

The Author's Personality under Freudian lenses: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Edward Albee's Psyche in the Light of his Dramatic Works

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Abstract: Based on Freudian psychoanalytic concepts: sexuality, the unconscious, the tripartite psyche and defence mechanisms, this study investigates the relationship between the personal life of the American playwright, Edward Albee and his selected plays, namely *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, *A Delicate Balance* and *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* It exposes how Albee sublimates his sufferings and reveals his life via his dramatic works. The study also shows the traumatic experiences which Albee undergoes during his childhood, a matter that affects his behaviour and actions and leaves a deep scar on his own psyche. Besides, it displays how the author sketches his fictional characters to express his unconscious mind, bruised ego and troubled childhood. Further, the study exposes the defence mechanism the playwright takes up to legitimize his suppressed wishes and undesirable impulses. The aforementioned plays are selected because they are autobiographical and self-referential in that they highlight significant aspects of Albee's own personal life and expose the psychological effects of past experiences, stored in the mind of the playwright since childhood, on his personality as an adult.

Keywords: Freudian psychoanalytic theory, Edward Albee, sublimation, the unconscious

INTRODUCTION

Freud's psychoanalysis was the first approach which studied personality formally and it is still influential in spite of the emergence of many theories of personality. It focuses

on the human personality, the unconscious biological drives, and unsolved childhood conflicts which control and shape it (Schultz & Schultz, 2005). The development of psychoanalytic theory is traced back to the early writings and personal life events of the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud and his followers, whose contentious psychoanalytic theories present new visions of the unconscious facets of the human mind and personality. Freud stamped his own distinctive mark not only on psychology but also on medicine, philosophy, theology, sociology and literary criticism. His work provides human beings with a language to express the emotional experiences of the repressed self and endows them with a method to delve into the mind (Bucci, 1997). Freud's psychoanalysis also lays the basis for psychodynamic therapy and stimulates the development of contemporary psychological theories (Corey, 2013). Essentially, psychoanalytic theory is psychodynamic since it concerns itself with the active moving forces behind human behaviour and the intrapsychic unconscious struggle with the tripartite psyche that constitutes personality (Gross, 2015).

Freudian psychoanalytic theory of personality views literature through the lens of psychology, using the language and methods of psychoanalysis. It explores the psychology of the author as well as characters of a particular literary work, treating them as case studies. This theory proposes a relationship between dreams and literature. Freud argued that while the dreamer finds an outlet for his repressed desires, libidinous and aggressive drives in dreams, the author expresses his/her unconscious in literature, creating narratives or images and using disguised symbolic forms. In *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* (2013a), Freud postulates that works of art and literature are merely reflections of the urges, instinctual impulses, sufferings, tortured mind and personality of the artist or author. He sees literary writings as wish-fulfilling daydreams and a channel for the unfulfilled wishes, suppressed feelings, or stored tensions. He finds links between the unconscious mind of the author and dreams and uncovers the motivating subconscious forces behind his/her creative writing. Freud believed that what a writer cannot do or communicate because of social rules is articulated via his/her literary work.

In addition, the psychoanalytic theory exhibits the impacts of troubled childhoods, dysfunctional families, traumatic events and curbed sexuality on people's psyches, which leads to unbalanced personalities that suffer from different psychological ills. Psychoanalysis reveals the pains, fears, traumas, inner conflicts and unresolved complexes people experience during their early life. It provides a background to childhood development and illustrates how repression of and not gratification of infantile sexuality could result in a fixation of the libido on a certain psychosexual stage. Moreover, Freudian theory demonstrates the conflict between the structures of personality—the id, ego, and superego—and refers to the defence mechanisms the ego adopts to protect itself against illicit desires of the id and feelings of anxiety or guilt. It further identifies the underlying psychological drives which govern people's behaviours and actions, affect their social lives and precipitate the emergence of sexual deviances.

The Freudian theory basically concerns itself with the workings of the unconscious mind and the interplay between it and the conscious mind. Hence, the unconscious is the central concept of psychoanalytic theory. It is "dynamic or motivational and in conflict with consciousness" (Cloninger, 2004, p. 23). Freud (1963a) maintained that the unconscious is the storehouse of thoughts, drives, instincts, fears, unpleasant memories and sad events. He postulated that human actions and behaviours are motivated and determined by unconscious psychological forces. Furthermore, Freud (1963b) said that "the greater part of what we call conscious knowledge must ... exist

for very considerable period of time in a condition of ... unconsciousness” (p. 117). Freud (1960) classified personality into three layers: the conscious, which denotes everything people are aware of; the preconscious, which is the repository of thoughts and memories that people are unaware of at the moment, but they can recall; and the unconscious, which contains all things people are unconscious of. Furthermore, Freud (1960) posited that the human mind consists of three basic structures. The id, which is the unconscious, is the amoral and instinctual part of the psyche that operates to gain pleasure and reduce tension. The ego is the logical part of the mind that regulates the libidinal desires of the id and delays them until they are released in an acceptable way. Finally, the superego is the internal censor of the mind that represents the ethics and moral restrictions of society and works to achieve perfection. Another essential component of Freud’s theory (1993; 2013b) is the defence mechanisms, which are techniques employed unconsciously by the ego to defend itself against feelings of pain and anxiety and to deal with the forbidden impulses of the id and avoid conflict with the superego.

Another key idea of psychoanalytic theory is sexuality. Freud thought that sexuality is the motor force which underlies all human conduct and acts. In his view, sexuality is a wide term that extends beyond intercourse and reproduction to include all behaviours or experiences which bring pleasure and avoid displeasure (Schultz & Schultz, 2005). Freud (1960) conceded that sexuality comprises two instincts: ‘Eros’, the sexual instinct, which directs people towards life; and ‘Thanatos’, the death instinct, which drives them to destruction. Freud (2016) theorised that sexuality begins in infancy and claimed that childhood is a period of intense sexual experience. In this respect, children progress through three major psychosexual stages of development, the oral, anal, and phallic, where a child derives his/her pleasure from certain erogenous zones. According to Freud, the successful resolution of the conflicts occurring at each psychosexual stage produces a normal and healthy personality; otherwise, harmful fixations emerge. Furthermore, Freud (2016) stressed the significance of childhood years because the roots of adult personality traits and sexuality are planted during childhood. Freud affirmed that most of the unconscious materials are real past episodes, repressed wishes and memories hoarded in a person’s psyche throughout childhood, which emerge in the form of fantasies or abnormal conduct (Schimek, 2011).

Edward Albee: The Adopted Child

Edward Franklin Albee is regarded as an international figure in the theatre and one of the most influential American dramatists of the twentieth century. He was born in Washington, D.C. on 12 March 1928, and grew up in Larchmont, New York. Two weeks after his birth, Albee was abandoned by his biological parents to be adopted by a wealthy, childless family that owns a chain of theatres. His adoptive parents were the millionaire Reed A. Albee and the socialite Frances Cotter (McCarthy, 1987). Albee was absolutely mesmerized by the arts since childhood. He concerned himself with music, poetry, fiction and literature, and particularly theatre due to the Albees’s work in it (Hayman, 1971). However, his adoptive family refused to allow him to pursue the arts and instead planned for him to become business professional, a matter which caused Albee to be in endless conflict with his parents, especially Frances (McCarthy, 1987). During the period of his instruction, Albee was expelled from several schools until his graduation from the Choate private school in Wallingford. The same is true of his academic education, where he was also dismissed from Trinity College in Hartford and

Columbia University until he graduated from Washington University (Prono, 2008). Feeling that he did not belong to his adoptive family, Albee left home at the age of eighteen because of the tense atmosphere which precluded him from acting freely and developing his mind (McCarthy, 1987). In an interview with Parks (2005), Albee declared: "I never felt comfortable with the adoptive parents. I don't think they knew how to be parents. I probably didn't know how to be a son, either." In another interview with Rose (2008), Albee stated that he was forced to break away from home because his family wanted him to become a "corporate thug" rather than a writer.

Away from his adoptive parents, Albee settled down in New York's Greenwich Village to live among artists and bohemians. He worked in different temporary jobs to support himself, during which time he began attending the theatre and writing plays (McCarthy, 1987). Albee's most famous and successful plays are *The Zoo Story* (1958), *The American Dream* (1960) and his masterpiece, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), which drew Albee widespread critical acclaim and earned him a Tony Award for Best Play in 1963. Following the success of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* his *A Delicate Balance* (1966), *Seascape* (1975) and *Three Tall Women* (1994) garnered considerable critical acclaim in the United States, winning him three Pulitzer Prizes for drama. In 2002, *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* also earned praise, winning Albee his first Tony Award for Best Play since *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Mann, 2003; Abdelli, 2009).

Albee was homosexual at the age of twelve and a half. He was romantically involved with a composer named Bill Flanagan and then with the young dramatist and actor Terrence McNally for five years (Prono, 2008). Likewise, Albee had a gay affair with a sculptor, Jonathan Thomas, which lasted from 1971 till the latter's death in 2005 (Pressley, 2016). However, Albee refused to be labelled as a "gay writer," saying that "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" (Montagne, 2011). In addition, Albee had a brief relationship with Delphine Weissinger, a young woman from an upper-class family with whom he used to spend most of his time (Shulman, 2011).

As a legendary figure and a prominent playwright of the American theatre, Edward Albee is renowned for his dramatic themes, which are rife with bluntness, wittiness and fantasy. His plays are seen as being edifying and appealing to the audience's concerns. Roudané (1987) mentions that Albee's plays skilfully capture the spectators' attention with fairly truthful representations of personal lives as well as the inside and outside realms. In Albee's opinion, the playwright should present people and society as they are in reality and inspire the audience to cope with their problems and social strains. He remarked that the duty of a writer is "to present the world and the people in it as he sees it and say Do you like it? If you don't like it change it" (McCarthy, 1987, p. 16).

The Correlation Between Edward Albee's Personal Life and the Selected Plays

Many scholars have signaled the fact that Edward Albee's personal life and his work are inseparable and part of that life is inscribed in every play he writes. Characters and conflicts present in most of his plays overlap with the world of his own experience. McCarthy (1987) explains that to understand Albee's plays, one should refer to his biography because it contains the emotional aspects of his life. Paolucci (1972) contends that Albee shapes his plays' characters "from the inside out" (p. 5), in that he reveals his own character on the stage. Brooks (1966) states that Albee's life is "like one

of his heroes in that he did not know himself or his purpose in life" (p. 82). Albee (as cited in Cristian, 2006) announced that "I found out who I was through my plays" (p. 403). He declares that he refers to himself in his plays either through the character of the abandoned, foundling, dead and transient child or through some members of his adoptive family. According to Freud (2013a), the writers transfigure their impermissible desires, obsessions and disturbing feelings by the healing powers of art into literary works or fantasies which are unconscious manifestations of their traumas whereby they project their buried feelings onto characters.

Albee grapples profoundly with the demons of his adopted childhood. Through his plays, he fictionalizes his ego and sublimates his feelings by pouring them into a work of art. McCarthy (1987) thinks that writing plays for Albee becomes "a natural subconscious process" (p. 18). To recover from childhood traumas, deeply rooted in the unconscious, Albee redirects his bittersweet memories in the family home into a dramatic work. He invests his own mental and emotional energy in dramatization where he used writing as a form of self-medication. Albee's family tensions and painful experiences as an adopted child are imprinted on his memory and embodied in most of his plays. Writing opens the way for Albee to release the intensity of his emotions and inner sense of rejection under the umbrella of his plays, thereby helping him recover from his personal obsessions (McCarthy, 1987).

Similar to George, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, who sublimates his guilty feelings of murdering his parents unwittingly into a story about a teenager boy who has killed his parents, Albee channels his sad childhood into a story about George. In his unconscious, Albee wishes that he would revenge himself on his biological parents, killing and deserting them before they abandoned him. "It is a fantasy of an active revenge in which the abandoned child says, If I find my parents, I shall get rid of them as they got rid of me" (Blum, 1969, p. 896). Albee transfers his subconscious desire to kill his biological parents onto George in order to handle the trauma of separation and rejection by his natural parents. Then, the psychological effects of distress are transformed into a fantasy where the control of unpleasant experience is achieved. Freud (2013a) viewed creative literature as a mirror through which the author reflects his/her unconscious psyche to express the pent-up feelings and desires of the id. He likened a creative art to a conscious daydream which is triggered by the hidden desires, memories and early experiences of infancy. Freud elaborated that the creative work is just like a dream where the unconscious wishes are fulfilled, but in disguised symbolic images.

Bottoms (2000) states that some critics view *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* as a satisfaction of desire, an allusion to Albee's unconscious fear and abhorrence of women and an outlet for his infantile emotional tension. Being a surrogate child adopted by childless parents has had a negative effect on Albee's psyche. Corresponding to the imaginary son in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Albee is the "son who is, deep in his gut, sorry to have been born" (Blum, 1969, p. 209). He is "emotionally handicapped by the knowledge that he was adopted" (McCarthy, 1987, p. 5). Because he is orphaned by his natural parents, Albee's ego is deeply wounded and feels loneliness. The stigma of being an adopted child had haunted him for the rest of his life (Holeyannavar, 2013).

Albee is obsessed with the negative parent-child relationship and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* involves a similarity between Albee's childhood life and the two childless couples. Abandoning fertility, the biological young couple, Nick and Honey, implies Albee's biological parents who by rejecting him, they have symbolically aborted him. On the other hand, the old couple, George and Martha who deny barrenness, exemplifies his adoptive parents who desperately tried to maintain him

though he is not their biological offspring. Like the imaginary child in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Albee is an adopted child raised by childless foster parents, but both the biological and adoptive parents have regarded him as a pseudo-child. Albee "has no visible natural parents. He was born and abandoned like the symbolic conception and abortion of pseudocyesis" (Blum 1969, p. 892). As he left his adopted parents afterwards, Albee is the child who becomes chosen as well as abandoned.

By painting two different pictures of marital relationships, Albee compares the biological parents who deliberately deserted him at birth as unworthy child with the infertile parents who adopted Albee as an alternate child, wish fulfillment and defensive mechanism against the painful reality of their sterility (Blum, 1969). Thus, the subtext of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is that sterility is not biological, but it is an "emotional and spiritual sterility" (Hayman, 1971, p. 31).

Curry (1972) writes that Albee's drama expresses his inner vision and contains elements of his early life. He remarks that Albee articulates his bitter feelings and anger at his natural family in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Curry links between the imagined kid in this play and Albee who relates himself to the fantasy and parentless son of the old couple. As Albee is a parentless child that is adopted by a childless parents, he is metaphorically regarded as an imaginary child for Reed and Frances because they never treated him as their real son, but as a personal possession. Despite their adoption of Edward, the Albees seemed completely unconcerned about their adoptive child. Albee (as cited in Pal, 2013) said that "I spent most of my time with my nannies or away at summer camp and at school [and] I didn't see those damn people – my parents – more than six weeks of the year" (pp. 4-5). The made-up child, killed by George, is an allusion to Albee who was forced to leave his adoptive parents' home because of their attempt to regulate his life.

Through the fictive son, Albee displays his critical attitudes towards his adoptive parents who attempted to mould his personality into something they wish to become. As stated by Kittredge (2006), Albee "feels that his parents saw him not as a child to be nurtured, but as a toy to be polished and then stored on a shelf" (p. 15). Sketching the image of Martha, he expresses his hatred of his adoptive mother. Mann (2003) says that Frances is Albee's primary muse who negatively generates most of his plays' characters and "his lifelong war against shallow, entrenched American values and attitudes" (p. 8). Akin to Martha who uses the imaginary child as an outlet for her emotions and wishes blocked in the unconscious, Frances strived to make Albee meet her expectations, become an heir-apparent to Albees's job and acquire their masculine authority.

In *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, Albee portrays the character of his adoptive mother through the manly Amelia. She is as tall, autonomous, imposing, imperious and has physical stature as Frances who was a statuesque woman. Like Amelia whose marriage to Marvin is motivated by money, Frances's marriage to his parent was built upon economic ground, not on love. Albee suspects that his mother married his father for money (Gussow, 1999). Through the character of Marvin, Albee articulates his orphaned childhood. Similar to the author, Marvin is deserted by his biological parents who abandoned him to be nurtured by another family. He is also psychologically abused and demeaned by Amelia just like Albee who "suffered emotional sadism at the hands of Frankie [who] . . . regularly ridiculed [him] for a spectrum of perceived personality flaws" (Kittredge, 2006, p. 16). Further, there is a correlation between Albee and the homosexual, hunchback dwarf. Resembling Albee who lived an opulent life during childhood, Lymon enjoys a luxurious lifestyle after he has been adopted by Amelia who provides him with a shelter, treats and spoils him as her own surrogate son. As Albee

who left home, Lymon fails Amelia and runs away with her ex-husband.

A Delicate Balance recalls Albee's old memories in Larchmont house during childhood and depicts the affluent lifestyle of his family. In this play, Albee evokes memories from the past and refers back to his personal experience with his adoptive family. He implicitly points to "his sense of personal loss" through the character of the dead son, Teddy, whose name is a diminutive of Albee (McCarthy, 1987, p. 82). Both Teddy and Albee are homosexual and have stern mothers and weak fathers (Gross, 2005). While Teddy dropped dead in infancy, Albee escaped his house because of his mother's refusal for his gayness (Cristian, 2006). Through Teddy, Albee denies the unpleasant truth about his homosexuality and fantasizes himself as a loving teddy bear, "the traditional infant's companion" (Clum, 2005, p. 67).

In his study about homosexuality, Bieber (as cited in Gross, 2005) argues that a person who is born to a passive, feeble father and a dominant mother, becomes a homosexual. Bieber's psychoanalytic reading can be applied to Teddy, if he had lived, and also to Albee. Since he is born to be adopted by an authoritative mother and ineffective father, Albee has grown up to be a gay. Albee's homosexuality is recognized from his relationships with several men whom he both adored and was adored by. This form of homosexual attachment was an outcome of Albee's bringing up being mothered by two women, his adopted mother and grandmother, in the absence of an effective father. As put by Clum (2005), the presence of women around a man may result in his homosexuality.

The characters of Tobias and Agnes are modeled on Albee's childish image of his adopted parents. Whereas Tobias resembles his submissive, unfaithful and ineffective father who was indulging in his own sexual proclivities, Agnes is a domineering and a 'martinet' woman like his mother (McCarthy, 1987). Notably, the theme of the adulterous and disloyal husband to his wife is recurred in most of his plays (Nagtegaal, 2013). Albee (as cited in Gussow, 1999) commented that Reed "was often nailing the whores to the billiard table at the Lotto Club in New York" (p. 27). Additionally, Agnes is as neat and orderly as Frances who did not allow for Albee to use the books of family library, which are put for show rather than reading, so as to keep the décor ordered (Curry, 1972). Albee's mothers often correspond to the picture of Frances in his mind who is described as a biased, unemotional and reserved woman (Nagtegaal, 2013).

Further, Albee's psychological knot as an adopted child and his obsessive search for psychic balm to his tortured ego are expressed through Julia's character. Similar to Albee, Julia is an unwanted child who searches for parental love and attention and fails in the school she has sent to (McCarthy, 1987). Also, Julia's repeated aborted marriages refer to Albee's cousin, Barbara, another adopted child in the family who frequently returned home because of her failed marriages (Gussow, 1999). Harry and Edna are named after "Harry and Edna Winston", the business friends of Albee's family with whom Frances ended the relationship because they are Jewish (Gussow, 1999, p.26). To cope with his traumas, Albee channels the painful memories of childhood into writing, producing intellectual achievement. In an interview with Roudané (1982), Albee said, "we have to release the primordial demons" (p. 41).

In *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* Albee presents a negative view of his adoptive parents (George, 2016). The strong character of Stevie signifies his mother who kept a tight rein on her husband who, compared to her, is characterized by his passionate and vulnerable personality. Albee recognizes the tensed, dysfunctional relationship between his parents, so he formulates his views of the American family based on them. Whereas

wives are depicted as the leading figures who have the upper hand, men are given feminized and tarnished image (Nagtegaal, 2013).

According to Cristian (2006), *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* has an autobiographical basis because it involves details from Albee's own life. It is a sign of reconciliation between Albee and his foster parents as well as a resolution for his problem. In *TGWS?* Albee communicates a desire for his parents' acceptance of his homosexuality, a wish he could not fulfil during his living with them. Cristian (2006) expounds that *TGWS?* "works like a wish-fulfillment in terms of autobiographical traumas" (Lost & Found, para. 8).

Albee finds a channel of his psychic expression in *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*. He touches upon the controversial issues of sexuality in a contemporary American society. He considers homosexuality a typical and an acceptable behaviour compared with bestiality which seeks satisfaction via animals rather than human beings. He criticizes "heteronormative culture" which regards homosexuality as a deviant sexuality and challenges it to delineate the border between multifarious kinds of perversions (Gainor, 2005, p. 213). Obviously, bestiality and gayness are merely masks used by Albee to argue the normalcy of homosexuality and to protest against society which treated him unfairly.

Albee refers to himself through the homosexual son, Billy, who is the portrayal of the teenager Albee. His character "bears an ironic self-referentiality" (Bigsby, 2004, p. 153). Like Billy who deviates from the road of normalcy and does not conform to the stereotype of the ideal, aristocratic family, Albee adopts homosexuality and does not follow his parents' example. Billy is marginalized by his parents who reduce him to the position of a youngster, treating him as if he was still a child. During their verbal fight, when Martin and Stevie ask him to go to his room and play, Billy protests: "What am I- eight, or something? Go to my room?" (p. 53).

Comparable to Billy, Albee is diminished by his adoptive parents who treated him as an accessory child. However, in the third scene of *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*, the parental relationship between Billy and Martin improve when the latter finally demonstrates an acceptance of his son's sexual orientation. Billy's offer to set the room and clean up the mess denotes his effort to renovate his broken relationship with Martin:

BILLY: Then there is no point in setting all this right.

MARTIN: It does look pretty awful, doesn't it?

BILLY: Let's do it any way. (p. 97)

Albee's reference to Billy can be regarded as a gesture of the reconciliation between him and Frances who was displeased with her son's homosexuality. Albee eventually accepts and is accepted by his adoptive parents, as Billy declares: "I have been living with two people about as splendid as you can get; that I'd been born to other people, it couldn't have been any better" (p. 100). Like Billy, Albee believes that his homosexual tendencies are normal and more socially tolerable than Martin's because he has sex with human beings not with animals. By portraying the characters of Martin and Billy, Albee manifests his sexual orientation openly and revolts against the constrictions of the cultural life. Freud (2013a) considered a literary work as an outlet for the writer's undesirable feelings and ideas which are curbed in the unconscious because they are forbidden. Person (2013) elaborates that both work of art and dreams work within the unconscious context and express latent wishes and thoughts in an indirect way that serves as wish-fulfillment.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Albee is an invert. Freud (2016) described people whose sexual objects are exclusively of their own sex as "absolute inverts" (p. 56). Penney (2006) comments that Freud views male homosexuality as "a nostalgia for the phallic mother—for an object . . . which combines maternal omnipotence with the desired phallicized body" (p. 25). This may suggest that Albee's oedipal wish for his mother is repressed, but he gives his suppressed desires a way to satisfy themselves through same-sex relationships. This interprets Albee's homosexual inclinations.

Albee has ambivalent feelings for his adoptive mother because through the characters of women in his selected plays, he shows a deep reverence for her and simultaneously a feeling of hatred. Freud (1960) stated that Oedipus complex involves dual oedipal feelings and ambivalent attitudes toward parents since the boy may exhibit a feminine affection for his father along with jealousy and envy of his mother. Conversely, the boy's masculine nature motivates him to show hostility for his father and a desire for his mother. Albee exemplifies the confused and regressive sexuality of the pre-oedipal mother-son relationship. Freud (1964) claimed that children of both sexes start their life journey with a mother love. Also, Freud (1919) posited that every child experiences an Oedipal struggle and his/her relationship with his/her parents is dominated by "incestuous longings" (p. 29).

Through puberty, the teenager looks for a partner who substitutes for the parental love of childhood. Albee has experienced an excessive affection on the part of Frances who cherished him but their conflicted relationship, which made him escape home, deprives Albee of the motherly love. To compensate for this love, he pursues his libidinous drives and wallows in homosexuality. Freud (2016) referred to the effects of mother-child relationship on the psychic life of a child and emphasised the importance of this relation in choosing the future sexual object. He stated that the excessive parental affection can speed up the "sexual maturity" of the child, a matter that spoils him/her to become incapable in the future of living "without love" and has an insatiable desire for parental love (p. 103).

CONCLUSION

Psychoanalysts find literature a fertile place for planting viable overtones of the writer and a platform for releasing his passions and wishes. According to Freud, literature is nothing but repressed desires and postponed fears. He believed that literature is an attempt to express the writer's inner feelings, fears and emotions locked deeply in the unconscious by means of language. Freud theorised that what is repressed in the unconscious will materialize in disguised forms, in dreams, slips of the tongue or in literature. By writing, authors express purely personal sufferings which they convert into creative works that touch upon the personal fears of readers as well.

Notably, Edward Albee's selected plays are interconnected by two basic themes: adoption and sexual deviation. Albee's own life has impressed itself upon his work and most of his plays are autobiographical statements and self-portraits, containing aspects of his unhappy childhood. Albee's plays are born of the womb of sad and happy memories which may be a person, or an event stored in his mind to be performed on the stage. They make a documentary of his own traumatic life. Albee has found his voice in the theatre where he articulates his personal obsessions and deep psychological tensions, and sublimates them into literary masterpieces.

Albee's life is scarred by his having rejected by his biological parents. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* demonstrates the depth of Albee's sensibility who because of

his adoption feels isolated and neglected. As a surrogate son, he sees himself as the unreal child in this play and expresses his hatred for his natural parents because they deserted him, through the personality of Honey who rejects and kills her infants. Killing his parents accidentally, George has done what Albee unconsciously wishes he himself would have done, i.e., killing his biological parents since they abandoned him. Additionally, the unhappy childhood of Marvin in *The Ballad of the Sad Café* and of Julia in *A Delicate Balance* is a portrayal of his own misery. As Albee, Marvin is deserted by his biological parents to be raised by another family and Julia's failures in schools represent Albee's.

As a child, Albee experienced the marital tension between his adoptive parents who serve as the prototype of the recurrent marital couples in the selected Albee plays. The affluent life style of Albee's family is depicted in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *A Delicate Balance* and *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* wherein he alludes to his adoptive parents through the characters of George and Martha; Tobias and Agnes; Martin and Stevie respectively. Echoes of Albee's parents are also felt in the weak characters of husbands that refer to Reed A. Albee, his adoptive father and the dominant characters of women who refer to Frances Cotter, his adoptive mother. Similar to his adoptive mother, Martha, Amelia, Agnes and Stevie are strong and authoritative, possessing the distinctive characteristics of Frances.

Additionally, Albee expresses his repressed homosexual wishes through some of his characters in the selected plays. Both *A Delicate Balance* and *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* have gay subtexts and show a blurred line between love and sex. Albee's homosexual orientation manifests itself in the character of Teddy, the dead son in *A Delicate Balance* and Billy, the gay teenager in *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*. In addition, Albee fantasizes his troubled relationship with his adoptive mother through the confused and strained relationship between Billy and his father who discreetly rejects his son's homosexuality. This signifies the intense relationship between the homosexual son, Albee, and his conformist mother, Frances. Albee's intention is to make public the discussion of homosexuality within the American contemporary culture, thereby he emphasises the normality of his homosexuality. From Freud's perspective, writer's artistic creativity is motivated by present wishes entwined with unconscious wishes of childhood which s/he embodies in literature.

Hence, many polemical aspects of the author's own life are reflected in the plays under study. The memories of the past and the traumatic experiences of childhood are impinging on Albee all over his life. Therefore, he translates them into creative theatrical works and dramatic practices as a sort of therapy to free the repressed feelings and thoughts. Albee confronts his childhood trauma and tries to exorcise the pain of his mind through theatre. The playwright acts out his past traumatic experiences, repressed wishes and problematic childhood through his fictional characters whom he depicts to implicitly refer to himself. Like most of his chosen plays' characters, Albee lived an unhappy life and suffered from inner conflicts and psychological tensions. He also surrendered to his id's desires and took abnormal course to satisfy his instincts; therefore, he had a weak superego.

In brief, the selected Albee plays are flashbacks that revisit his pains, wounds and traumas. So, he employs sublimation as a mechanism to release his unconscious, unpleasant experiences of his life and the libidinous desires of the id in a culturally acceptable way. The playwright channels his traumatic feelings of abandonment and rejection into artistic and witty dramatization. He is acting out his emotions through his fictional characters as a defence mechanism against painful reality. Albee invests in his melancholic feelings for his own benefits and turns them into an intellectually satisfying

work by pouring his emotional distress into theatre. In his writing, he depicts and refers to himself through his characters, experiences a deep sense of emotional insecurity and appeals for understanding and tolerance of his homosexuality. Albee's dramatic work contributes greatly to the improvement of his adult self-esteem and provides him with an outlet for his deep emotional tensions. Thus, it seems that his ego controls its trauma.

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