

RÉKA CRISTIAN

EDWARD ALBEE'S CASTINGS

*A delicate balance is a shading between love and hate that exists between anybody who cares for one another. (Edward Albee)*

Edward Albee's plays—together with a long list of modern American dramatists—are indebted to the works of Eugene O'Neill. The birth of American tragedy starts with O'Neill's dramatic art, which conveys human alienation in the context of modern society, and sheds light on the tension that appears between human essence and existence in the context of modern America. The American tragedy, in Péter Egri's words was "brought about by the increased tension between the face and the reverse of the American Dream"<sup>1</sup>. Post-war American drama depicts many facets of O'Neill's trope of alienation. Among the best to describe the consumerist American Dream within the context of American drama was Edward Albee. His plays are, according to Péter Egri "grotesquely grim and bitterly playful pieces crossbreeding Realistic relevance with Absurdist insight"<sup>2</sup>.

Edward Albee's *dramatis personae* entails a construction specific to the name of the playwright. Albee's dramas have a careful composition and a special rendering of characters. Most of his characters are dual, in the sense that it is the couple, which is the basic unit in the playwright's dramatic universe. The characters seem to act in couples, which consist of individuals that supplement each other in

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<sup>1</sup> Péter Egri "Critical Approaches to the Birth of Modern American Tragedy. The Significance of Eugene O'Neill". In *The Birth of American Tragedy* (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1988), 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

telling, in dramatic action or in both. This supplementation, which is implied in the relational rhetoric of Albee's dramaturgy, denotes that there is no specific hierarchy among the dramatic participants. The examples below aim to follow the similitude among Albee's characters. The cast of Albee's dramas participates in the process of encoding and unveiling the dramatic blindspot in Albee's dramas, which is the figure of the present (or absent) child. This trope of the child is revealed in the emblematic dual constructions of the dramatic cast in Albee's dramas. Albee's characters contain, besides the dual component, a dispersed sense of the author in the characters' journey through the oeuvre. The name of Edward Albee imprints the plays with characters that remind the reader of the biographical implications of the plays. The playwright claims this personal implication as a cathartic process: "I get *all* the characters in *all* of my plays out of my system by writing about them"<sup>3</sup>. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Sandbox*, *Three Tall Women*, *The Zoo Story*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The American Dream*, *Marriage Play*, *Counting the Ways*, *Finding the Sun* are some of Albee's plays centered around the issue of the love and hate that sublimate into dramatic filiation acts. In the following the discussion will be based on mostly on *The Zoo Story*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The American Dream*, *Marriage Play*, *Counting the Ways*, *Finding the Sun*, with references to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *The Play About the Baby*, and some remarks about *Three Tall Women* and *Sandbox*<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Mel Gussow *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 354.

<sup>4</sup> There are two Albee plays that are the closest to his biography. One is *The Sandbox*, a "cameo tribute to his maternal grandmother, who was closest to him" and *Three Tall Women*, "an act of peacemaking" with his adoptive mother, Frances (Frankie) Albee. The scene of the second act in *Three Tall Women* that always moves the playwright is when "the son, Albee's surrogate, comes onstage and sits by the bedside of his mother". *Three Tall Women* is the drama of Albees' replicas. The character **A** (and her unnamed husband, who likes only tall women) explicitly stands for Frances (Frankie) **A**lbee, while the son of **A** bears not only the trademark of the playwright but highly identifies with him. There is a special monologue in the play, which is uttered by another character, **B**, who is in fact a younger version of the character **A**. The character of **B** recalls an episode of lovemaking, which she had with a groom in a stable stall, an affair that her son (the Young Man) discovered. The indirect, metonymical reference to **A**/Frankie is

The child (son) is the major theme that the playwright presents in his dramas. Albee's 1997 drama culminates in this regard and it is entitled *he Play About the Baby*<sup>5</sup>. In the same context of filiation the

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made clear, since Frankie was a horsewoman and Albee said that this scene was his literary wish fulfillment. The silent Young Man of the play is described by the character C. She is the contemplative character of the drama and the younger version of the characters of B and A. In act two C describes the Young Man as "how nice, how handsome, how very...". The sentence is not finished, nor the description finalized and the image of the Young Man ends in silence. A (and B) cannot forgive the Young Man. They are hostile towards him because of his homosexuality, a way of loving which they could never accept, and, accordingly tabooed the subject. A proof of the banished topic of homosexuality is the repressed figure of the Young Man, who is a self-portrait of Albee in the play. He does not talk, in fact he does not utter a sound. His presence is only physical not verbal. The figure of the Young Man appears also in *The American Dream* and in *The Sandbox*, as Teddy in *A Delicate Balance*, as Fergus in *Finding the Sun*, as YAM in *FAM* and *YAM*. In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, he is the enigmatic character, the fictional son of Martha and George. These love-hate games are encoded mostly by the relationship of the playwright with his mother and the maternal grandmother. The figure of Frances (Frankie) Albee is one that practically haunts all Albee's plots. Present as the character of Frankie Albee in *Three Tall Women*, she is Mommy in *The Sandbox* and in *The American Dream*, Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Agnes in *A Delicate Balance*, the Wife in *All Over*, She in *Counting the Ways*, and Edmee in *Finding the Sun*. The most sympathetic character, however remains that of Grandma, which appears in *The American Dream* and *Sandbox*. *The Sandbox* is Albee's other memory play. It was written for and about Edward Albee's maternal Grandma Cotter, "his closest relative" with whom he formed a lasting and profound attachment. "A crotchety and very amusing woman", she made Edward's life easier and brighter by being as Mel Gussow describes her in the YAM chapter of the playwright's biography, "a natural ally against his mother". The estranged parents did not tell Edward Albee of her death in 1959 so he missed her funeral. Later he metonymically transposed his personal good-bye into a "brief play, in memory of my grandmother". William Flanagan Edward Albee's mentor and companion provided the play's music for this very personal farewell. The Young Man ("good-looking, well built") is converted into the real son-like Angel of Death that gives Grandma the final tender touch: "The Young Man bends over, kisses Grandma gently on her forehead." Edward Albee *The Sandbox. The Death of Bessie Smith (with FAM and YAM)* (New York: Signet, 1960), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Albee's play entitled *The Play About the Baby* (1998) starts with a baby's first cry in the world. A young couple wants to take away the baby but the Man and the Woman (as the biological parents) try to convince the young couple that the baby never existed. Finally the blanketed "baby bundle" was thrown into the air. "The

play entitled *Fam and Yam* explicitly presents the not-yet named (name of the) author in the young character of YAM (the acronym for The Young American Playwright), which renders a filial relationship with the character of FAM (Famous American Playwright)<sup>6</sup>. The motif of the child (who is mostly gendered male) is recurring in different versions throughout the dramaturgy of Albee. The child constitutes the blindspot of the plays and it is hidden and revealed in the world of Albee's verbal mastery.

While the dual relationships in the dramas of Williams require a strong sense of the character's gendered nature, the characters from *Seascape* and *Sandbox*, the family of *The American Dream*, or *Fam and Yam*, and *Fragments. A Sit Around*—to name a few of Edward Albee's *dramatis personae*—seem to distance their corporeality from their gendered bodies. In the context of Albee's dramaturgy, sexuality seems of no greater importance than a simple dramatic device. Forster Hirsch remarks that Albee's characters are "often removed from sex" and that "bodies in Albee are never, as they are in the work of Tennessee Williams, instruments not only of lust but of salvation and spiritual transcendence as well".<sup>7</sup> Since the couple is the basic unit of Albee's dramaturgy, it is the trope of the couples that will be in the focus of further investigations. The scope of this investigation is to visualize, through the couples in the dramas, the issue of the present or absent child as Albee's plot of desire. The aim is also to present a patterning of events and characters by deriving the invisible into the visible. The invisible blindspot of the child in one play may as well be a trope of representation in another play or, in other words, one play may actually be the other discourse of the other play. An example of this kind is the (mis)communication of George and Nick on behalf of the child Nick mentions and George hides (or Tobias and Harry in A

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story is directly from Albee's life" and the theme of the baby and self-determination of what reality is has been of primary concern to Albee. Cf. Mel Gussow *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 396–399.

<sup>6</sup> FAM and YAM. An Imaginary Interview. In Edward Albee *The Sandbox. The Death of Bessie Smith (with FAM and YAM)*, (New York: New American Library, 1960).

<sup>7</sup> Foster Hirsch "Delicate Balances". In *Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Books, 1978), 15.

*Delicate Balance* with their cheating in marriage after the death of Tobias's son, Teddy). Their encounter in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is less visible, but, in essence, it corresponds in its form to the explicit one of Jerry's and Peter's communication in *The Zoo Story* (the lack of Peter's male child). The motor or the (sub)plot of the drama, the child as the blindspot, reads its equivalent from an Albee drama into the other one by the same playwright.

The embodiment of Albee's characters starts with the process of their naming. Albee's characters gain corporeality and dramatic texture through the names they bear. The boundaries of the sayable, as Ludwig Wittgenstein points out in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, are achieved by drawing a limit to the expression of thoughts, since if something is not delimited (*id est* is not named), it does not exist<sup>8</sup>. The names are pictures of the person/character and "what the picture represents is its sense"<sup>9</sup>. They depict the state of things and tell about the properties of the body included in the name or in Wittgenstein's words "the proposition *shows* how things stand, *if* it is true, and it *says*, that they do so stand"<sup>10</sup>. Names, therefore are condensed thoughts and essences of the bearers, that is, "everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly"<sup>11</sup>.

The generalizing names (Mommy, Daddy, Grandma, He, She, The Nurse, The Doctor, A, B, C, The Young Man, The Musician) in the cast of Albee's plays denote the function and relations that are established among the characters. They stand for descriptions for a given type of characters, of a class, or system of particulars. Other names Albee employs in his dramas (such as Martha, George, Nick, Honey, Tobias, Claire, Julia, Jerry, Peter) refer to a specific person. The explicit names (full names) are, with rare exception, eliminated in some of Albee's dramas from the language and, therefore what remains is in many dramas the substitution of the person with its

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<sup>8</sup> "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent". Ludwig Wittgenstein *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* (with an introduction by Bertrand Russel), (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981[1922]), § 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, § 2.221.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, § 4.022.

<sup>11</sup> The statement is followed by "everything that can be said can be said clearly". *Ibid.*, § 4.116.

relational function. The tropes used for naming can substitute for different roles, and, as such, they play the role of the name. Some examples of this category are the following: Grandma, Mommy, Daddy in *The American Dream* (1961) and *Sandbox* (1960), FAM, YAM in *Fam and Yam* (1960), The Father, The Nurse, The Intern, The Orderly in *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1960), The Young Man, The Musician in *Sandbox*, Woman 1, 2, 3, 4 and Man 1, 2, 3, 4 in *Fragments. A Sit Around* (1993), the Long-Winded Lady, the Old Woman and the Minister in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (1968), the Voice in *Box* (the 1968 “parenthesis” play for *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*), the Cardinal, the Lawyer and the Butler in *Tiny Alice* (1964), He and She in *Counting the Ways* (1976), The Woman, The Girl, and The Man in *Listening* (1976), The Wife, The /dying/ Husband, The Mistress, The Son, The Daughter, The Best Friend, The Doctor, in *All Over* (1971) and finally the most simplified version of names as A, B, C in *Three Tall Women* (1991). These names are functional and depict the human relations that are established among them. The names as character forms depict the Albee character as a relational unit (the couple) that hides the blindspot within the onomasticon.

Another category of names employed in Edward Albee’s dramas is the first name. In contrast to the previous use of indefinite names, the first names designate a definite set of objects/persons. The family name in the Albee oeuvre is excluded. Examples of character names in this sense are: Julian and Miss Alice in *Tiny Alice*<sup>12</sup> (the characters were created as “creating God in one’s own image” as confessed by the playwright in Mel Gussow’s biography), Lucinda, Edgar, Carol, Oscar, Elizabeth, Jo, Fred, and Sam in *The Lady from Dubuque* (1980), Nancy, Charlie, Sarah, and Leslie in *Seascape*<sup>13</sup> (1975), Abigail, Benjamin, Cordelia, Daniel, Edmee, Fergus, Gertrude and Henden in *Finding the Sun* (1983), Peter and Jerry in *The Zoo Story*

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<sup>12</sup> “Tennessee Williams said that *Tiny Alice* was the Establishment, ‘the meaningless, monstrous, outrageously mysterious Mystery that defeats us all’ “. In Mel Gussow *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 221.

<sup>13</sup> Originally the title of *Seascape* was *Life and Death*. Initially *Life and Death* were two short plays, conceived as companion pieces. *Ibid.*, 282.

(1959), Martha, George, Honey and Nick in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), Agnes, Tobias, Claire, Julia, Edna and Harry in *A Delicate Balance* (1966), Jack and Gillian in *Marriage Play* (1987).

Some character names are fully given and these are inserted into the title of the plays. One of them is as the real person, the African-American singer Bessie Smith, the absent eponymous character in *The Death of Bessie Smith*<sup>14</sup>. The other full name (also a cultural code) is that of the Chairman Mao Tse-Tung from the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. Here, we have not only the full name but also the function of another eponymous character, which in the given context of the Cold War bears a strong political connotation. A solitary example in Albee's oeuvre is that of Mrs. *Barker* from *The American Dream*. She is the opposite figure of Willy Loman from Arthur Miller's *The Death of a Salesman*, a success-oriented, opportunistic icy woman of the market economy who sells the dream of the perfect child to a childless family and has a ponderous voice that makes up her name. With the exception of these above-mentioned three exceptions, the reader is channeled in the dramas of Albee from the symbolic reading of the full names towards a semiotic reading of the generalized or first names of characters. The lack of family names tends to emphasize the universal nature of the bonds between humans with their visible and less visible sides.

The personal frame is contextualized as a perfect form that occasionally harbors an empty spirit, as Foster Hirsch remarked: "Albee's response to the characters is ambivalent, recalling Tennessee Williams' divided attitude to *his* Adonis figures: The perfect form of the American Dream cloaks an empty spirit."<sup>15</sup> The typology of the Albee dramatic character is subject to the pattern of dual relations. Martha and George, Honey and Nick, Mommy and Daddy, Jerry and Peter, Agnes and Tobias, Edna and Harry, Edmee and Fergus, Benjamin and Daniel, He and She, are all characters that play the

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<sup>14</sup> "The germ idea occurred to Albee when he was reading a record sleeve note about Bessie Smith, the colored singer whose life might have been saved if she had been admitted quickly enough to hospital after a car crash, but the nearest hospital took white patients only". In Ronald Hayman *Edward Albee* (London: Heinemann, 1971), 13.

<sup>15</sup> Foster Hirsch "Delicate Balances". In *Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book, 1978), 15.

supplementing game. They are all centripetal characters directed towards a lost primordial unity<sup>16</sup>. The dramas of Albee seek to reveal and subvert in a powerful battle of words all maladjustment that destroy the harmony between and among the members of the family (as a basic social unit) and outside it. "The image of the family as a cauldron of seething Freudian maladjustment haunts Albee in all of his work; in different moods and styles, he returns, obsessively, to these destroyed and destroying figures."<sup>17</sup> observed Foster Hirsch.

In the act of repeating the description of the destroyed and destroying figures (as part of the family rituals), the dramatic plots of Albee's plays are mostly loose frameworks against which the playwright sets "his characters snapping at each other"<sup>18</sup>. This "snapping" is here a form of communication, of communion between and among the characters. The "snapping" as a form of communication induces a dualism, which depicts the Albee vision of fundamental human attitudes: love and hate. These attitudes will finally form a unit in establishing the meaning of the telling in Albee's plays, which (as confessed in the Mel Gussow book by the playwright himself) are the reinterpretation and the reevaluation of the mystery of his birth and the sense of (his afterwards) abandonment. If the playwright's (personal) journey in life is a singular one, as Mel Gussow defines it, the journey of his mimetic characters tend to attain a sense of plenitude, a desire for the primordial, semiotic phase in a dual construct. They live in interdependence. All follow the urge to

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<sup>16</sup> The most perfect form is the primordial semiotic communication/communion with the mother, which stands at the base of all later human communications and relational abilities. The angular desire engulfed by the corpus of the infant and the body of the mother becomes a semiotic realm of the unsaid, which later develops into forms of telling. The object-relation theory seems to explain the process. The infant develops a primary identification with the first object of love, with the mother, after the period of un-differentiation before birth. The process of differentiation shifts from the feeling of the total symbiosis, as depicted by Margaret Mahler, in the fusion of the mother-child diad, to separation, as the traumatic process, to individuation (through primary and secondary identification processes, the Oedipal stage and the Lacanian mirror stage), and finally, to the stage of the autonomous the subject.

<sup>17</sup> Foster Hirsch "The Living Room Wars". In *Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book, 1978), 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

attain again the primary, lost object of *love* in an abyss that appears between (and among) them and which, as Gerald Weales had remarked, has been carefully induced by the laws of society similarly perceived by Albee and Williams (and Ionesco).

The chasm that confronts the Albee characters may, then, be existential chaos or a materialistic society corrupt enough to make a culture hero out of... (whom? to each critic his own horrible example, and there are those who would pick Albee himself), or a combination in which the second of these is an image of the first. There is nothing unusual about this slightly unstable mixture of philosophic assumption and social criticism; it can be found in the work of Tennessee Williams and, from quite a different perspective, that of Eugène Ionesco<sup>19</sup>.

The similitude of Albee's and Williams's plays is pointed out by Harold Bloom, who emphasized the role of *love* in both playwrights' dramaturgy. The shift of the two basic human attitudes for both playwrights is made evident: their characters love and hate at the same time; they envy and gratify instantly. Williams has some metaphysical input in the quest for the object of love while Albee, in Harold Bloom's view, evades this transcendental component by making it ironic:

...we have a drama of impaling, of love gone rancid because of a metaphysical lack. That is Albee's characteristic and obsessive concern, marked always by its heritage, which is a similar sense of the irreconcilability of love and the means of love that dominates the plays of Tennessee Williams.<sup>20</sup>

Albee's female characters bear, in most cases, masculine features and appear to be with phallic attributes. Mothering, as the relational human process in Albee's plays, does not necessarily imply the presence of the explicit female body, therefore Albee's women characters are detached from the stereotypical feature of the woman and embody irony and satire in their dramatic emasculation. However, as Foster Hirsch observed, they are rather maternal figures with occasional emasculating or phallic attributes.

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<sup>19</sup> Gerald Weales "Edward Albee: Don't Make Waves". In Harold Bloom *Edward Albee* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Harold Bloom *Edward Albee* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 6.

The women Albee reserves his sharpest satiric jobs are the ones who unravel, like the Nurse and Mommy, the hysterics who want everyone to collapse along with them. Women rule the roost in Albee's households; sometimes they govern wisely if icily, sometimes their power is clearly threatening and emasculating. It is significant, though, that women are typically presented as maternal rather than romantic figures<sup>21</sup>.

As in virtually each of Albee's works, "sex is handled evasively, kept at distance from the play's ostensible focus of dramatic interest"<sup>22</sup>. What is important is not the real or perceived gender of the characters, it is rather the relational image they project through the texts they tell or act. Albee's dramatic text is a palimpsest consisting of the readings of all the characters involved (as many subplots as many characters). What they read is their own selves projected into the other, or at least, the desire to see themselves in the other.

Albee is "a modern spirit building from the inside out"<sup>23</sup> and has an implied artistic danger that Eugene O'Neill described as 'beyond theater'. His Pirandellian *maschere nude*, the stripped semblance of what is commonly called "character", relies on the power of recognizing a Wittgenstein-type difficulty in human communication. This difficulty becomes materialized in Albee's "almost perverse refusal to trim it down to direct and acceptable statement"<sup>24</sup>. Eloquent examples in this manner are the marking figures of Grandma from the *American Dream* and *Sandbox*, of Claire from *A Delicate Balance*, Jerry from *The Zoo Story* or the famous Martha-George couple from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. These are some of the wise Shakespearean Prosperos clothed in burlesque modernist dramatic situations and talks. Humor, in Albee's dramas, becomes a trap for the reader; in his dramas "to laugh at any of these things is to laugh at our

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<sup>21</sup> Foster Hirsch "Evasions of Sex: The Closet Dramas". In *Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book, 1978), 106.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>23</sup> Anne Paolucci "The Discipline of Arrogance". In *From Tension to Tonic. The Plays of Edward Albee* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Paolucci "The Existential Burden. The Death of Bessie Smith, The Sandbox, The American Dream, The Zoo Story". In *From Tension to Tonic. The Plays of Edward Albee* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 18.

own expense”<sup>25</sup>. Decoding Albee(’s characters) is more than a process of a simple recognition—as the comic laughter—, it also brings forth all that recognition entails. This also includes the fact that Edward Albee does not write about what things are, he rather points at what they are not (let to be), especially in traditional social contexts and well bound human attachments (such as the institution of marriage). Anne Paolucci compared Albee with Bernard Shaw, who shocked his readers by “insisting that love and marriage do not mix easily in marriage”. Albee in his turn, as Paolucci writes, insisted “on what sex in marriage is *not*”<sup>26</sup>. By writing about things, which “are not” or ‘do not speak their name’, the characters and the plot of Albee’s dramas bear the mark of the unsaid, of the blindspot, of the enigma that direct the reader towards the name of the playwright. In the following we will follow the characters and the quest for the enigmatic figure of the child in some of Albee’s dramas.

*The Zoo Story* is a masterly play<sup>27</sup> that emerges from a casual encounter between two men, Jerry and Peter, into an explosive confrontation that ends in a ritualistic act of sacrifice and violence. By dying, Jerry offers Peter a special awareness of life, which suddenly wakes Peter up in a final recognition. The anguish and loneliness of the two different men are common denominators and concern, as Anita Maria Stenz writes in her book about Albee, “the inadequacy of the human heart”<sup>28</sup>. Peter and Jerry are neither winners nor losers,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>26</sup> Anne Paolucci “Exorcisms. *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*”. In *From Tension to Tonic. The Plays of Edward Albee* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 47.

<sup>27</sup> *The Zoo Story* is Albee’s first play and came out of Albee’s experiences in New York in the 1950s as a Western Union messenger. The play was influenced by the figures of Jean Genet and Tennessee Williams. Cf. “Die Zoo-Geschichte”. In Mel Gussow *Edward Albee. A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 93–118. “Albee himself has pointed out the influence upon *The Zoo Story* of *Suddenly Last Summer* by Tennessee Williams. Albee’s play, like that of Williams, contains a search for God climaxed by violence. Like the Old Testament Jeremiah, whose cruel prophecies were a warning kindness to his people, Jerry may have educated Peter in his relation to God”. In Ruby Cohn *Edward Albee* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1969), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Anita Maria Stenz *Edward Albee: The Poet of Loss* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1978), 12.

they are alienated figures that seek understanding. Jerry exemplifies the character, which in human relations best exemplifies the love-hate rhetoric and pushes these to the borders of the drives and instincts. As the title shows, the *zoo*—with its animals in cages—depicts the instincts that are repressed in humans by the restrictive laws of society. A similar situation is depicted by Eugene O'Neill in *The Hairy Ape* where the protagonist of the play, Yank, is an analogous character with that of Jerry from *The Zoo Story*. The real interlocutor of the play that permits access to the other person, to the repressed Other within, is Jerry, the protagonist of the drama, who represents the world of instincts described by the symbol of the dog<sup>29</sup>. The allegorical encounter of Jerry and the dog (“an anatomy of love” as Ruby Cohn described it) is the one that best describes Jerry’s personality in “The Story of Jerry and the Dog”. Jerry here describes his view on the basic human attitudes, stressing that kindness (love) and cruelty (hate) are counterparts and the two combined have effect only:

**Jerry:** I have learned that neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves independent of each other, created any effect beyond themselves; and I have learned that the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotion. And what is gained is loss... a compromise. We neither love nor hurt, because we do not try to reach each other... If we can so misunderstand, well, then, what have we invested the word love in the first place?<sup>30</sup>

Peter is described in the presentation of the cast. He is Jerry’s counterpart in the process of “teaching emotion”. If Jerry represents the world of instincts, Peter is the man of the laws, of the rules, a person that society has perfectly ‘domesticated’. His clothing embodies his social position of middle-class person (“tweeds”) and suggests even his profession (“horn-rimmed glasses”). Although a middle-aged person, his looks suggest a man younger. This means that

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<sup>29</sup> The ‘dog’ can also be interpreted as the inversely read ‘god’ (anagram of ‘dog’). The symbolism of the dog is related with death. He is the companion of the dead on their ‘Night-Sea Crossing’ as the dog is the first sign of Jerry’s journey in the underworld.. Cf. J. E. Cirlot *A Dictionary of Symbols* (trans. Jack Sage), (New York: Philosophical Library, 1983), 84.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Albee *The Zoo Story*. In *Absurd Drama* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 176.

he is capable of doing more than he shows or wants to show. It may well be that Jerry was attracted to this unrecognized potential in Peter, who, in an unusual manner suggests his misplacement on a Sunday afternoon in New York's Central Park, alone. He is a man in his "early forties, neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely". He wears "tweeds, smokes a pipe, carries horn-rimmed glasses" and while he is "moving into middle age, his dress and his manner would suggest a man younger".<sup>31</sup> Peter works as an executive in a small publishing house. He has a wife, two daughters, two parakeets and cats, and lives between *Lexington* and *Third Avenue*. The place of his home denotes his way of life: *Lexington* symbolizes the rules of the society ('lex' in Latin meaning 'law') and Peter's conformist nature, while the *Third Avenue* implies the symbolic number *three*, which, according to J.E. Cirlot denotes the solution of the conflict posed by dualism. Peter's conflict will be with Jerry and the end of their dualism will be Jerry's sacrifice.

Jerry is described as a person that was once handsome but lost his beauty. His body that "began to go fat" implies the lack of sexual activity that seems to have caused him a "great weariness" and aimless wanderings among people that only misunderstand him. He is in search of a person with which he can communicate in a world of miscommunication. He is "a man in his late thirties, not poorly dressed, but carelessly", with "once a trim and lightly muscled body" that "has begun to go fat". He is no longer handsome, but it is evident "that he once was. His fall from physical grace should not suggest debauchery; he has, to come closest to it, a great weariness."<sup>32</sup> Jerry lives in the upper *West Side* between *Columbus Avenue* and *Central Park West*, on the top floor of a four-storey brown-stone rooming-house in the *rear*. The symbolism of *West* in the context of his home implies a place where the sun sets and where symbolic night (as his implied death) begins. Jerry's death represents the impossibility of living in accordance with the values he carries. To make contact he has to "take his life in hands just as *Columbus* did when he set out for

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 158.

a voyage from which there would have been no return”<sup>33</sup> (*emphasis mine*) if he found what he was searching for. The *rear* position of the apartment emphasizes the repressed nature of his place—as the place of the unconscious—, something that is in the rear is hidden as the past events and traumas from Jerry’s life. The twin room of his room (the two smaller rooms were originally one room) is occupied by a “coloured queen who always keeps his door open”. The similarity of the rooms connote a narcissistic, dual image, which implies (not only by the nature of the transvestite) Jerry’s nature. His possessions are two picture empty frames, “eight or nine books”, a pack of pornographic playing cards, an old Western Union typewriter<sup>34</sup> “that prints nothing but capital letters”, and a box with some “please letters” and sea-rocks he “picked on the beach” when he was a child. The empty frames depict the lack of parents (two picture frames, one for each dead parent). The “please letters” are only substitutions for possible objects of love and are detours on Jerry’s route of desire. The sea-rocks, however foretell the person with whom he will finally achieve communion and communication, Peter (‘Peter’ means ‘rock’)<sup>35</sup>.

The blindspot of the drama is an absent character, the unborn child that Peter longs for. Since he is a conformist, Peter wants to have a son in order to obey the laws of patriarchal culture, where the male child means the continuation of the family, of the name and its traditions. This unborn “male child”—that Peter’s wife could not

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<sup>33</sup> Ronald Hayman “The Zoo Story”. In *Edward Albee* (London: Heineman, 1971), 11.

<sup>34</sup> The Western Union typewriter is both a personal involvement and a device with which he actually wrote his first drama. “In February, one month before his birthday, he sat down in a folding chair at a rickety table in his kitchen in his apartment at 238 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Using a standard typewriter he had stolen (or ‘liberated’) from Western Union and yellow copy paper from the same source, he began to write a play, single space, filling the margins. Everything had led him to this moment. For the first time in his life, the writing seemed to flow from some inner need and conviction.” It took two and a half weeks to write the drama. “From first line to last, it flowed. As he said, ‘There was a click’.” In Mel Gussow *Edward Albee. A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 91.

<sup>35</sup> The drama can also be interpreted in Biblical terms, with the cast of ‘Jerry’, who would stand for *Jesus* and ‘Peter’, who would be Peter, the apostle.

“provide” her husband with—is the key that ignites the outcome of the drama. Peter blames the lack of male child (besides his two daughters) on the “matter of genetics, not manhood”, when Jerry accuses Peter of not being man enough. The untold desire and the lack induced by the impossibility of having a ‘heir’ drive Peter into the induced fight with Jerry, who recognized this by Peter’s body semiotics.

**Jerry:** And you’re not going to have any more kids, are you?

**Peter** [*a bit distantly*]: No. No more. Why did you say that? How would you know about that?

**Jerry:** *The way you cross your legs, perhaps; something in the voice. Or maybe I’m just guessing. (emphasis mine)*<sup>36</sup>

By mentioning the child he could never have, Jerry made Peter step out from his conformist position and obey his instinctual nature. “I guess this is what happened at the zoo”, Jerry finally recognizes. With the help of the non-existent child, Jerry has made Peter react instinctually in self-defense, and at the same time he “comforted” Jerry in his last minutes of life. The blindspot of the play, similar to the workings of the *pharmakos* (‘medicine’, which heals but has side effects which can harm), embodies the basis of the relation in humans: human emotion in which kindness and cruelty work as supplements. The non-existent child does not love nor hurt because it is not reached. As Jerry says “we neither love nor hurt because we do not try to reach each other”. Jerry made Peter at least verbally reach, ‘mention’ this child. This process showed the two facets of the same coin: love and hate, life and death. The exorcism of the desire in Peter by Jerry was similar to the veiling and the unveiling of the fictional son in *Virginia Woolf*, whose “mentioning” caused the flaw of the action in the drama.

*A Delicate Balance*’s cast includes Agnes who is described as “a handsome woman in her late fifties”. Tobias is her husband and he is “a few years older” than his wife. The cast encounters the mirroring couple, Edna and Harry, who are ‘very much like Agnes and Tobias’. Besides the two couples from the cast, there are two single characters. One is Julia, the daughter of the Agnes-Tobias couple, and the other is Claire, Agnes’ alcoholic sister. Claire is “several years younger” than

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<sup>36</sup> Edward Albee *The Zoo Story*. In *Absurd Drama* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 161.

Agnes and she is, as her name implies (Clare meaning 'clear') the *clairvoyant* of the play. Her otherwise very positive figure resembles that of Grandma in *The Sandbox* or in *The American Dream*. According to Mel Gussow's biography of Edward Albee, Agnes and Tobias were actually inspired by the playwright's adoptive parents, Frances and Reed Albee. Claire was modeled by the playwright's aunt (Frances's sister) Jane, while Julia resembles Albee's cousin, Barbara, who was another adopted child of the extended Albee family, who was a "spoiled brat"<sup>37</sup>.

Julia is the problem character of the play. She is the daughter of Agnes and Tobias, an "angular" character, who failed in all her four marriages (with Tom, Charlie, Phil and Doug). During the plot time of the play, Julia is home after a new deception with Douglas, her fourth husband. Claire utters the truth about the failure of Julia's marriages:

**Claire**[*a mocking sing-song*]: Philip loved to gamble,  
Charlie loved the boys,  
Tom went after women,  
Douglas...<sup>38</sup> (*emphasis mine*)

Julia is in close relation with the blindspot of the play, who is her brother Teddy. He is described in any way but his absence rules the plot because of the impact he had on all the dramatic participants. Teddy died and he has become a fictional, non-existent son to whom all relate to some extent. He is, in functional terms similar to the son in *Virginia Woolf*. The summer when Teddy, Julia's younger brother, died she presented body scars in her mourning, "she used to skin her knees" in grief. It was that summer when Tobias cheated on Agnes by sharing the same woman (most probably Claire) with his best friend, Harry.

When Harry and Edna bring in the house "the scare" and want to finally depart, Tobias repeatedly asks Harry to "please, stay". His attachment to Harry dates from the point of losing Teddy. Julia does not have children of her own. Once every three years she comes home and announces that her marriage failed. Agnes labels her as "our melancholy", which means that Julia is a site of Teddy's remembrance

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<sup>37</sup> Mel Gussow *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 254–255.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Albee *A Delicate Balance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 31.

since melancholy connotes the absence of the object of love, that Teddy used to be. Julia is the physical attempt to replace her dead brother in the world of the drama. She is thus the visible site for the blindspot of the play. Claire tells Tobias that Julia is “only” his “daughter” and as such, she emphasizes the role the remaining daughter plays in the family since the departure of Teddy. Julia stopped calling her father Daddy or Father from the moment Teddy was gone. This fact emphasizes an infertile parenting, a family devoid of further life, so specific to Albee’s dramatic world.

The figure of the absent Teddy is shifted towards the figure of Julia’s ex-husband, Charlie, whom Julia’s parents “pushed” on their daughter (because of Charlie’s similitude with their son, Teddy). Charlie was the most beloved of all of Julia’s husbands because he was “so alike” Teddy although he was the husband that had the inclination for boys:

**Julia:** Do I pick ‘em [husbands]? ...

**Tobias** [*grudging*]: Well, you may have been pushed on Charlie...

**Julia:** Poor Charlie.

**Tobias** [*temper rising a little*]: Well, for Christ’s sake, if you miss him so much...

**Julia:** I do not miss him! Well, yes, I do, but not that way. Because he seemed so alike what Teddy would have been.

**Tobias** [*quiet anger and sorrow*]: Your brother would not have grown up to be a fag.

**Julia:** Who is to say?<sup>39</sup>

Teddy is the physically absent character, to whom the family directly or indirectly relates. The reason of his death is not mentioned, but it might have been the “fright”, the “plague”, the “terror” of his recognition in being *other* (“a fag”) than he was (socially) supposed to be. At least this is what the Julia and Tobias dialogue above makes it visible. Claire introduces the deictic figure of Teddy, when the frightened Harry and Edna arrive at the house of Agnes and Tobias. Claire puts sadly the rhetorical sentence: “I was wondering when *it* would begin... when it would start.” (*emphasis mine*). Nobody seems to recognize the referent of her sentence. This referent is only labeled as the fright, “the terror”, the “plague” (which

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 49.

are “both the same”) that the friend-couple brings uninvited in the house and seems to lack its referent. Julia is the one who reacts and even over-reacts to the arrival of the uninvited guests and their unsaid and euphemized ‘thing’ they cannot name. Julia’s hysterical symptoms at the sight of the guests refer back to a metaphoricized ‘skinning of her knees’ that started to happen when (after Teddy’s death) she found out the “cheating” of her father (and his friend). Her nervous reactions link the fright of the guests with the silenced, elegiac atmosphere of the lack of Teddy. The repressed confrontation with the trauma of losing Teddy, the beloved son, is made real with the coming of the guests. As in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, all the characters from this play are ‘afraid’ that the ‘delicate balance’ of the superficial world will break with mentioning the “plague” that has come upon them.

It is Julia’s mediation through which the blindspot, Teddy becomes visualized and ‘mentioned’. For a long time after Teddy’s death, Julia could not come in terms with herself. The death of the brother marked her and remained a traumatic event that later plotted her life. Her mother recollects Julia’s primary hostile attitude to her brother, which then grew into a deep lack and modeled further failures in her life:

**Agnes:** ... Teddy’s birth, and how she felt unwanted, tricked his death, and was she more relieved than lost...? All the schools we sent her to, and did she fail in them through hate... or love? And when we come to marriage, dear: each of them, the fear, the happiness, the sex, the stopping, the infidelities...<sup>40</sup>

Agnes, the mother, is “a perfectionist” and “*very* difficult to live with”. About herself she says that she is the “ruler of the roost”, licensed wife, midnight... nurse”<sup>41</sup>. She even overrides her chain of definitions in stressing her function as a “wife, a mother, a lover, a homemaker, a nurse, a hostess, an agitator, a pacifier, a truth-teller, a deceiver”. She is the phallic woman of the play, the Albee type of strong woman. Tobias has many common features with his friend, Harry. They are, in fact, metonymies of each other (and Claire has been the same mirror for both). The similitude is stressed not only by the fact that they have cheated on their wives in the “same summer

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 95.

with the same woman” (Claire) but also in Agnes’ recognition of the semblance when she asks for a drink from Harry: “Will you make me a drink, Harry, since you are being Tobias?”. Tobias is a complex character. He is later (and finally) called by his daughter a “saint, sage, *daddy*, everything... sea monster, ram... absolutely human man”<sup>42</sup>. Tobias is already “stranger” to Agnes, a stranger that happened to enter her room during the night of the plot time. By the end of the play Tobias answers to the question concerning his relation to Harry put by Claire at the beginning (“Would you give friend Harry the shirt off your back, as they say?”). He says that “friendship grows to love” but since Harry does not respond Tobias has his replicas to the silence: “I like you, Harry, yes, I really do, but I don’t like Edna... I find my liking you has limits... BUT THOSE ARE MY LIMITS!” The attraction of the two men Tobias and Harry to each other echoes the image of what Teddy might have become if he was alive (like Charlie, who liked men) and identified with his father. Harry’s fright, in turn, might have been the recognition of his otherness and attraction towards Tobias, which he, as his wife ‘dare not name’ but are *afraid of*, as the couple of *Virginia Woolf* is “afraid” on the account of their non-existent son.

Claire is the symbol of the pre-Oedipal stage of the semiotic since she is, according to Agnes, “nothing but vowels”. She is an alcoholic that escaped the organized group therapy and makes fun of the experience in the home of her sister. Claire bears the connotation of her name since she was “not named for nothing”. She is the female Tiresias floating in alcohol. She “watches from the sidelines” and has seen “so very much, has seen all so clearly” from the life of the family. Her scopic drive is emphasized by the fact that she has never “missed a chance to participate in watching”.

Edna and Harry<sup>43</sup> suddenly enter the house of Agnes-Tobias with the explanation similar in function with the nursery rhyme from *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (which in Thornton Wilder’s words could be

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>43</sup> “Edward says that the reason he borrowed the Winston’s names [Albee’s Jewish neighbors] for the characters is that they would have been the last people that his parents would have taken in”. Mel Gussow *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 40.

sung as the rhymes of the 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush'). They exclaim: "WE... GOT FRIGHTENED!... We... got... scared... We... were... terrified... AND THERE WAS NOTHING!"<sup>44</sup>. What seems to be the no-named thing, the "nothing" for Edna and Harry, is the pain of Teddy's lack for Agnes and Tobias. Both couples love and hate at the same time. This culminates in Tobias's soliloquy about the always shifting nature of love: "we love each other, don't we?"; in his statement about liking Harry and disliking Edna at the same time, or in Harry's questioning the friendship of Tobias: "Do they love us?" The answer is always an ambiguous one since love entails hate and hate entails love.

The love-hate relationship is visible even from the horizon of the context of Agnes and Tobias: a dead male child, a failed daughter, an alcoholic sister and an (almost) broken marriage. All try to hold together the love and the hate (error, fright, plague) which, as the unsaid and unnamed "terror" of Edna and Harry, inhabits the house and requires a delicate human balancing act to keep safe the equilibrium between and among the characters. The rhetorical question of "love and error" lurks from all the deeds within and outside the couple(s) and implies a similitude between the characters in coping with these (similar to the "kindness" and "cruelty" of Jerry and Peter in *The Zoo Story*). The book Agnes reads in the drama shows the similitude of humans (at the level of sexes) in the balancing act(s) their relationships imply. This book stresses the fact that "sexes are reversing, or coming to resemble each other too much, at any rate"<sup>45</sup> and as such, another balancing act is uttered in terms of gender. The phrase from Agnes' book is similar to George's when he talks with Nick about the genes in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* George states "people are rearranging my genes, so that everyone will be like everyone else."<sup>46</sup> Edna utters a similar sentence when she realizes that the balancing act made the lives of all characters similar: "Our lives are the same" while Agnes realizes that they "become allegorical" in their substitutive relations with each other.

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<sup>44</sup> Edward Albee *A Delicate Balance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 38–39.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Albee *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965), 29.

The great balancing act of the drama (and of human relations in it) is to reach the state of the “good enough motherhood” between humans, that is, an equilibrium of the envy-gratitude or love-hate, as shown by Donald Winnicott<sup>47</sup>. The balancing act takes place if a character is “good enough” to the other character in the course of the plot induced by the blindspot. Agnes and Julia finally verbalize this act of balancing<sup>48</sup>, which stands at the root of all human relations:

**Agnes:** The double position of seeing not only facts but their implications... There is *a balance to be maintained after all*, though the rest of you teether, unconcerned, or uncaring, *assuming* you're on level ground... by divine right, I gather, though that is hardly so. And if must be the fulcrum... I think I shall have a divorce.

**Tobias:** Have a divorce?

**Agnes:** No. No, Julia has them for all of us. Not even separation; that is taken care of, and in life: the gradual ...demise of intensity, the private preoccupations, the substitutions. *We become allegorical*, my darling Tobias... The individuality we hold so dearly sinks into crotchets; *we see ourselves repeated by those we bring into it all*, either by mirror or by rejection, honor or fault...

**Julia:** Well, you are the fulcrum and all around here *the double vision, the great balancing act...*(emphasis mine).<sup>49</sup>

*The American Dream* according to Ruby Cohn, strives like Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* “on social inanities”<sup>50</sup>. The characters are Mommy, Daddy, Grandma, Mrs. Barker and the Young Man. The

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<sup>47</sup> The characters in the play act as mothering agents. This mothering process, in Donald Winnicott's writings on the topic means that each human can act as a 'good enough mother', which means that it must balance (in a so-called transitional space) the quantity of love and hate proportionally in order to achieve maximum effect and response from the other person. It also means that each character is both good and bad at the same time but also that they are “sensitively using the transitional space”. In other words, “the good enough mother actively adapts to the needs of the infant rather than the other way round.” In Rosaliny Minsky, ed. *Psychoanalysis and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 114.

<sup>48</sup> In 1949 Albee wrote one of his apprentice works *The City of People*. “For the first time in Albee's work, the words “delicate balance” appear, referring to the that “shading between love and hate that exists between anybody that cares for one another”. In Mel Gussow *Edward Albee. A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 68.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Albee *A Delicate Balance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 58–59.

<sup>50</sup> Ruby Cohn *Edward Albee* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 11.

drama tells everything about an unnamed American couple, which is unable to have an offspring in the household. Mommy and Daddy have already bought/adopted a child whom they have mutilated and dismembered in a process of dissatisfaction with the bought 'product' of the market economy. As Lee Baxandal pointed out, the characters of Albee are interrelated and cohesive in almost all of his plays because "the heart of his technique is an archetypal family unit"<sup>51</sup> where all the dilemmas, defeats, hopes and values of the American society—as the playwright sees them—are "tangibly compressed". As Albee writes in the *Preface* of the play, the drama is hoped to be one that "transcends the personal and the private". *The American Dream* is filled with references to the playwright's life<sup>52</sup>, which are represented here in an abrasive manner. As Anita M. Stenz pointed out, it is a "nightmarish mad-cap cartoon"<sup>53</sup> of emotional crippling in the family that leads to excessive materialism and hypocrisy in the drama, which has an abrasive satirical tone. There is no separate description of the characters, their features can be seen through the course of the play. Mommy was a "deceitful little girl" and married Daddy because of money: "We were poor! But then I married you, Daddy, and now we're very rich."<sup>54</sup> The stereotypical roles in the family of *The American Dream* are changed since. During the plot time Mommy is the phallic woman, the *mater familias* of the household. Daddy was once "firm", "decisive", and "masculine" that made Mommy "shiver" and "faint" (and as an additional power attribute, he wanted to be a Senator but then changed his mind and wanted to be Governor). Despite his aims in the past, Mommy calls him a "hedgehog" because of his soft nature. Daddy is "turning into a jelly", he becomes indecisive and therefore Mommy says that he is "a woman" but not like Mrs. Barker nor like Mommy. Mrs. Barker is the professional woman of the Mommies grotesque gallery of Albee's dramas, who

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<sup>51</sup> Lee Baxandall "The Theater of Edward Albee". In Alvin B. Kernan *The Modern American Theater* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1967), 80–81.

<sup>52</sup> Mel Gussow *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 141.

<sup>53</sup> Anita Maria Stenz *Edward Albee: The Poet of Loss* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1978), 25.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Albee *The American Dream*. In *New American Drama* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 30.

runs the business of the Bye-Bye adoption agency and sells 'adoptions' like normal products.

The Young Man of the play is the muscular movie-like faced man that Grandma invests with the role of the "van man". He looks "familiar" to Grandma and then to Mommy, too. He is the visible site for the blindspot of the play, who is the baby that had been once brought/adopted and then dismembered and killed by its foster parents. The Young Man's familiar looks are emphasized three times during the play (which means he is part of the enigma of the plot), since he is the twin brother of a child Mommy and Daddy once bought. The foster parents dismembered and finally killed this brother because they were not satisfied with him. The plot of the drama brings the dead child's substitution in the person of the Young Man, whom Grandma calls the "van man" and whom Mrs. Barker, as a good merchant, substitutes for the previously 'sold' child. The van man is, thus a fictional construct of Mommy and Daddy, which is made flesh by Grandma's witty substitution. The Young Man confesses that he lost his mother, never knew his father and had an "identical" twin brother who was separated and taken away from him. "We were torn apart", The Young Man says. His brother was at his turn, torn apart by his new parents. At that time The Young Man felt that his twin brother's life was over because once his heart "became numb" as if the mutilation was taking place in his own body. From that moment on he was never able to love. This might have been the moment when Mommy and Daddy actually dismembered his twin brother<sup>55</sup>.

The "van man" is the product of Mommy's and Daddy's imagination similar to the son of Martha and George from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. He is the "clean-cut, midwest farm boy type, almost insultingly good-looking in a typically American way" with a "good profile, straight noses, honest eyes, wonderful smile", in other words "the American Dream". 'He', as the van boy, was created

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<sup>55</sup> "In all his work there are recurrent themes (and even character names, like Agnes, Amy, Ann, Toby, Fred): twins (male and female), sometimes separated at birth; children who died or were lost; strong mothers and weak fathers; dreamers and questers who are misunderstood and confused about their identity, sexual or otherwise." Mel Gussow "Albee's Village Decade". In Edward Albee. *A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 85.

to discipline Grandma and to make her afraid if she proved too annoying for the couple. The reality of the van man's existence is reinforced by Mrs. Barker from the Bye-Bye Adoption Service, when the family does not want to accept that he is real. As an excellent opportunist, Mrs. Barker posits this van man as the guarantee-substitute for the wrong child, whom the parents destroyed.

**Mrs. Barker:** The van man. The van man was here...

**Mommy** [*near tears*]: No, no that's impossible. No. There's no such thing as the van man. There is no van man. We... we made him up.<sup>56</sup>

When The Young Man appears in the home of the couple, he seems very familiar to Mommy and Daddy. He strikingly resembles the blindspot-child of the drama. Mommy says he is "more like *it*", "a great more deal like *it*" (*emphasis mine*) "*It*" is the dead child, which did not even have a name. The lack of onomastics is caught in the dialogue of the parents and Mrs. Barker:

**Mrs. Barker:**... Call him whatever you like. He's yours. Call him what you called the other one.

**Mommy:** Daddy? What did we call the other one?

**Daddy** [*puzzles*] Why ...<sup>57</sup>

Grandma is an old, "obscene" person. She is busy packing boxes for her alleged departure from home. She knows "what she says", as Daddy claims and she knows the twisted way of the shaken family romance. She does not complain she rather focuses on her exit from the imposed home, where she invites The Young Man and, in a witty manner, presents him as the van man that has come to take her away. Grandma in *The American Dream* and in the *Sandbox* is the sole human and generous character in the Albee *ménage* of characters. The model for the character of Grandma was Edward Albee's maternal Grandma Cotter, who was the closest to the playwright in his family and who was "an outlaw" as Edward. As the Young Man and Grandma in this play, Edward and Grandma Cotter formed in the home of the Albees, an alliance against the world, especially against

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<sup>56</sup> Edward Albee *The American Dream*. In *New American Drama* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 58.

<sup>57</sup> Edward Albee *The American Dream*. In *New American Drama* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 59.

the mother and father. They were, as the playwright remembers, like “two ends against the middle”<sup>58</sup>. Grandma uses the Uncle Henry *nom de boulangère* with which she wins the baking contest and earns enough money to depart on her own from the American Dream home. In terms of the dramatic structure she represents the figure, which indirectly induces epiphany in the play by recognizing the counterpart, the ‘othered’ half of the absent-present child. Her recognition of the epiphanic body as a substitution for the enigma of the play is uttered in a threefold repetition of the phrase “you look familiar”. The newcomer van man, bitterly and melancholically answers to the threefold recognition in terms of the Platonic doxa: “I am incomplete, and I must therefore... compensate”<sup>59</sup>. This doxa promises an end that secures economic fulfillment for the American Dream couple (Mommy and Daddy) and for The Young Man, who has become in the meantime the American Dream boy.

For Albee, human relationships are always more important than conventions and social categories. *The American Dream* is an incursion into the human processes that occur between members of a family when the institution of marriage and the commercialism become more important than its participants. Here, the rhetoric of love and hate turns into the rhetoric of having or not having, that is possession or loss.

The *Marriage Play* is about the pros and cons of a possible divorce, a delicate balancing act of the two characters of the play, Gillian and Jack, the married couple. Gillian is a woman “in her early 50s” and Jack is a man “in his middle 50s”. The play focuses on their George and Martha type of intellectual exchange. The discussion is at the expense of the seemingly liberating idea of divorce on the part of Jack. The verbal games the couple plays is symbolic of the emotional emptiness of their marriage. Gillian’s exit way from boredom is her diary, Jack’s is his repetitive ‘threat’ with divorce. Martha and George in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* start and end their game with the rhyming device of a nursery rhyme. The *Marriage Play* begins the

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<sup>58</sup> Mel Gussow Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography (London: Oberon, 1999), 33.

<sup>59</sup> Edward Albee *The American Dream*. In *New American Drama* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 53.

game of the spouses with Jack's "I'm leaving you". This sentence will later develop into a spontaneous research into their common past, that is, into a double-edged talk. "Talk" is the word with which Gillian defines her sentences when she says that she is "talking as not to scream". With very efficient verbal devices, Gillian and Jack repeat the *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* game of love-hate that Martha defines as "sad, sad, sad". Gillian paraphrases Martha when she further echoes the melancholic dictum about their marriage: "sad husband, sad wife, sad day, sad life"<sup>60</sup>. While in their matrimonial games the "rhetoric is beyond" Jack, both attempt to "de-Siamese" themselves into separate entities in different ways. Jack repeats his wish many times, but Gillian, as most of the women characters of Albee, holds the final punchline about the nature of the human bonds and individuation in marriage:

**Gillian:** ...marriage does not make two people one, it makes two people two—a good marriage, a useful marriage- makes individuals! That when two people chose to be together though they're strong enough to be alone, then you have a good marriage. Has ours been a good marriage? Are we two? Clearly we've not become each other, we've become ourselves—I guess we have, and maybe for the first time. With any luck we've not compensated, we've complemented.<sup>61</sup>

In the process of duality, Gillian is writing a diary she calls 'The Book of Days', which is "more of a journal", a record of their encounters during marriage. In its functional aspect this diary is similar to the book of George in *Virginia Woolf*, which is the story of the fictional boy, which was then George. In metonymical terms, the two books are substitutes for love/child/son. As she says, it is "a record of our touching". Gillian recognizes that her life with Jack is a chain of "successes and failures" and that they had "good times and bad". Jack is sometimes "Mrs. Stud himself" while other times "ya don't have **it** in ya" (*emphasis mine*). This deictic **it** is similar to the one that is uttered in *The American Dream*, can be compared to the euphemized Teddy in *A Delicate Balance* or the son in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and the "**this**" that "happened" in *The Zoo Story*. In the process of individuation and complementation which turns Gillian

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<sup>60</sup> Edward Albee *Marriage Play* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1995), 9.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–40.

into the writer of her diary, Jack is his own observer, who does not write but verbally shares his conclusions:

**Jack:** ...I am aware that I am the object I am studying, that I am my own subject, or object, if you will. I become aware... well, yes, that's it! I become aware of awareness I have never known before, of clarity, of... revelation, I suppose. Mystics must have it, clairvoyants, the possessed.<sup>62</sup>

The deictic “**this**” covers the blindspot of the drama, which is unveiled by the flaw of the action the declaration of divorce and a recorded event from Venice that is written in the ‘Book of the Days’ brings. This event records Gillian making love with Jack. Jack realizes that he was not the person Gillian made love to, instead, Gillian had an encounter with a stranger she thought it was her husband. The blindspot in this drama is the lack of a bodily ‘outcome’ of the marriage, whose place the ‘Book of the Days’ takes as a fictional product, an intimate outcome of Gillian’s and Jack’s marriage. The intimate diary of Gillian depicts the lack of instinctual impulse between the spouses, which, as a result, could have made a child possible. The outcome of the impossible continuation on the part of Jack is his exit from the matrimonial bond in his one-sentence fiction of saying: “I’m leaving you”. The marriage of the two is ‘saturated’ and empty at the same time because passion, as the key word for the lack that is present in their life, needs to be revitalized. The last pages of the play concentrate on the issue of the passion perceived as instinct, and as the rhetoric of love and hate, which is linked with the animal realm similar to that of *The Zoo Story*. Jack explains this context:

**Jack:** Instinct tells us everything: that if there are rules run counter to our gut, then *they* are wrong; we are the animals, and we smell the kill and the rest is fine unless it gets in the way. We understand it *all* when we become animals, when we give in to **it**—standing at night in the forest, in the snow when we become the wolf: *then* we understand it. Man is different man is the lordly beast. We know these things by gut; when passion dies...<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 37.

The blindspot of the drama covers the issue of the lack of (any more) 'children' (referring to the book of intimacies). The child is a fictional one, like the son(ny boy) in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The penultimate page of the drama contains Gillian's recognition of the fact that children are not possible because the two sides of the couple have become similar (an allusion to a homograph insertion): "Are we supposed to get *married* again? *I* can't have children anymore, I can't make a full marriage: I'm shaped to you". The issue of the blindspot is connected with the passion induced by the drives. This passion is redefined by Gillian, who does not blame the lack of passion but rather its changeable nature. She explains that passion needs redefinition. However, both agree, passion is rooted in the rhetoric of love and hate, on which both have built their marriage, in which they are irrevocably intertwined and—from time to time, as Jack shows with his intention of leaving and divorce—confused.

**Gillian:** Passion in a marriage never dies it changes. When the passion of passion wanes there are all the others waiting to rush in—the passion of loss, of hatred, the passion of indifference; the ultimate, the finally satisfying passion of nothing. You know nothing of the passion; you confuse rut with everything.<sup>64</sup>

*Counting the Ways*<sup>65</sup> is the bare analysis of He and She, two characters with generic names. The play aims the lack or loss of meaning in the relation between two people in marriage trying to escape the responsibility intimacy requires. The number two employed by the playwright in this drama evokes the symbolism of the number. Two means, as Philip C. Kolin wrote, "disunity,

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>65</sup> The play has been compared with Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*. "the very type of romantic play of the heart at which Albee aims his vaudevillian parody, although in fairness one must note that Albee admires Williams as a playwright... in many ways Albee's play is a direct response to the kind of theatre of the heart projected by Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie* and *Counting the Ways* push aside the convention of realism. Both plays can be called memory plays. For Williams a depiction of memory "is seated predominantly in the heart", while for Albee memory is a non-emotional faculty." Philip C. Kolin "Edward Albee's *Counting the Ways*". In Julian N. Wasserman, ed. *Edward Albee. An Interview and Essays* (Houston: The University of St. Thomas, 1983), 136.

separation, and ultimately death”<sup>66</sup> in *Counting the Ways*. The absurdity of the emptied relationship of He and She is accentuated by the fact that both characters enter Scenes 10, 11, and 12 with a flower (a rose) symbolizing the same thing (as their mutual possession). The rose represents love but also bear the hidden meaning of its opposite, hate<sup>67</sup>. He and She pluck the petals in order to find an answer to their search for love but they do not ask each other about it, they fear direct questions and mediate their wish through the petals of the rose. Counting the petals has a contrapuntal effect and the play has a centripetal effect because of its characters that strive on the borders of insecure feelings between love and hate. The play starts and ends with the commonplace question of “Do you love me?”. Love is the main structuring device that demonstrates the lack of meaning in this marriage, where one has to be able to communicate with the partner “in order to be aware of one’s own self”<sup>68</sup>. There are no specific details nor descriptions given about the characters, they are detached selves that live amid fragmented and momentary talks that induce the threat of the incertitude. She is the rational woman, while he is a passive man, less vocal and as such less vulnerable. Both parody themselves and of course each other. As Philip C. Kolin shows in “The Ways of Losing Heart”, the parody is best exemplified by the domestic substitution of the artistic phrase, which applies to both characters:

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>67</sup> In *Counting the Ways*, roses are the symbols of the unsaid questions and uncertainties. “Roses, especially white ones, are emblems of silence, being the flowers of Harpocrates, God of Silence. This is the origin of the phrase ‘under the rose’, used in reference to things said that must not be repeated... The first roses were all white but some turned red when they were stained by blood... It is exceedingly unlucky to scatter petals of a rose worn upon the person or carried in the hand... Roses, like other flowers, are ill-omened if they bloom out of season”. Cf. E. and M. A. Radford, (Christina Hole, ed.) *Encyclopedia of Superstitions* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 285–286. Also “The single rose is a symbol of completion, of consummate achievement and perfection.” Cf. J. A. Cirlot *A Dictionary of Symbols* (trans. Jack Sage), (New York: Philosophical Library, 1983), 275.

<sup>68</sup> Philip C. Kolin “Edward Albee’s *Counting the Ways*”. In Julian N. Wasserman, ed. *Edward Albee. An Interview and Essays* (Houston: The University of St. Thomas, 1983), 128.

... He's switching the words of an Auden poem. He substitutes the domestic "shirts" from Auden's "water" in "Thousands have lived without love but none without water"... A little later He substitutes each of the ingredients from his wife's list for Auden's "water". When He exchanges "creme brulée" for "water", he does admit: "It lacks... well, it doesn't... there's not as much resonance that way... Creme Bruleé for water, or shirts for water, for that matter, but if parody isn't a diminishment... well, then, was it worth it in the first place?". He and She deliberately parody serious ideas and words from poetry, thus showing little if any aesthetic appreciation for the material which they cite. Such are the people whom Albee consistently terms "Philistines" in his public addresses.<sup>69</sup>

The petal picking test veils the very visible blindspot of the play, which is the rose itself, as the common flower for both He and She. The rose is present when these two people cannot communicate and counts the ways of living. Loving and hating for them. In other words, the rose is a metonymy of the couple's living together, a metaphoric child with the help of which both can 'measure the love the other. Its petals 'count the ways' in which love and hate can be lived and interpreted. The flower, as the adopted baby in *The American Dream*, is dismembered petal by petal by He, and then has to be replaced by another one. The petals 'strip out' the truth they two never mentioned or avoided answering. Since it is a symbolic construct of the unsaid desires, the rose stands for the imaginary child of the two, as the sonny boy in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* who is never to be 'mentioned' to anyone else. The rose's function (besides hiding the blindspot) is also to make She and He ridiculous and to make them subject to (reader's and audience's) laughter. The blindspot rose is made devoid of any content of sentiment because the people of the cast fear intimacy and directness. It is a structuring device, a tool with which the characters can 'measure' the parameters of their relationship. (Similar questions and variant affirmations are found the relative-play of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, where the George and Martha are figuratively counting the petals of "the lion's tooth", the snapdragon).

**He:** She loves me. She loves me not. She loves me. She loves me not. She loves me. She loves me not.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 133–134.

She: He loves me? He loves me not? ...Not me loves he? Me loves  
he? Not me loves he? Me loves he?<sup>70</sup>

Love seems to have its limits between He and She. Their love borders on hate, which lives on the anxiety of the incertitude. Similar to the main couple's life in *Counting the Ways*, the rhetoric of love-hate, as played by Martha and George, Gillian and Jack, Agnes and Tobias, will end in the recognition of the verisimilitude as uttered by Edna in *A Delicate Balance*. She says that "our lives are the same", which is a similar proposition to Julia's earlier exclamation when she claims that "all the *happy* families are alike!". The character He in *Counting the Ways* posits the same idea in the interrogative sentence of "we are each other's rod?" Charlie and Nancy from *Seascape*, the seaside nomads agree with the congruence of the relations bluntly put in Charlie's statement of "mutate or perish" and in Nancy's theory of marriage: "we have nothing holding us, except together". In this context all the Albee couples are different and both are the same. All are governed by the rhetoric of love in the pattern of what Peter Brooks calls in *Reading for the Plot* the same-but-different.

*Finding the Sun* is one of Albee's "sand plays" (together with *Box*, and *The Sandbox*), an allegory about the celestial body of the *Sun*. The play follows the route of the sun's ascent towards its zenith via the (human) positions characters take on the beach, and finally focuses on the youngest character, the *son* of Edmee. The highest peak of the solar route is achieved when the oldest man in the play dies and the youngest boy (son) ripens to knowledge and consciousness. In this context, the logic behind the words of **sun** and **son** links the meaning of the first in the second. The sun, according to C. E. Cirlot represents the *Sol in homine* or "the invisible essence of the celestial Sun that nourishes the inborn fire of *Man*"<sup>71</sup>. The link of the son, (whose name is Fergus) and the solar body (the sun) is emphasized on the first page

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<sup>70</sup> Edward Albee *Counting the Ways*. In *The Plays*. Vol. Three. All Over. *Seascape* *Counting the Ways*. Listening (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 13–17.

<sup>71</sup> The alchemic concept of the *Sol in homine* is an "early pointer to the way the astral body has latterly been interpreted by psychoanalysts, narrowing its meaning down to that of heat or energy, equivalent to the fire of life and libido. Hence Jung's point that the sun is, in truth, a symbol of the source of life and of the ultimate wholeness of man". In J. E. Cirlot *A Dictionary of Symbols* (trans. Jack Sage), (New York: Philosophical Library, 1983), 319.

of the play. The drama opens with the word “finding the sun” uttered nine times by each of the characters. The last page links the wish of the play’s beginning with Edmee’s inquiry and search for her son. “Fergus”, the name of the son that disappeared in the meantime, is uttered also nine times like the wish to find the sun. This time, the ‘sun’ is the ‘son’, and their relation is made obvious since the drama opens with the search for the celestial body that is found and ends with the search for the son, who will not be found.

The eight characters of the play are people on a beach in bright sun. They all tend to find the best places for their bodies, therefore they move from place to place in order to “find the sun”. Abigail and Benjamin, Cordelia and Daniel, and Gertrude and Henden are married couples. Edmee and Fergus, a mother and her son represent the last symbolic ‘couple’. Abigail is twenty-three, with “pinched” features. She is neither pretty nor plain. Her husband, Benjamin is thirty. He is blond and “willowy handsome”. The two are married but seem to have problems in their marriage. Cordelia is twenty-eight and she is “attractive in a cold way”, with a “good figure”. Her husband, Daniel is thirty-seven, “dark, tall and good-looking”. Cordelia and Daniel seem to have a working agreement in their marriage. Gertrude, who is a sixty year-old elegant outdoors woman, is Cordelia’s mother. She is married to Henden, who is seventy and “looks like a diplomat”. He is also Daniel’s father. Edmee is forty-five and she is a stylish matron that takes excessive care of her son, Fergus, who is the youngest character in the play. He is sixteen. At a point in the play Henden even tell Fergus that there is “no such an age”, although symbolically their age is correlated by the number seven that denotes both the young man and the old man. Henden is seventy ( $70$  as  $7 + 0 = 7$ ), Fergus is sixteen ( $16$  as  $1 + 6 = 7$ )<sup>72</sup>. Edmee has an enigmatic name that can be

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<sup>72</sup> When talking about his own age, the playwright quotes this passage of the old man’s and young man’s age from *Finding the Sun*. “For his seventieth birthday on March 12, 1998, he [Edward Albee] flew back to New York from Houston for a small dinner party given in his honor by Elizabeth McCann. That afternoon he spoke about aging: ‘When the old man in *Finding the Sun* asks the boy how old he is, the boy says: ‘I’m 16, and the man says, “Don’t be silly: There’s no such an age”. Sometimes I feel sixteen, sometimes younger. Sometimes I feel a healthy forty. The only way I ever feel anything close to my age is the way people treat

read as the doubling of the name **Ed**<sub>ward</sub> of the playwright {'Ed'+ 'me(e)} and the reflexive, narcissistic **me**<sub>e</sub>. The couple of the mother and son is the doubling of the name of the implied author, since it clearly identifies with the reflexively named 'Ed' and 'me(e)' (or that of the first two and the last two letters of the name of the playwright: **Ed**<sub>ward</sub> linked with the help of the initial of the **m**other with **Albee**), which shows a bond of narcissistic nature, on the one hand on the part of the playwright and, on the other hand, between the mother {'me(e)'} and the son ('Ed')—another narcissistic bond is made explicit in the relation of Daniel and Benjamin, which the son of Edmee indirectly witnesses—. Edmee is wisely questioned in the drama about Fergus and about their relation.

**Gertrude:** Young man. [To Edmee]. Is **that** yours?

**Edmee:** Yes, yes, he is.

**Gertrude:** What is he to you, or I am being nosy?...

**Edmee:** What *is* he to me?...<sup>73</sup>

The answer posited in Scene 3 is given in Scene 8 and shows an identification of the son with the mother (who in turn identifies him with her dead husband):

**Edmee:** Well, now, to answer your question—your pry, to be more accurate, about Fergus. What he is to me is too much. He is my son—he is: real mother, real son. And since my husband died—his father—he has been the “man” in my life, so to speak... There is, I think—there may be an—attachment transcends the usual, the socially admitted, that is, by which I mean: given the provocation, *Fergus would be me in a moment*. A mother knows these things and even admits knowing them... Sometimes. He doesn't know it, or, if he does sense it, is polite or shrewd enough to pretend he does not... (*emphasis mine*)<sup>74</sup>

By the depicted excessive identification with his mother, Fergus is the most complex character of the play. Edmee, the mother and Fergus, her son, androgynously counterpoint and take care of each

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me.” In Mel Gussow *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey. A Biography* (London: Oberon, 1999), 395.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Albee *Finding the Sun* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1994), 7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

other. Fergus<sup>75</sup> is blond, handsome, healthy kid with a swimmer's body. He is also the enigmatic character, the blindspot and is he the homograph of the play (he is the one outside Daniel and Benjamin that shares not only the same game with them but has similar feature to them). The emblematic name of his mother veils him as the name of the author's enigma of the play. The ambiguities of the play do not stop at the character of the blindspot. The cast encounters other misplaced characters that Fergus senses to be problematic as well. Abigail, as the plain figure in the "complex twine" of human relationships in *Finding the Sun*, is married to Benjamin, whom she calls "a fairy". Cordelia and Daniel seem to share a sibling-type of relationship: "'we're such good friends'... that isn't exactly your usual marriage isn't precisely"<sup>76</sup>, while the relationship of Daniel and Benjamin is explicitly stated in the play (they "were 'involved'", Henden says, "they were lovers"). He is present at the discussion-game of Benjamin and Daniel and proposes that the three of them "play catch". This is the game of their unsaid love, of the dramatic primal scene of the play. This game promotes the drama, *i.e.* the action, because it generates curiosity, the drive to know and to see the unsaid. The hidden love of the two men, as seen by Fergus, alternates with the beach ball game in which the ball and the words are both 'thrown' to each other. Fergus is the viewer of the game and he concludes the hidden fact:

**Fergus:** I know. You two are presently married to those ladies over there, although... since the two of you have been... uh... intimately involved? There is a question floating around this particular area of the beach as to whether these marriages were made in heaven.<sup>77</sup>

The rhetoric of love and hate is substituted in this drama by "pleasure into pain". This dictum is uttered by Fergus, who in his final

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<sup>75</sup> The figure of Fergus strikingly coincides with that of the playwright from the Mel Gussow biography. The site of the boyhood is the same, the wealthy mother, the family and the private school and even the so-called WASP education the family wanted him to have. "A *New England* boyhood... *wealthy mother* and all, *private school*, *WASP* education. ASP, to be precise", says Fergus in the play. (*emphasis mine*), *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

recognition of the nature of the human bonds leaves the beach and metaphorically continues following and “finding the sun”. While Henden is the sacrificial body that dies in the end, Fergus is the epiphanic body that gives hope to a new telling (‘finding’) of the play. All characters find pleasure (the sun) in order then to gain pain. Henden will die (has the ‘end’ inserted in the name)<sup>78</sup>, Gertrude will renew her skin cancer from the sun, Abigail will try to commit suicide, Edmee will temporarily lose Fergus, who disappears, while all the other characters will continue their socially reinforced heterosexual matrix (Cordelia, Daniel and Benjamin). After the sun (and the son) has (have) disappeared, it epiphanically returns and everything starts from a new beginning.

**Edmee:** (A Frightened child) Fergus?

**Gertrude:** He’ll come back, my dear, they do. The sun’s returning. What glory! What... wonder! (Indeed the sun is returning)<sup>79</sup>

The end of *Finding the Sun* equals the end of *A Delicate Balance* (which is uttered by Agnes in the end). Both plays, as other plays of Albee, tend to reach the state of delicate balance by the end. Agnes describes this end as a possible circular beginning, which has been started by the finally revised nursery rhyme of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*: “Well, they’re safely gone... and we’ll all forget... quite soon. Come now, we can begin the day”<sup>80</sup>. Martha and George unveil the enigma of their love and the enigma of the drama through a verbal and textual production. The result is a fictional son, an imaginary, alternative form of love. In *The Play About the Baby* there are two characters that are bound in the complex process of having

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<sup>78</sup> The sunwise turn of Henden implies his “walking funeral”, his death, after the beach procession of finding the sun is over. “The custom of turning the way of the sun, or *deiseil*, when performing any important ceremony or luck-bringing rite, is very old, and has its roots in ancient sun-worship. The sun, the source of all earthly life and fertility, seems to go from east to west, and its worshippers did likewise on every ritual occasion... The dead also went to their last rest thus. When walking funerals were more usual than they are now, the coffin was often taken once or three times round the graveyard before the burial, or in some parishes, round the churchyard.” In E. and M. A. Radford, (Christina Hole, ed.) *Encyclopedia of Superstitions* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 329–330.

<sup>79</sup> Edward Albee *Finding the Sun* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1994), 39.

<sup>80</sup> Edward Albee *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

(and losing) a baby and two characters in desiring to have the baby. The Girl and the Boy seem to have a “baby-poo” which is fictionalized by the end with the mediation of the old(er) couple, Woman and Man. What seemed real is transformed into an imaginary product, “a baby, perhaps?”<sup>81</sup>

The “complex twine” that exists between and among the characters of Albee’s cast is based on the belief that has been earlier stated by Leonardo da Vinci and quoted by Nicholas Mirzoeff. This belief holds the idea that one body alone “cannot signify perfectly without outside assistance” and needs to be “complemented and supplemented with artificial techniques of the body”<sup>82</sup>. This technique has been fully implemented in the dramaturgy of Edward Albee through his characters in order to make visible its major theme, the figure of the absent/present child.

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<sup>81</sup> Edward Albee *The Play About the Baby* (Dramatists Service, New York, [1997], 2002), 27.

<sup>82</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff “Body Fragments Versus Universal Forms”. In *Bodyscape. Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 21.