostensibly ideal life with his loving wife and gay teenage son. But when he confides to his best friend that he is also in love with a goat (named Sylvia), he sets in motion events that will destroy his family and leave his life in tatters.

**Type:** Full Length Play

**Acts:** Two

**First Performance:** March 10, 2002

**Awards:** Drama Desk Award for Best New Play, 2002. Tony Award for Best Play, 2002.

**Nominations:** Pulitzer Prize for Drama, 2003.

## **Chapter Two:**

# **Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

***The American Dream (1960)***

***Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ?  
(1962)***

## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

### Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays

#### .1.The Historical Context

The mainstream culture of the postwar era portrayed happy family with super structure. The father went to work each day and the mother stayed at home to run the house and raise the kids. Plays of that time, portrayed the 1950's American rigid social expectations that dictated how each gender is to speak, think, act and engaged with each other. In words, gender control what either men and women can and can not say or do. For example in the 1950's it would be highly unlikely to any woman to take a job like a builder, because society and culture insisted that it was a men job and it would not be acceptable for a woman to do such a work. Men at that time, were the dominant sex.

America's involvement in the Second World War, which lasted from 1941 to 1945, drafted Pearl Harbor men to fight, and America needed workers and supplies. When the Japanese attacked on December 7, 1941, the lives of many Americans changed instantaneously. Men and women were quickly sent off to war, leaving their current jobs behind in order to protect and serve the people of the United States of America. Again, the employers looked towards the women for labor. Unmarried and married women were invited to work, as had been done during World War I. To attract women to join the force work into untraditional jobs where workers were needed, the government used propaganda. Magazines became a masterkey to achieve this action (aim, purpose, goal). Magazines themes stories had to encourage women as much as possible to join the American force work by (alter) their patriotic mind. For September 1943, the theme was "Women at Work". The slogan for this was "The More Women at Work the Sooner We Win." Women were called to action to work in factories to help the war effort. The propaganda efforts worked.

In fact, the turning point in women's employment came after WW2. Many married women who went to work during the war continued to work in peacetime and many more joined them in the following decades. But, the same forces that encouraged women to join the forcework also served to encourage women to return home. Once men returned from war, once again, the government and media together, however, encouraged women this time to return home. Popular culture and the mass media reinforced messages about traditional gender roles. The majority of women left the workforce and jobs were returned to the men. But, the government effort's was not as successful and was abandoned quickly.

## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

The end of the ww2 marked the beginning of a new era. Many important changes have occurred in women's position regarding work. Their participation in the workforce was not met with open arms at first. Women workers faced discrimination at work. During this period, they fought successfully to gain new rights. Women were as strong or even stronger than their male counterparts. There was a rise of a new way of thinking about what is meant to be a woman and a citizen in the United States of America. Women were not happy with the idealized housewife role, where their limited strength and learning could just serve their male relatives.

The implication of women changed the way America operated for the rest of its times. In fact, the following decade saw tremendous changes at the social, cultural, economic, and the most challenging one, the political levels. Some leading figures helped pave the way for the new phase of women's liberation and making the end of gender discrimination in the federal workforce. Women gained more rights. These « new women » made noise that grew bigger and bigger. They fought hard to bring women's rights under the feminist movements. (In her 1963 book "The Feminine Mystique," women's rights advocate Betty Friedan argued that the suburbs were "burying women alive.") This dissatisfaction, in turn, contributed to the rebirth of the feminist movement in the 1960s. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published, became a best-seller, and laid the groundwork for the second-wave feminist movement in the U.S.

However, industrialisation brought with it changes, too, in people's attitude toward women. Changes that transformed deeply the physical appearance of the land, way of living and working of the American society. In this decade America became the wealthiest in the world. The amazing transformation of its economy was made possible by advances made in medical, scientific and technological knowledge. The « New Messiah » as Henry Ford

called machinery, played a part in saving time in daily life for women and also speeded up the industrial expansion. Mass production of cheap commodities were sold in huge numbers, and thus, the American production increased like magic.

A culture of consumerism was born. After World War II, consumer spending no longer meant just satisfying an indulgent material desire. In fact, the American consumer was praised as a patriotic citizen in the 1950s, contributing to the ultimate success of the American way of life. Americans invested in items based around home and family life. Americans were eager to

## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

spend. Household appliances liberated women from much household drudgery. They were no longer obliged to stay home.

Other numerous changes can be considered within this period that have impacted on all aspects of women's life can be. The introduction of the pill, legalised abortion, and the decline of the stigma attached to divorce, contributed too much in the liberation of women. Women were liberated in all senses.

The birth control was another masterkey in women's liberation. It became more widely accepted, thus, birth rates dropped. The activist Margaret Sanger, who already had opened the first birth control clinic in the United States in 1916, was persecuted for several times because of her actions. But by 1950, while in her 80s, Sanger sponsored the research necessary to create the first birth control pill. By the end of the decade the first oral contraceptive, Enovid, was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as contraception. *Enovid* is approved for sale in the United States 9 May 1960 as a contraceptive pill. But, it had been already approved three years earlier for menstrual symptoms. The arrival of the pill ushered in and coincided with the second wave of feminism.

However, modern medicine may have also played a role. The discovery of penicillin led to significant reductions in syphilis mortality, which consequently may have spurred an increase in non-traditional sex.

Women healers provided abortions and practice it openly and trained other women to do so, without legal prohibitions. In the 1950s, about a million illegal abortions a year were performed in the U.S., and over a thousand women died each year as a result. Women's movements began to fight more actively for the right of abortion. Even if it is true that abortion, till now, remains a (un sujet sensible) but it is openly approved in numerous states also facilitated the rise of new sexual norms. As Betty Freidan said in *The Feminine Mystique* : "Chosen motherhood is the real liberation. The choice to have

a child makes the whole experience of motherhood different, and the choice to be generative in other ways can at last be made, and is being made by many women now, without guilt.”.

This period of profound societal change, characterized by changes towards sexual attitudes and behavior are often referred to generally under the blanket metaphor of « sexual revolution ». In fact, data from historical reports published by the Centers for Disease Control *and Prevention (CDC)* appear to demonstrate that measures of non-traditional sexual behavior (e.g., gonorrhea incidence, births out of wedlock, and births to

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## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

teenagers) began to rise dramatically as early as the mid to late 1950s.( *Francis, Andrew* (2013). *"The Wages of Sin: How the Discovery of Penicillin Reshaped*

## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

### II.2. The American Dream (1960)

As one of Albee's early plays, *The American Dream* depicts a childless U.S. family of the late fifties, composed of a middle-class husband Daddy, a housewife Mommy and her mother Grandma. Right from the outset, Mommy appears through her speech as a "powerful" wife whose loving husband abides by her "laws".

-Mommy: We were very poor ! But then I married you, daddy, and now we're very rich".....I can live off you , because I married you. And aren't you lucky all I brought with me was Grandma. A lot of women I know would have brought their whole families to live off you.

In *The American Dream*, for instance, Mommy blatantly reveals her eagerness to live off her husband's money. Being some sort of "bad wife", Mommy is the supreme family sadistic authority attacking her husband permanently. At this stage, Mommy recalls Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. In fact, authoritarian Mommy emasculates Daddy recurrently and relentlessly, mocking his manliness and terrorizing him into obedience<sup>1</sup>, as a critic rightly observes. Sensing his feminine side, she often teases him on his masculinity as in the following examples :

-Mommy to Daddy: " You were firm; you were masculine and decisive"

-Mommy : "open the door"

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/01/just-folks-4> , accessed on October 20, 2015.

-Daddy : Was I firm about it ?

-Daddy : Was I decisive ?

-Daddy : And masculine;? Was I really masculine?

Mommy ironically replies:

## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

-“Oh , Daddy, you were so masculine; I shivered and fainted”

-Daddy : “I shall now open the door”

Mommy : “What a masculine Daddy ! Isn't he a masculine Daddy?” (p.11)

Seeing his reluctance to open the door, she crudely insults him:

-Mommy: “Oh, look at you ! You're turning into jelly; you're indecisive; you're a *woman* (*emphasis mine*)

Reacting “unnaturally” at being jeeringly called “a woman”, he just complies and surrenders to her tyrannical rule and abusive language, by replying:

-“ All right. Watch me now; I'm going to open the door. Watch ! Watch!”

That Daddy easily accepts whatever Mommy says or requests shows in fact how he accepts the lack of communication that exists between them beneath a surface of docility. Actually, we can sense that he does not have any intention of listening to Mommy's requests nor is he interested in paying attention to her, but is almost obliged to. This makes the home a kind of a battlefield where both the husband and the wife continuously strive for power.

However, Albee places the characters in the context of American life and society and exposes the lack of values and the consequent misunderstandings. The author himself says about the play:

“The play is an examination of the American scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity” (Preface to *The American Dream*). Let us illustrate this lack of communication :

Daddy. Oh! Yes ...Yes.



Mommy. Pay attention

Daddy. I am paying attention, Mommy.

Mommy. Well, sure you do.

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## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee's Early Plays**

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Daddy. Oh! I am.

Mommy. All right, Daddy now listen.

Daddy. I am listening, Mommy.

Mommy. You're sure!

Daddy. Yes ...

yes, I'm sure. I'm all ears.

He is desperately trying to please Mommy to avoid any communication with her.

Mommy. And I said, 'The minute I got outside I could tell that it wasn't a beige hat at all; it was a wheat hat.' And they said to me, 'How could you tell that when you had the hat on top of your head?' well that made me angry, and so I made a scene right there; I screamed as hard as I could; I took my hat off and I threw it down on the counter, and oh, I made a terrible scene. I said, I made a terrible scene."

The play suggests that Mommy has an intention to climb up the social ladder from the very beginning as Grandma says: "When she was not more than eight years old, she used to climb up on our lap and say, in a sickening voice, 'when I go up, I'm going to mahwy a wick old man; I'm going to set my wittle were end right down in a tub o' butter, that's what I'm going to do' "

No wonder then that Albee says *The American Dream* is a "critique of emasculation on the, "American scene"<sup>2</sup> when most critics look in the other direction.

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<sup>2</sup> "In his preface, Albee poses *The American Dream* as a critique of emasculation on the "American Scene".", in <http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/americandream/canalysis.html>, accessed on October 22, 2015.



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### **II. 3. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ? (1962)**

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, like its predecessor *The American Dream*, tackles American family values, notably husband and wife relations between Martha and George, relations taking the form of a sort of fierce competition both for intellectual and domestic power. Martha challenges him discursively and manages to overpower him domestically, as in this instance :

MARTHA:

- "Go answer the door.

GEORGE : "You answer it"

MARTHA: "Get to that door, you

- I 'll fix you, you...". And when the door bell chimes, she goes on:

- "I said, get over there !"

Feeling her threat, George gives in, much like Daddy in the previous play : "All right, love...whatever love wants..."

He opens the door while receiving a "screw you ! " from her.

Not only is she cruel and authoritarian, but she is also vulgar.

- " You have a poetic nature, George... a Dylan Thomas-y quality that gets me right where I live".

George replies : " Vulgar girl ! With guests here !"

Martha will gradually assume a more promiscuous and violent image than other wives such as Honey or Mommy.

- "My arm has gotten tired whipping you...

- For twenty-three years "

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Unhappy with such a “feminine husband”, she voices her grief and unhappiness with emphasis:

-“ IT’S NOT WHAT I’VE WANTED ! ”

-“I ‘m loud , and I’m vulgar, and I wear the pants in this house because somebody ‘s got to...”

In fact, Martha is frustrated at not having a male authority at home. In fact, she may have wanted a man, one with an “emphasized masculinity”<sup>3</sup>, rather than an emasculated husband who, as she says :

- “ tolerates , which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension ... ”

George, as is often the case with middle-class men and intellectuals in particular, is too lenient, too tolerant to the point that his wife rejects his kindness and understanding. She bluntly voices her disarray at being married to a man who apparently is not-too manly.

As George turns into an emasculated husband, she takes up full authority of the family. Now, gender roles are fully reversed. Both at the level of discourse and performance Martha gets into the dress of the “husband”. In fact, her language in particular is rather masculine. As she tries to construct her “new” gender via language<sup>4</sup>, she frequently sprinkles her verbal interactions with obscene words.

Moreover, Martha delights in letting people know that George is a "flop"<sup>5</sup> but recognizes that George is the only person who can satisfy her physically and emotionally. George being

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## **Chapter Two: Representation of Women in Albee’s Early Plays**

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<sup>3</sup> A.BAHOUS, “Empowered Wives : Edward Albee’s America in the 1960s” , in Women, Empowerment, Citizenship and Development, Mostaganem University and GSLSD Research Unit First International Conference on Women Studies and Sociolinguistics In partnership with the University of Manchester, Centre for Advanced Studies of the Arab World (CASAW) 02-04 November 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Clare V. EBY, op. cit

<sup>5</sup> She uses the term flop for George’s career since he did not take over the history department as she had expected, but also uses it for Nick when he could not satisfy her in bed . See WAVW( ACT 2)

six years her junior looks rather disarmed. Age difference may also be taken into account as her husband may look rather less “experienced”<sup>6</sup>

Put differently, Martha is a fully experienced and “mature” woman who is not satisfied with her husband. And so when Nick, the biology teacher comes for the evening with his wife, she gets excited at the idea of having a younger man around who is also physically strong and talks about biology<sup>7</sup>, not history. Thus, she blatantly reveals her sexual attraction to the young and strongly built guest in the very presence of his wife, Honey. On the other hand, Nick and Honey are represented more positively, neither ill-bred nor , but rather use a more polite language and are embarrassed whenever George or Martha utter vulgar words or phrases. As in this instance:

George talking to his guests about his father-in-law who is the university president :

...(Martha) “ is his...right ball, you might say”

Unhappy, Nick replies : “...I wish you wouldn’t talk that way in front of my wife”

As to the other wife in the play, Honey, she manages to keep a more respectable, acceptable image than obscene and depraved Martha (affair with Nick )<sup>8</sup>. On the contrary, she appears rather balanced as a feminist ideal woman” although she “refuses to be the stereotypical woman”<sup>9</sup>, by aborting her pregnancies.

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<sup>6</sup> A.BAHOUS, op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> Allusion to materialism in contradistinction to history.

<sup>8</sup>Nicola Chiaramonte (1963) considers WAVW as a “pretty unbearable” play.

<sup>9</sup> Gender Roles in Edward Albee’s WAVW ? , <http://www.inforefuge.com/gender-roles-edward-albee> accessed on octobre 22, 2015. Contrary to the author of this article, Honey is NOT made “uninteresting, remarkablyunintelligent and absolutely loathsome” but may also represent the middle of the way wife.

In fact, neither Martha nor George perform as wife and husband<sup>10</sup>. Martha is too masculine and seems to have lost her femininity while George is so emasculated that he turns into a “feminine husband”.

Albee’s wives are endowed with superiority over their husbands but are strikingly or surprisingly made to look vulgar and distasteful, something which shatters the image of the well-bred and cooperative homely wife.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, Albee attacks the institution of marriage by unmasking its supposed ideals and values on the one hand and alludes to some new form of married women’s posture, on the other. Both Martha and Mommy terrorize and emasculate their husbands relentlessly and publicly. Now, the potential rebuke of these two female figures is apparently guaranteed.

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler’s idea that “Gender as performance” (quoted in Eby 604)

<sup>11</sup> Clare V.Eby, op. cit.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Representation of Women in Albee's Later Plays**

***Three Tall Women (1994)***

***The Goat, or Who is Sylvia ? (2000)***

### **Chapter Three: Representation of Women in Albee's Later Plays**

In comparing the sixties and the nineties, the first thought was how much women's status has changed since then and how different society toward women is today. The strange thing is, the more I tried to differentiate between them, the more similarities I found. Both the sixties and the nineties were about women emancipation and how to obtain more and more properties at all levels. Their main catalyser was the feminist movements and organizations.

With the nineties coming, women challenges were : increasing practical literacy, gaining access to employment opportunities at all levels in the economy, promoting change in the perception of women's roles and status, and gaining a public voice both within and outside political process.

Judith Butler's 1990 book, a highly influential book titled *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, has helped to challenge and alter our ideas about gender identity and feminism, a movement that focuses on social, economic, and political equality for women.

Compared to the 1960s, in which the Postmodernist movement rejected the idea of overriding truth and maintained that women interpretations was the only thing that mattered. The cultural world of the 1990s had a lot less drama. But it was still a period in which the visual and performing arts, literature and architecture produced creative works that reflected the sweeping changes and the female print occurring in the society around it.

Culturally, the 1990s are characterized by the rise of multiculturalism which continued into the 2000s. It is also a synonym for "ethnic pluralism", the two terms often used interchangeably. For example, a cultural pluralism in which various ethnic groups collaborate and enter into a dialogue with one another without having to sacrifice their particular identities. As it is illustrated in « The Goat » (example of calling or business cards)

On the live stage, 1990s playwrights grappled with important social issues. To take one such instance, Albee's plays *Three Tall Women* and *The Goat or Who's Sylvia* ?through which he tried to make sense of the seismic shifts that were taking place in America.

In the *Three Tall Women* Albee focused attention on the rising generation born in the late 1960s and 1970s, and how their view of reality differed from the older Baby Boomers.



Where as in *The Goat* by Albee imagined a secret club in which similarly lost souls try to find a sense of belonging.

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### **Chapter Three: Representation of Women in Albee's Later Plays**

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Martha was not alone. Over the course of a long career, which ended with his death in 2016, aged 88, Albee portrayed women who ran laps around their men. They also get the best lines. “Albee is one of the few major American male playwrights who really fleshed out female characters in engaging ways,” says Matthew Roudané of Georgia State University. “It’s not surprising that some of the best female actors pick Albee plays to act in.” This has made him a timely and resurgent playwright.

Edward Albee made a triumphant comeback with *Three Tall Women* in 1994. Praised by many critics as his best play in 30 years, it struck many students of Albee’s work as a final coming to terms with the memory of his vital but domineering adoptive mother. The play won every award in sight and earned Albee his third Pulitzer Prize.

Inspired by Frances Cotter Albee, Albee’s narcissistic and domineering adoptive mother, who married into money and had little love for her inconveniently sensitive and gay son. Albee ran away from home as a teenager, looking back only through his art. He never saw his father again, but he rekindled a kind of relationship with his mother before she died in 1989.

Albee’s confidence in the power of women’s stories, and insight into the female condition, remain both refreshingly shrewd and troublingly rare.

Its beauty lies in Albee’s compassion. He shows his subject evolving from a clever, romantic young woman into a cynical yet strong (if senile) old biddy. “Parents, teachers, all the others...don’t tell us things change—that Prince Charming has the morals of a sewer rat, that you’re supposed to live with that...and like it, or give the appearance of liking it,” says the 50-something B.

This play is unlike anything that has been put on stage before, essentially because of the permutation that follows after act one, where the three previous female characters from the first act later shift in act two to three selves of the same person, representing three different stages of life that one of the characters lived.

Three women (one young, one middle-aged, and one elderly) are concerned with what they know, how they know it, and when they knew it. The play canters on death and dying, but thematically, it's about the inevitable changes that take place in women's as they age. Albee admits to the autobiographical elements : "I knew my subject—my adoptive mother, whom I knew from my infancy ... until her death over sixty years later... . I harbor no ill-will toward

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### **Chapter Three: Representation of Women in Albee's Later Plays**

her; it is true I did not like her much, could not abide her prejudices, her loathings, her paranoias, but I did admire her pride, her sense of self."

Albee claims that the play was also develop a kind of a grudging respect for her: "It's all there on stage, all the good stuff and the bad stuff." The text overflows with his preoccupations: the tension between dreamy youth and wizened old age, the compromises of marriage, the elusiveness of familial love, the imminence of death and the absurdity of life.

Albee gives only letters to name the characters in the play. This is a metaphor that the created a single woman, but three versions of the same woman at different ages - A, B and C. The symbol in not naming the woman is that he didn't truly know her enough, or in the way he possibly hoped to, in order to give her a name. And i think because it can be also every woman. . Albee lists his characters thus:

A a very old woman; thin, autocratic, proud.

B looks rather as A would have at 52; plainly dressed.

C looks rather as A would have at 26.

The Boy 23 or so; preppy dress.

Albee's frank dialogue about everything from incontinence to infidelity portrays aging women without sentimentality. His scenes are charged with wit, pain, and laughter, and women's observations that tell us about all women forgiveness, reconciliation, and any women fates.

These "tall women" lay bare the truths of our lives—how we live, how we love, what we settle for, and how we die.

A's monologue at the end of the play is a metaphor for the fact that her life is not going to get better, that no drama will create a false reality. The only happiness to come is the end of her life and she knows this.

"That's the happiest moment. When it's all done. When we stop. When we can stop." A

These are the final words of the play. A tells C that the happiest moment of her life will be when everything is over, and that will only come with death. C will have to endure through what B and A have lived through, there is no way around it. Here as if A is telling C and the

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### **Chapter Three: Representation of Women in Albee's Later Plays**

audience that the best part of her life will be the end. This is a symbol that C's life has no happy moments ahead to look forward to.

Through his work, Albee meant to push readers or viewers into thinking beyond their immediate reactions, questioning an entire atmosphere of impact on human life. He also wanted to change the way that people looked at themselves. While "A" is lingering in bed, there is an element of unspoken knowingness that she possesses, a knowledge of what will await "B" and "C" when they themselves reach her age, where they too will be bedridden, dependent, vulnerably exposed and privately humiliated after the body and mind slowly begin to break down.

In the second act, "A" is still bedridden, but "B" and "C" are transformed to "A" at different periods of her life. They were separate characters on stage in the first act, and yet actually the same "everywoman" at different ages in the second act.

While a very emotional and unhappy story, it's still an extraordinary exploration of aging and its effects on the human psyche.

With some of the unpleasant events that occurred during her life it was when her son walked out. A good example took place when B expressed hatred for her own son. (Rage) He left! He packed up his attitudes and he left! And I never want to see him again. (To him) Go away!! (Angry, humiliated, tears.) (Page 92)

In the final act he himself appears as a returned prodigal, a silent presence watching over her death bed.

Edward Albee's plays, like his own life, have been shaped by the changing nature of American families. Albee himself was adopted at an early age by wealthy New England parents, shuffled around to various private schools until he was eighteen. Like the son in *Three Tall Women*, he quarreled with his mother over his homosexuality and left home; he then attended college briefly, living off a trust fund in Greenwich Village until he began his successful career as a professional playwright.

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#### The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?

Some of Edward Albee's best, award-winning work, *The Goat: Or, Who Is Sylvia?*, has come during the latter part of his career.

"*The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*" (2000), his provocative and darkly funny play about a marriage undone by a man's affair with a goat.

*The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* is a full-length play written in 2000 by Edward Albee which opened on Broadway in 2002. It won the 2002 Tony Award for Best Play, the 2002 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play, and was a finalist for the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

*The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* tells the story of Martin, a middle-aged, hugely successful architect whose seemingly perfect life is thrown into total turmoil when he confides in his best friend that he has fallen in love with a goat named Sylvia. The revelation brings tragedy to the Gray family, as his wife Stevie and son Billy struggle to understand his secret and recover from the confusing betrayal. Ultimately, there can be no return from this improbably love affair. It is a fascinating look at the limits liberal society can be pushed to, and asks the audience to question their beliefs, to examine their own bigoted views and reconsider their judgement of matters that may or may not be considered socially taboo. Indeed, through showing this family in crisis, Albee challenges audience members to question their own moral judgment of social taboos.

The playwright himself describes this situation as a dramatic event: "Every civilization sets quite arbitrary limits to its tolerances. The play is about a family that is deeply rocked by an unimaginable event and how they solve that problem. It is my hope that people will think afresh about whether or not all the values they hold are valid."

The play also features many language games and grammatical arguments in the middle of catastrophes and existential disputes between the characters. The name of the play refers to the song "Who is Sylvia" from Shakespeare's play *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Proteus sings this song, hoping to woo Silvia. It is also referred to in *Finding the Sun* (1982), an earlier work of Albee.

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In "The Goat, or, Who is Sylvia?" Stevie is portrayed as the wife in a liberal American family. She is married for more than twenty years to a successful architect, Martin, and has a gay son whom she has fully accepted. Initially, Stevie appears to be the archetypal wife for she is able to complete Martin's thoughts and sentences. Also, she buys flowers for the house and goes shopping for fish. She seems happy and content with her family and even utters a joke when Martin casually asserts that he is having an affair with a goat (Sylvia).

The discovery of the business card with the woman's name and the odd scent attending her husband changes everything.

Stevie "Stop calling it her!"

Stevie erupts when Martin continues to call the goat that he is in love with a "her." It's beyond her understanding of how he can be in love with an animal and even reference the creature in a way that is so familiar.

Here we have an other example expressing Stevie's deprecation

"Shut up; so long as we don't screw up. And you've screwed up!"

Stevie

Stevie has just told Martin that they are not like other people they understand the deeper things of life, and as long as they don't screw up they will keep a straight line to death. Martin attempts a response, but Stevie cuts him off with this line.

The killing of the goat by Stevie at the end of the play is a metaphor for tragedy. She invokes the great suffering of her husband at the loss of his love, and she inflicts this pain, the same pain she feels by his betrayal of their marriage.

Stevie slits the throat of the goat that Martin is in love with. This is a symbol of the fact that she is willing to go to even greater lengths than Martin could have imagined in order to keep her love with her husband.

Stevie slits the throat of the goat that Martin is in love with. This is a symbol of the fact that she is willing to go to even greater lengths than Martin could have imagined in order to keep her love with her husband. In *The Goat*, it is above all about revisiting

social mores and values by updating them, as it were. Take the example of Stevie Gary who is married

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and is a rather emancipated woman with character, belonging to a high-class milieu, being even a model for other women. Yet all this does not prevent her from coming back to her true nature, that of relating to and depending on her "male", her man. Her jealousy and fear of losing her man lead her to behave in a primitive way.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

### **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

Family is an indispensable ingredient of Albee's drama. The home is the setting for most of his plays, and the relationship of married couples, is of primary interest to him. Naturally, being part of a deep American domestic life tradition, wives and mothers have a significant role in his work. However, Albee's characters belong mainly to dysfunctional families. It is imaginable that this fact contributes to the tendency to read his drama as misogynist, since the common opinion holds the woman responsible for the integrity of the family and believes that if a family is dysfunctional, then something must be wrong with the woman of the family, the wife, the mother.

Having seen Albee's representation of women in two different periods (early 60s and mid-90s to early 21st century), one could see that the author of much controversy did not change much. Instead of the misogyny he was purportedly blamed for, it has been argued so far that he was not anti –woman at all but simply an eye-opener to the societal gender crisis lurking as early as 1960s. Mommy and Martha represent (ed) the “new liberated” American woman almost a few years before the “French Revolution” of May 1968, starting a wide feminist movement across the continent and beyond.

Albee's early women are wives not single women; hence his so-called “ attack” on women was rather targeted to those involved in family life and partnership. His negative representation of such kind of wives as authoritarian, bossy, unethical, or even immoral aimed to reveal Albee's fear of “emasculatation” (to use his own term). Still, in the two later plays, his



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women look slightly different from the first ones but the author's position does not seem to differ much.

Hence, we can see that despite all the struggles women has been fighting, whether at age 25, 50 or 90, she still remains inferior to man and dependent on him.

No matter her courage, beauty or status in society, woman remains diminished or not fully fledged. Her handicap is due to her being a woman; her nature betrays her and her femininity destroys her.

In Albee's drama, her dependence on man is quite visible. In *The Goat*, it is above all about revisiting social mores and values by updating them, as it were. Take the example of Stevie Gary who is married to Martin Gary «the award winning architect ». She is a rather emancipated woman with character, having refined taste, belonging to a high-class milieu, being «a woman of the world», even perhaps an iconic woman. Yet all this does not prevent her from coming back to her true nature, that of relating to and depending on her “male”, her man. Her jealousy and fear of losing her man push her to think and behave almost in a primitive way. She is afraid of losing her man and is afraid of social pressure and “gossip”(social prejudice).

Indeed, Albee seems to alert his audience on the changing values and norms, by warning them about the fact that women are using their husbands for social and professional success only, forgetting therefore that that true nature and function or role in society is to bring and raise children and make happy families.

Though the critical attitude toward Albee's plays has changed much throughout the years, in one aspect there has been little progress: the critics' evaluation of his female characters. Even in the 21st century, there are still critical responses that regard his work as misogynist.

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This accusation is what germinated the present study, which intends to examine the representations of women in Albee's plays.

It is undeniable that many of Albee's women are portrayed unconventionally. Mommy in *The American Dream*, and Martha with her aggressive behaviour seem to suggest to critics a hostile attitude toward women on the side of the playwright. But the critics who jump to universal conclusions based on this evidence seem to forget that Albee's later plays inhabit several other female characters who do not as easily conform to such conclusions.

The portrayal of the witty and wise Grandma in *American Dream* is in no way a demeaning of women, and a seemingly shrewish character like Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has a lot more to say about women than their being 'masculine' or 'emasculating'. Also, his later plays show a clearer picture of powerful women. Stevie in *The Goat* is nearly perfect, and *Occupant* is basically a tribute to a very successful woman artist, Louise Nevelson. The apparent change in the surface representation of these characters has certainly something to do with the various victories of the women's movement on social and political, as well as domestic levels. The public consciousness of women and their issues has undergone irrevocable transformation due to activities such as NOW's several marches, fasts and gatherings, forcing the state to support women by passing laws and legislations with regard to equal employment (in 1964), divorce (in 1969), abortion (in 1973), marital rape (in 1976), sexual harassment (in 1986), and violence against women (in 1994), among many other issues.

Albee has always been a rebellious playwright, shaped by an era of social reform. It is difficult to imagine him unaware of American women's feminist movements from the very beginning of and during his career. It would be helpful to regard Albee's drama not as a "confrontation", but "as an attempted dialogue" between the different cultural and social

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realities of his age, inclu including the ongoing struggle between patriarchy and women's movements.

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