A Transactional Analysis of the Plays of Edward Albee

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A TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF
THE PLAYS OF EDWARD ALBEE

by
Elizabeth Anne Hull

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I am grateful for the support of my family during the period of research and writing, particularly to my daughter Barbara, who took the trouble to learn a great deal about transactional analysis in order to communicate with her mother. I dedicate this dissertation to her. Her understanding of my thesis underscores for me the validity of the technique as a valuable literary tool.
VITA

The author, Elizabeth Anne Hull, the daughter of Frederick B. Hull and Elizabeth Schmick Hull, was born January 10, 1937, in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania.

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A TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS
OF EDWARD ALBEE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Virtually all major critics agree that Edward Albee has brought the freshest breath to the American theater air in the past two decades. Some, such as Robert Brustein, find that he wins this place only be default, since every other writer is so much inferior to even Albee's as yet unfulfilled promise. Others, such as Martin Esslin, believe that his interest springs from his daring to leap into the twentieth century man's predicament and explore existential themes similar to those preoccupying the thoughts of European philosophers and playwrights at least since the first world war. Still others, like Ruby Cohn, claim that his greatest accomplishment is not in the subject matter he treats but in the manner in which he forms his dramas, particularly his craftsmanship of dialogue. There is, surely, some validity to all these assessments.

The purpose of this analysis will be to show by applying another twentieth century concept, transactional analysis (TA),
that one of the most important reasons Albee succeeds—when he does—is that the audience can recognize in the dialogue and actions of the characters the human quality that represents, albeit sometimes in a stylized form, our peculiar American psychological and social reality: the feeling produced is, "Aha! Yes, yes, how true!" It is not surprising that this very recognition does not always induce comfort in the audience because, more often than not, Albee does not attempt to "solve" the problems confronting his twentieth century characters; in fact, for the most part, he like Beckett and Pinter, is content to portray their predicament, leaving it up to the audience to see a reflection of their own complex interpersonal lives. Talking with his longtime friend, William Flanagan, in 1966, he defends his technique:

[Flanagan]: If one can talk at all about a general reaction to your plays, it is that, as convincing and brilliant as their beginnings and middles might be, the plays tend to let down, change course or simply puzzle at the end. To one degree or another this complaint has been registered against most of them.

ALBEE: Perhaps because my sense of reality and logic is different from most people's. The answer could be as simple as that. Some things that make sense to me don't make the same degree of sense to other people. Analytically, there might be other reasons—that the plays don't hold together intellectually; that's possible. But then it mustn't be forgotten that when people don't like the way a play ends, they're likely to blame the play. That's a possibility too. For example, I don't feel that catharsis in a play necessarily takes place during the course of a play. Often it should take place afterward. If I've been accused a number of times of writing plays where the endings are ambivalent, indeed, that's
the way I find life.¹

TA is particularly suited to the plays of Edward Albee because it is a process of making sense out of seemingly chaotic and/or ambivalent behavior. In TA the process should be ongoing when the patient leaves the analyst's office. He learns to analyze the structure of his own ego and that of significant others in his personal life with the hope of controlling and changing his future behavior in such a way that he can derive the most possible legitimate pleasure from living within the parameters of his particular existence. Such insight may come directly, almost instinctively to some without the aid of a trained psychiatrist or psychologist; for others, a relatively brief explanation of TA can illuminate previously confusing and apparently unmotivated human actions.

The generally recognized father of TA is Dr. Eric Berne. Dr. John Dusay gives a condensed version of the history of this new scientific method for understanding human interactions:

Transactional analysis began with the discovery of the Child. Dr. Eric Berne, who had been involved with orthodox psychoanalysis for about fifteen years, reported a case in which he was working with a highly successful lawyer. The lawyer told him about an eight-year-old boy who was vacationing on a ranch and was dressed in his cowboy suit to help the hired man. The hired man said when they were finished, "Thanks, cowpoke!" to which his assistant replied, "I'm not really a cowpoke, I'm just a little boy."

The lawyer went on to say that when he was doing his professional work he was very much an adult. He was successful in the courtroom and in raising his family, and did much useful

community work. At certain times, however, he would say, "I'm not really a lawyer, I'm just a little boy." This was noticed by Dr. Berne during the course of treatment when the lawyer's mannerisms, gestures, and love of noise were exactly those of a small boy, the boy that he had once been. It was recognized that the little boy, the Child ego state, was very important in the troubles that he got into. This ego state, or Child, was recognized as being different from the Id. While the "unconscious" Id is a hypothetical idea, the Child is observable and can easily be consciously experienced. Observation of other cases following this verified that the observable Child was only one part of the personality, and the Parent and Adult were also seen as observable parts of the personality. The Parent, Adult, and Child ego states offer a new and realistic way of viewing the personality of any human being.

A small group of psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers who all had a common interest in group therapy began meeting regularly at Dr. Berne's office in San Francisco in the late 1950's to share their clinical experiences to better understand how people in trouble could gain control of their disturbed behavior. Thus began the "San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars," later changed to the "San Francisco Transactional Analysis Seminar" as its aims became more specific.

This "new and realistic way of viewing the personality of any human being" confirms, for the most part (and not surprisingly), the reactions of the sensitive audience and the serious critics to the plays of Edward Albee. Let us acknowledge before we proceed, once for all, that Albee's work usually does not please the mass.

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3 Ibid.
middle class audience, and in spite of the Broadway success of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Albee probably will never appeal to those who greet each new Neil Simon creation with the glee of anticipated flight from mundane and dreary reality into the world of the beautiful and witty people (and there is no denying Simon is today the undisputed master of his craft). Albee has chosen deliberately to challenge this gentle amusement which promotes complacency and escape. Very early in his career he made the following declaration of war against the established taste of the mass audience:

I would submit that it is this . . . attitude—that the theatre is a place to relax and have a good time—in conflict with the purpose of the Theatre of the Absurd—which is to make a man face up to the human condition as it really is—that has produced all the brouhaha and the dissent. I would submit that The Theatre of the Absurd, in the sense that it is truly the contemporary theatre, facing as it does man's condition as it is, is the Realistic theatre of our time; and that the supposed Realistic theatre—the term used here to mean most of what is done on Broadway—in the sense that it panders to the public need for self-congratulation and reassurance and presents a false picture of ourselves to ourselves is, with an occasional very lovely exception, really and truly The Theatre of the Absurd.

And I would submit further that the health of a nation, a society, can be determined by the art it demands. We have insisted of television and our movies that they not have anything to do with anything, that they be our never-never land; and if we demand this same function of our live theatre, what will be left of the visual-auditory arts—save the dance (in which nobody talks) and music (to which nobody listens)?

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* can be regarded as one of those "very lovely exceptions." The term audience is used in this dissertation to refer generally to the sensitive soul, the person of broad

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vicarious experience and intuitive insight.

An important aspect of TA is the insistence of the practitioners that both the professionals and laymen use simple, almost intuitively understood English terminology. They avoid the esoteric and Latinate jargon of traditional psychology and psychiatry, with its potential for labeling, finger-pointing, and categorizing, thus alienating people and rendering gutsy, hot human emotions into neat, purified, abstract, and nearly meaningless packages that encourage the average person to think that only those professionally trained elite who can command the vocabulary are capable of understanding the complexities of human interactions. Dr. Thomas A. Harris stresses the importance of this simplification:

Transactional Analysis . . . is the method of systematizing the information derived from analyzing . . . transactions in words which have the same meaning, by definition, for everyone who is using them. This language is clearly one of the most important developments of the system. Agreement on the meanings of words plus agreement on what to examine are the two keys which have unlocked the door to the "mysteries of why people do as they do." This is no small accomplishment.  

In order for one to grasp the implications of TA in viewing stage drama, there are several essential terms with which he or she should become thoroughly familiar at the start: among these are the "P-A-C" ego states and their identification through structural analysis; strokes and transactions (simple, crossed and ulterior); pastimes, games, and other ways to structure time; payoffs and trading stamps;

and life positions and life scripts. Of all of these concepts, the understanding of the P-A-C ego states is without doubt most basic.

P-A-C (Parent-Adult-Child) Ego States

Dr. Berne notes that "structural analysis, which must precede transactional analysis, is concerned with the segregation and analysis of ego states." Structural analysis reveals three distinct parts of the personality which emerge under close observation: the Parent, the Adult, and the Child.6 One of these, the Child, is altogether archaic; that is, it is formed in early youth and is for the most part unchanged after age seven. Another part, the Parent, is largely archaic also in that its basic shape is determined in early youth by contact with parents and other figures of authority and continues, with only slight modification, through old age, usually intact. In this way it is capable of preserving and transmitting the culture (in its broadest sense) from generation to generation. The third part, the Adult, is capable of lifelong growth and adaptation to circumstances of reality. This is the part of the personality which is felt in the normal adult, most often

6 Dr. Berne does satisfy his colleagues' notorious appetite for "legitimizing" their theories in Latinate terms, translating these concepts to their simple English equivalents: "While the theoretical exposition is more complex, the application of structural and transactional analysis requires an esoteric vocabulary of only six words. Exteropsyche, neopsyche, and archaeopsyche are regarded as organs, which manifest themselves phenomenologically as exteropsychic (e.g. identificatory), neopsychic (e.g. data-processing), and archaeopsychic (e.g. regressive) ego states. Colloquially, these types of ego states are referred to as Parent, Adult, and Child, respectively. These three substantives form the terminology of sturctural analysis." [Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy: A Systematic Individual and Social Psychiatry (New York: Grove Press, and London: Evergreen Books, 1961), p. 23.]
as the "real self."

It is outside the scope of this investigation to explore the scientific basis for belief in the biological existence of archaic elements of personality, which Dr. Harris summarizes in his discussion of Dr. Wilder Penfield’s experiments with direct stimulation of the brain by application of an electrode to the memory cortex of a conscious patient. This, no doubt, is better left to medical doctors to verify or refute. Harris’s conclusion is, however, important to understanding the concept of the Child and Parent ego states: "The evidence seems to indicate that everything which has been in our conscious awareness is recorded in detail and stored in the brain and is capable of being 'played back' in the present." 7

Before we proceed to examine each of these three ego states, it seems advisable to clarify that these are observable forms of ego function and really quite different from the basic psychoanalytic concepts, i.e., superego, ego and id, which they may, confusingly, at first seem to resemble. Claude Steiner notes:

The Parent, Adult, and Child differ from the superego, ego, and id because they are all manifestations of the ego. Thus, they represent visible behavior rather than hypothetical constructs. When a person is in one of the three ego states, for instance, the Child, the observer is able to see and hear the Child, while no one has ever seen the id or superego. TA focuses on the ego and on consciousness because these concepts explain and predict behavior better than the usual psychoanalytic concepts. 8

7 Harris, I'm OK--You're OK, p. 5.

The audience, too, of course, needs to predict behavior, in order to make sense of a small portion of the lives of heretofore unknown characters. TA, then, deals with observable behavior and so can prove valuable in explaining objectively what is happening on stage or page without resorting to speculation about characters' unexplained previous experiences, unless they are manifested by the actual appearance of archaic behavior. Albee's work is particularly rich in revelations of ego states, as I will show as we look at each play.

The Child ego state, perhaps the most easily distinguished, is described by Berne as "a set of feelings, attitudes and behavior patterns that are relics of the individual's own childhood." Steiner expands this definition:

> The Child ego state is essentially preserved in its entirety from childhood. When a person is functioning in this ego mode, he behaves as he did when he was a little boy or a little girl. Current thinking holds that the Child is never more than about seven years old . . . When a person is in the Child ego state, he sits, stands, walks, and speaks as he did when he was, say, three years old. This childlike behavior is accompanied by the corresponding perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of a three-year-old.

Berne further explains that the Child appears in one of two forms: adapted or natural. "The adapted Child acts under Parental influence and has modified its natural way of expression by compliance

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10 Steiner, *Games Alcoholics Play*, p. 4.
or avoidance. The natural Child is freer, more impulsive and self-indulgent. The Child is in many ways the most valuable aspect of the personality, and if it can find healthy ways of self-expression and enjoyment, it may make the greatest contribution to vitality and happiness. Berne had earlier observed:

The natural Child is manifested by autonomous forms of behavior such as rebelliousness or self-indulgence. It is differentiated from the autonomous Adult by the ascendancy of archaic mental processes and the different kind of reality-testing. It is the proper function of the "healthy" Child to motivate the data-processing and programing of the Adult so as to obtain the greatest amount of gratification for itself.

Typical demeanor of the Child is shown in "the inclination of the head which signifies coyness, or the accompanying smile which turns it into cuteness... as well as the aversion and fixed brow of sulkiness, which can be transformed into reluctant and chagrined laughter by Parental teasing." An action which may reveal the Child is "the warding off gesture, when it is pragmatically inappropriate." Harris explains the Child's behavior thus:

Since the Child's earliest responses to the external world were nonverbal, the most readily apparent Child clues are seen in physical expressions. Any of the following signal the involvement of the Child in a transaction: tears; the quivering lip; pouting; temper tantrums; the high-pitched, whining voice; rolling eyes; shrugging shoulders; downcast eyes; teasing; delight; laughter; hand-raising for permission

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12 Berne, Transactional Analysis, pp. 77-78.
13 Ibid., p. 72.
14 Ibid.
to speak; nail-biting; nose-thumbing; squirming; and giggling.\textsuperscript{15}

The actual words and phrases used by the Child are significant in aiding identification also: "Oaths, exclamations and name-calling are often manifestations of the Child."\textsuperscript{16} Steiner observes:

In the Child ego state, a person tends to use short words and expletives like "golly," "gee," and "nice," delivered in a high-pitched voice. He adopts stances characteristic of children: a downward tilt of the head, upturned eyes, feet apart or pigeon-toed. When sitting, the person may balance on the edge of the chair, fidgeting, rocking, or slouching. Jumping, clapping, laughing expansively, or crying are all part of the repertoire of the Child ego state.\textsuperscript{17}

Harris isolates still other verbal clues to help identify the Child: "Many words, in addition to baby talk, identify the Child: I wish, I want, I dunno, I gonna, I don't care, I guess, when I grow up, bigger, biggest, better, best (many superlatives originate in the Child as 'playing pieces' in the 'Mine is Better' game)."\textsuperscript{18} He also injects a note of clarification about children's common usage of the words "why, what, where, who, when and how." Although children speak these words continually once they learn to talk, they do not originate in the Child, but are a manifestation of the budding Adult which begins to form almost immediately after birth and functions as an information gathering, reality testing, probability computer.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Harris, \textit{I'm OK--You're OK}, p. 67.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Berne, \textit{Structure and Dynamics}, p. 135.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Steiner, \textit{Games Alcoholics Play}, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Harris, \textit{I'm OK--You're OK}, p. 67.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
There is, thus, an Adult aspect to the Child, but since it does not function perfectly because of lack of experience, it is ironically called the Professor. Steiner explains, "this part of the personality is thought to have an extremely accurate grasp and understanding of the major variables that enter into interpersonal relationships. This grasp is manifested in the capacity to detect the psychological, covert aspect of relationships; thus the Professor, or the Adult in the youngster, is tuned into and is able to detect the real meaning of transactions and is therefore able to understand that which the Adult misses." Thus the Child is able to translate what people "really mean" and act accordingly, even though it seems contrary to parental or societal demands. Berne calls this intuitive language "Martian," because it seems so alien to an Adult interpreter.

In addition to the words themselves, the quality and tone of voice itself can be diagnostic of ego states. Berne observes:

It is quite common for people to have two voices, each with a different intonation, although in many situations one or the other may be suppressed for very long periods. For example, one who presents herself in a therapy group as "little old me" may not reveal for many months the hidden voice of Parental wrath (perhaps that of an alcoholic mother); or it may require intense group stress before the voice of the "judicious workman" collapses, to be replaced by that of his frightened Child. Meanwhile, intimate friends and relations may be fully aware of both intonations. Nor is it exceedingly rare to meet people who have three different intonations: under favorable circumstances one may literally encounter the voice of the Parent,

20 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 20.

the voice of the Adult and the voice of the Child all coming from the same individual. When the voice changes, it is usually not difficult to detect other evidences of the change in ego state. One of the most dramatic illustrations is when "little old me" is suddenly replaced by the facsimile of her infuriated mother or grandmother.22

As charming as the Child can be, there are strong sanctions from society about letting the Child rule, as Steiner suggests:

The Child ego state tends to be fleeting in grownups because of a general societal injunction against "childish behavior." However, Child ego states can be observed in situations which are structured to permit childlike behavior, such as sports events, parties, and church revivals. A good place to view the Child ego state in grownups is at a football game. Here, childlike expressions of joy, anger, rage, and delight can be observed, and it is easy to see how aside from bone size and secondary sexual characteristics, a man jumping for joy when his team scores is indistinguishable from a five-year-old boy. The similarity goes further than the observable behavior since the man is not only acting as a boy, but feeling, seeing, and thinking as a boy.

When we examine the aria scene from A Delicate Balance, we will be able to observe Tobias shifting rapidly among his three ego states.

Like the Child the Parent is also relatively readily identifiable to the trained observer:

A Parental ego state is a set of feelings, attitudes and behavior patterns that resemble those of a parental figure. The diagnosis is usually made first by observation of demeanor, gestures, voice, vocabulary and other characteristics. This is the behavioral diagnosis. It is supported if the particular set of patterns is especially apt to be aroused by childlike behavior on the part of someone else in the group. . . . The Parent usually shows in one of two forms: prejudiced or nurturing. The prejudiced Parent has a dogmatic and disapproving attitude. If the prejudices happen to be the same as those of other people in the group, they may be accepted as

22 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 135.
23 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 4.
rational, or at least justifiable, without adequate examination. The nurturing Parent is often shown in "supporting" and sympathizing with another individual.²⁴

This Parental ego state is first formed in early childhood, but it does have some ability to be modified. Steiner explains that the Parent displays behavior copied from actual parents or other authority figures which is perceived at an early age, accepted whole, without modification, "a play-back of a video tape recording of his parent or whoever was or is in loco parentis."²⁵ Therefore, the Parent is basically nonperceptive and noncognitive; it does provide a basis for decisions when adequate information is inaccessible for an Adult decision, and sometimes even when adequate Adult information is available it may continue to operate in some people. But the Parent is capable of some growth in most individuals, as life experiences influence its development:

In general, the Parent ego state seems to change throughout life, from adolescence to old age, as the person encounters new situations that demand parental behavior, and as the person finds authority figures from whom examples for such behavior are adopted.²⁶

Berne also acknowledges the importance of this ego state: "The value of the Parent is that it saves energy and lessens anxiety by making certain decisions 'automatic' and not to be questioned."²⁷

²⁴ Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 136.
²⁵ Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 6.
²⁶ Ibid.
²⁷ Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 137.
There are many ways to identify the Parent. In demeanor, "the sternly paternal uprightness, sometimes with extended finger, and the gracious mothering flexion of the neck soon become familiar as Parental attitudes."\textsuperscript{28} Also, "the Parental origin of forbidding and refusing gestures is often obvious . . ."\textsuperscript{29} Additional physical clues include: "Furrowed brow, pursed lips, the pointing index finger, head-wagging, the 'horrified look,' foot-tapping, hands on hips, arms folded across chest, wringing hands, tongue-clucking, sighing, patting on the head . . ."\textsuperscript{30}

There are many verbal clues, both in vocabulary and tone of voice that make it clear when the Parent is in the executive. Harris lists the phrases and individual words that often may "tip off" the observer that he is watching the Parent:

I am going to put a stop to this once and for all; I can't for the life of me . . .; Now always remember . . . ("Always" and "never" are almost always Parent words, which reveal the limitations of an archaic system closed to new data); How many times have I told you?; If I were you . . .

Many evaluative words, whether critical or supportive, may identify the Parent inasmuch as they make a judgment about another, based not on Adult evaluation but on automatic, archaic responses. Examples of these kinds of words are: stupid, naughty, ridiculous, disgusting, shocking, asinine, lazy, nonsense, absurd, poor thing, Poor dear, no! no!, sonny, honey (as from a solicitous saleslady), How dare you?, cute, there there, Now what?, Not again!. It is important to keep in mind that these words are clues, and are not conclusive. The

\textsuperscript{28} Berne, Transactional Analysis, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{29} Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{30} Harris, I'm OK--You're OK, pp. 65–66.
Adult may decide after serious deliberation that, on the basis of an Adult ethical system, certain things are stupid, ridiculous, disgusting, and shocking. Two words, "should" and "ought," frequently are giveaways to the Parent state, but "should" and "ought" can also be Adult words. It is the automatic, archaic, unthinking use of these words which signals the activation of the Parent. The use of these words, together with body gestures and the context of the transaction, help us identify the Parent.

Surely anyone perceptive, even without formal knowledge of ego states, would be able to recognize from this brief description the Parent in control of Albee's Mao in Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung.

It is also important to distinguish the Parental ego state from the Parental influence. When the Parental ego state is in control, an individual sounds like his mother or father talking and looks like one of the parents acting. When he is responding to Parental influence, however, it is really the Child in the executive who behaves in the way he believes his parents would have approved. Steiner distinguishes the Child who responds to the Parental influence, the Adapted Child (colloquially the frog or duckling), from the Natural Child (the Prince or Princess). This Adapted Child results from being overly influenced by the Child ego state (the "crazy Child") of the mother and/or father (also colloquially known as the "Witch" or "Ogre"), who is basically incapable of performing the necessary functions of a father or mother:

31 Harris, I'm OK--You're OK, p. 66.

32 Berne, Transactional Analysis, p. 76; and Structure and Dynamics, pp. 136-137.
The child in a normal household is essentially nurtured, protected, and raised by the Parent ego state of his parents, with their Adult and Child paying lesser roles. These lesser roles, however, are not unimportant, since the Adult in the parent teaches the offspring the rules of logic, and the Child ego state of the parents plays an extremely important part in exciting and encouraging the Natural Child in the offspring. Nevertheless, the Parent ego state of the parents is the one that carries the burden of child-rearing and neither the Child nor the Adult is allowed to take full command in such normal situations.33

The Adult is, without doubt, the most difficult to identify of the three ego states. Berne characterizes it negatively as "the residual state left after the segregation of all detectable Parent and Child elements."34 His positive description is less specific and requires a certain amount of judgment and knowledge on the observer's part:

The Adult ego state is an independent set of feelings, attitudes and behavior patterns that are adapted to the current reality and are not affected by Parental prejudices or archaic attitudes left over from childhood. In each individual case, due allowances must be made for past learning opportunities. The Adult of a very young person or of a peasant may make very different judgments from that of a professionally trained worker. The question is not the accuracy of the judgments, nor their acceptability to the other members (which depends on their Parental prejudices) but on the quality of the thinking and the use made of the resources available to that particular person. The Adult is the ego state which makes survival possible.35

Steiner describes the Adult as a highly sensitive and efficient computer, capable of mechanically gathering and processing data in order to make predictions for the individual:

33 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, pp. 27-28, 39.
34 Berne, Transactional Analysis, p. 76.
35 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 137.
The Adult gathers data about the world through the senses, processes them according to a logical program, and makes predictions when necessary. Its perception is diagrammatic. While the Child perceives in color, in space, and from one point of view at a time, the Adult may perceive in black and white, often in two dimensions, and from several points of view at the same time. In the Adult ego state, a person is isolated from his own affective and other internal processes, a condition indispensable for the proper observation and prediction of reality. Thus, in the Adult ego state the person "has no feelings," even though he may be able to appraise his Child or Parent feelings. Often the rational Parent ego state is confused with the Adult ego state. However, the Adult is not only rational but is also without emotion.36

As with the Parent and the Child, close observation reveals the Adult: "thoughtful concentration, often with pursed lips or slightly flared nostrils, are typically Adult."37 Although finger pointing usually comes from the exhorting Parent or even the plaintively accusing Child, "certain kinds of pointing with the index finger come from the Adult: a professional man talking to a colleague or client, a foreman instructing a workman, or a teacher assisting a pupil."38 Harris answers his own question: "What does the Adult look like?"

If we turn off the video on the Parent and Child tapes, what will come through on the face? Will it be blank? Benign? Dull? Insipid? . . . the blank face does not mean an Adult face. . . . listening with the Adult is identified by continual movement—of the face, the eyes, the body—with an eyelblink every three to five seconds. Nonmovement signifies nonlistening. The Adult face is straightforward, . . . If the head is tilted, the person is listening with an angle in mind. The Adult also allows the curious, excited Child to show its face.39

36 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 5.
37 Berne, Transactional Analysis, p. 72.
38 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 134.
39 Harris, I'm OK—You're OK, p. 67.
The Adult also has his own special vocabulary, beginning with the basic words listed before in the discussion of the Child: "why, what, where, so and how." Harris adds:

Other Adult words are: how much, in what way, comparative, true, false, probable, possible, unknown, objective, I think, I see, it is my opinion, etc. These words all indicate Adult data processing. In the phrase "it is my opinion," the opinion may be derived from the Parent, but the statement is Adult in that it is identified as an opinion and not as fact.

Berne further clarifies the classification of vocabulary for the three ego states and explains how a common adjective may be used by each:

Substantives and verbs are intrinsically Adult, since they refer without prejudice, distortion, or exaggeration to objective reality, but they may be employed for their own purposes by Parent or Child. Diagnosis of the word "good" is a simple and gratifying exercise in intuition. With an implicit capital G it is Parental. When its application is realistically defensible, it is Adult. When it denotes instinctual gratification, and is essentially an exclamation, it comes from the Child, being then an educated synonym for something like "Nyum nyum!" or "Mmmm!" It is an especially common indicator of contamination and of unexpressed Parental prejudices which are rationalized as Adult. That is, the word is said as though it had a small g, but confrontation may reveal that phenomenologically it has a capital G. The speaker may become angry, defensive, or anxious at the confrontation, or the evidence he marshals for his opinion is at best flimsy and prejudiced.

Steiner cautions against the same difficulty in hasty diagnosis of ego states by listening only to the words:

It is somewhat difficult to diagnose ego states because people tend to masquerade their Child and Parent as Adult ego states. Opinionated and judgmental attitudes are often couched

40 Ibid., pp. 67-68.
41 Berne, Transactional Analysis, pp. 73-74.
in rational language. The Parent, masquerading as an Adult, may express very logical points of view, but the Parental nature is revealed by the emphasis or the unspoken but clear attempt to impose the points of view on others. From his Adult ego state, a husband may ask his wife, "Why isn't dinner ready?" From his Parent masquerading as an Adult, he may ask the identical question. The difference, however, is that in the former case, the husband is simply asking a question, while in the latter he is attempting to pressure and blame the wife for being lazy and disorganized.

Albee aids his reader by frequent use of stage directions to indicate attitudes of the characters which may be at variance with the seemingly Adult content of their lines. And interestingly in this connection, so far (with the exceptions of Roger, Richard and Jenny's son in Everything in the Garden, and the eponymous role of Malcolm, neither of whom are very young children anyway and both of whom are legacies from their authors, Giles Cooper and James Purdy), Albee has chosen to portray only grownups—usually people clearly into middle age or even beyond. The people in the position of children to other characters are themselves seldom under thirty. Thus they should all, theoretically, be able to deal with one another on an Adult to Adult basis. Naturally, we are interested when they fail to do so.

Before leaving the definition and identification of the P-A-C ego states, we might note and try to resolve an interesting apparent conflict between two of the most respected authorities on TA (Harris and Steiner) regarding the subject of creativity. Steiner cautions that "the value of the Child should not be underestimated. It is said to be the best part of a person and the only part that can

42 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 7.
really enjoy itself. It is the source of spontaneity, creative change, and is the mainspring of joy."\textsuperscript{43} Harris, on the other hand, tells us that the Adult is "the place where the action is, where hope resides, and where change is possible," and that "only the Adult has creative power."\textsuperscript{44} This paradox is not easily resolved, although it is possible that both ego states may be vital for creative change. Steiner explains how ego states function:

Ego states operate one at a time, that is, a person is always in one and only one of the three ego states. This ego state is called the executive, or is said to have executive power. While one ego state has the executive power, the person may be aware of literally standing beside himself, observing his own behavior. The feeling that the "self" is not the ego state in the executive usually occurs when the Child or Parent has executive power, while the "real self," perhaps the Adult, observes without being able to behave. Thus, while only one ego state is cathected, that is, imbued with the energy necessary to activate muscular complexes involved in behavior, it is possible for another ego state to be sufficiently cathected to become conscious to the person, even though it is unable to activate the musculature.\textsuperscript{45}

Thus, the needs of the Child may be the impetus for the Adult to seek new information and new ways of ordering old data for the gratification of the whole ego. This ability of the Adult to watch the Child and come to a decision to begin acting differently from previous behavior is especially important to understand, because it accounts for the ambiguity of Albee's endings. In the ending of \textit{Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?}, for example, George and Martha

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Steiner, \textit{Games Alcoholics Play}, p. 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Harris, \textit{I'm OK--You're OK}, p. 64.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Steiner, \textit{Games Alcoholics Play}, p. 6.
\end{itemize}
seem to be speaking to one another intimately, Child to Child. Short words, simple sentences, singing the game song again, all indicate that both characters are in their Child ego states. Only the possibility that their Adults are watching, listening, learning can offer hope that they may begin to abandon their old games and create a new relationship.

Ambiguity is increased because, not only may things continue as they are or change for the better, there is also a possibility that things will get worse, in the sense that the Child may recognize the need for change, but be forced to suppress his desires to those of a demanding and unreasonable Parent. Steiner uses a common social situation to illustrate the way the listening and watching Parent may inhibit the actions of the Child:

Since a person can operate in one ego state while another state observes, internal dialogues between these ego states become possible. For example, after a few drinks at a party, a man may be swept by the music into an expansive, childlike dance. His Child is now in the executive while the Parent observes his gyrations and mutters something like, "You're making a fool of yourself, Charlie," or "This is all very well, but what about your slipped disk?" Often this comment by the nonexecutive ego state decathects the Child and transfers the executive to the Parent, in which case Charlie will stop dancing, perhaps blush, and retire to his seat where the situation will be reversed and Charlie, now in the Parent ego state, will look disapprovingly at the other dancers.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 6-7.}

Harris explains why he is nevertheless optimistic about mankind's possibility of changing for the better when he answers his own question: "Does Man Have a Free Will?"
Can man really change if he wants to, and if he can, is even his changing a product of past conditioning? Does man have a will? One of the most difficult problems of the Freudian position is the problem of determinism versus freedom. Freud and most behaviorists, have held that the cause-and-effect phenomenon seen in all the universe also holds true for human beings, that whatever happens today can theoretically be understood in terms of what has happened in the past. If a man today murders another man, we are accustomed by Freudian orientation to look into his past to find out why. The assumption is that there must be a cause or causes, and that the cause or causes lie somewhere in the past. The pure determinist holds that man's behavior is not free and is only a product of his past. The inevitable conclusion is that man is not responsible for what he does; that, in fact, he does not have a free will. The philosophical conflict is seen most dramatically in the courts. The judicial position is that man is responsible. The deterministic position, which underlies much psychiatric testimony, is that man is not responsible by virtue of the events of his past.

We cannot deny the reality of cause and effect. If we hit a billiard ball and it strikes several more, which then are impelled to strike other billiard balls in turn, we must accept the demonstration of the chain sequence of cause and effect. The monistic principle holds that laws of the same kind operate in all nature. Yet history demonstrates that while billiard balls have become nothing more than what they are as they are caught in the cause-and-effect drama, human beings have become more than what they were. The evidence of evolution--and of personal experience--convinces us that man has become more than his antecedents.

An understanding of TA may, therefore, help provide the audience of an Albee play with a certain moral satisfaction which otherwise be lacking. For surely, even if his characters do not usually show immediate change, they can still provide insight into patterns of human behavior, information that the data-processing Adult in the audience may use to create better ways of coping with universal problems.

47 Harris, I'm OK--You're OK, pp. 61-62.
Strokes and Transactions (simple, crossed and ulterior)

The basic unit of social transactions between human beings is colloquially called a stroke. This stroke is symbolic of the physical attention necessary for survival of the human infant and goes beyond the mere perfunctory handling required to take care of food, shelter, and cleanliness, to encompass the idea of human contact summarized in the concept of "mothering." For adults, the stroke most usually takes the form of some verbal recognition of another person's proximity. D. Kupfer explains the value of stroking in maintaining mental health and cautions that all strokes are not the same:

There is some evidence that the value of a simple "stroke" can vary with circumstances. If we assign a value of 5 to the simplest stroke, "Hello," then "Hello, Joe," may have a value of 10. But "Hello, Joe," coming from a "celebrity" may have a value of 100.48

Steiner points out that "'Go to hell!' is as much a stroke as 'Hi' and people will settle for the former form when they cannot obtain the latter."49 We all take for granted most of the common types of recognition strokes unless they are denied when we expect them. Greeting strokes, impersonal strokes, and terminal strokes (saying hello, carrying on business in an efficient way, and saying goodbye) are a part of our everyday lives. We anticipate stroking in many cases because we've been conditioned to expect it, and if we pass someone we know without our greeting being returned, we usually feel


49 Games Alcoholics Play, p. 12.
hurt at not being recognized, at being "cut dead."\(^{50}\)

Each stroke may initiate a chain, called a transaction. The first stroke is then called a transactional stimulus, and it usually will elicit a transactional response; the response in turn becomes a new stimulus and so on. Berne claims:

> It can be demonstrated that once a chain is initiated, the resulting sequence is highly predictable if the characteristics of the Parent, Adult, and Child of each of the parties concerned is known. In certain cases, . . . the converse is also possible: given the initial transactional stimulus and the initial transactional response, not only the ensuing sequence, but also some of the characteristics of the Parent, Adult, and Child of each of the parties concerned can be deduced with a considerable degree of confidence.\(^{51}\)

This is exactly what the audience is inclined to do: from an initial stimulus and response, viewed in the first moments of a play, the audience deduces just what kind of characters will be portrayed. And, of course, the audience feels it is the obligation of the playwright to make these characters consistent without being flat, and individually memorable without being altogether grotesque. Albee at his best succeeds in creating some well-balanced, believable, satisfying characters, such as Jerry and Peter in *The Zoo Story*, Martha and George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and Agnes, Tobias, and Claire in *A Delicate Balance*. When he fails in characterization in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* and *Malcolm*, we can perhaps blame the failure on the inherited characterizations of McCullers' grotesques and Purdy's puzzling adolescent. His deficiency in the eponymous role of *Tiny*.

\(^{50}\) Berne, *Structure and Dynamics*, p. 147.

Alice (and the minor roles in that play as well for the most part), is apparently directly related to the totally unrealistic, purely fantastic donee Albee has chosen to shape his melodrama. The very audience that can appreciate Albee's usually uncanny ability to represent realistic transactions between "whole personalities" is probably the most offended by his abdication of the playwright's "responsibility" in this play.

We need to understand three kinds of transactions: complementary (or simple), crossed, and ulterior. A single transaction consists of just a stimulus and a response between two people; in simple transactions each person operates in only one ego state and each person may be in any of his three ego states. Transactions will usually continue smoothly so long as the stimulus and response are parallel (Adult-Adult, Parent-Parent, or Child-Child) or complementary (Parent-Child and Child-Parent, Adult-Child and Child-Adult, or Parent-Adult and Adult-Parent). In other words, "in any series of transactions communication proceeds if the response to a previous stimulus is addressed to the ego state that was the source of the stimulus and is emitted from the ego state to which that source addressed itself. Any other response creates a crossed transaction and interrupts communication ..."52 In complementary transactions, "the response is appropriate and expected and follows the natural order of healthy human relationships"53; and, at least theoretically, "as long as transactions are complementary, communication can, in

52 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 9.

principle, proceed indefinitely. . . . As long as the transactions are complementary, it is irrelevant . . . whether two people are engaging in critical gossip (Parent-Parent), solving a problem (Adult-Adult), or playing together (Child-Child or Parent-Child)." 54 On the other hand, Steiner points out, "Crossed transactions not only account for the interruption of communication but also are an essential part of games." 55

Berne illustrates the way transactions commonly cross:

The stimulus is Adult-Adult: e.g., . . . "Do you know where my cuff links are?" The appropriate Adult-Adult response . . . would be "On the desk." If the respondent flares up, however, the response will be something like . . . "You always blame me for everything." This is a Child-Parent response, and the vectors cross. In such cases the Adult problem about . . . cuff links must be suspended until the vectors can be realigned. This may take anywhere from several months . . . to a few seconds . . . Either the agent must become Parental as a complement to the respondent's suddenly activated Child, or the respondent's Adult must be reactivated as a complement to the agent's Adult. 56

It is also possible that a stimulus from an Adult directed to an Adult may become crossed when the response is Parent to Child: "In everyday life, 'Do you know where my cuff links are?' may elicit: 'Why don't you keep track of your own things? You're not a child anymore.'" 57 The "cure" again calls for realignment of complementary ego states.

Ulterior transactions, unlike simple transactions, involve

54 Ibid., p. 30
55 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 9.
56 Berne, Games People Play, pp. 30-31.
57 Ibid., p. 32.
more than two ego states. Berne describes the advantages to salesmen of angular transactions, those which are initiated by a stimulus aimed at more than one ego state:

Salesman: "This one is better, but you can't afford it."

Housewife: "That's the one I'll take."

... The Salesman, as Adult, states two objective facts: "This one is better" and "You can't afford it." At the ostensible, or social, level these are directed to the Adult of the housewife, whose Adult reply would be: "You are correct on both counts." However, the ulterior, or psychological, vector is directed by the well-trained and experienced Adult of the salesman to the housewife's Child. The correctness of his judgment is demonstrated by the Child's reply, which says in effect: "Regardless of the financial consequences, I'll show that arrogant fellow I'm as good as any of his customers." At both levels the transaction is complementary, since her reply is accepted at face value as an Adult purchasing contract. 58

Even more complex are the ulterior transactions possible when both parties are aiming their remarks to more than one ego state. This is called a duplex ulterior transaction; it commonly takes the form of a flirtation game and involves four ego states:

Cowboy: "Come and see the barn."

Visitor: "I've loved barns ever since I was a little girl."

Berne explains that "at the social level this is an Adult conversation about barns, and at the psychological level it is a Child conversation about sex play. On the surface the Adult seems to have the initiative, but as in most games, the outcome is determined by the Child, and the participants may be in for a surprise." 59

58 Ibid., p. 33. 59 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
Story is comprised of many duplex transactions and ends in just such a surprise, as Peter is left to evaluate his own culpability in Jerry's death.

Stroking and transactions are necessary for human life not only on the physical level, then, but also on the psychological level. Berne explains, "... the presence of other human beings offers many opportunities for gratification, and everyone intuitively or deliberately acquires a high proficiency in getting as many satisfactions as possible from the people in the groups to which he belongs ..." 60

Pastimes, Games, and Other Ways to Structure Time

When people spend considerable time together, their transactions will begin to fall into one or more of several patterns. Six possibilities for conduct in a group of at least two people are listed here, roughly in the order of complexity of engagement and the seriousness of commitment: withdrawal, ritual, activity, pastimes, games, and intimacy. 61 Withdrawal occurs when an individual is present physically only; mentally he is engaging in fantasies, either related or unrelated to what is going on around him. 62 Withdrawal occurs only occasionally in Albee's plays. One notable example is the Daughter in All Over, who from time to time gives up trying to fight her losing battle against the others and either covers her eyes and turns her back or totally leaves the room in desperation.

60 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 159.
61 Ibid., p. 148. 62 Ibid., p. 146.
Withdrawal also apparently occurs in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, but it seems very unnatural and artificial, for it does not arise out of the situation since the characters do not transact any business with one another.

Rituals are transactions which take the form of predictable behavior, and the stimuli and responses are dictated more or less formally by the local culture. Arrivals and departures are customarily accompanied by rituals appropriate to the individuals, the relationship between them, and the circumstance of meeting.

The kind of transactions next in complexity are activities, usually called "work." In its purest form it consists of "simple, complementary, Adult transactions." Rituals and activities are even less important than withdrawal for Albee's plays--Albee usually spends as little time as conceivable on rituals, preferring to plunge into the middle of the action and dribble the exposition as necessary; and he manages almost totally to avoid depicting activities, even in *The Death of Bessie Smith*, most of which takes place in a hospital, though no lives are saved there. On the other hand, pastimes,

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63 Ibid., pp. 146-147. 64 Ibid., p. 147.

65 Claude Steiner has noted one playwright who points up the usefulness of activity by denying his characters the opportunity to do any: "The existentialists are aware of the counterphobic nature of 'activity.' Sartre, in his play *No Exit* illustrates how three human beings, deprived of any possibility of engaging in useful activities, or of escaping from each other, quickly become involved in painful, internally programmed, transactional behavior." ['"No Exit Revisited," Transactional Analysis Bulletin, I, iv (Oct. 1962), 36.']
games, and intimacy are extremely important in Albee's plays.

Pastimes are superficial and usually innocent ways of satisfying our structure hunger and stimulus hunger simultaneously: "Pastimes consist of a semi-ritualistic series of complementary transactions, usually of an agreeable nature and sometimes instructive." Arthur Wagner, who used TA in coaching actors at Tulane, noted that in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, nearly all the transactions are pastimes; in fact, Vladimir notes with satisfaction in both Act I and Act II after Pozzo and Lucky exit, "That passed the time." Berne calls *Godot* a "very fine example of a play which deals with real-life problems. Most people spend their lives waiting for death or Santa Claus and their problem is 'How do we structure time?'* Godot, who should be fulfilling the leadership role, is absent, thus making the structure hunger of Vladimir and Estragon all the more difficult to satisfy, because the leader should act as principle time-structurer. Berne explains why pastimes are a psychological necessity:


69 Berne, *Structure and Dynamics*, p. 158. Berne notes that this time structuring service is a major factor responsible for awakening the followers' grateful devotion and gives a full explanation of the leader's role. Eugene Ionesco's *The Leader* is a vivid portrayal of the principles Berne discusses.
human beings find it difficult to face an interval of time which is not allotted to a specific program: an empty period without some sort of structure, especially a long one. This "structure hunger" accounts for the inability of most people simply to sit still and do nothing for any length of time.

Only a relatively small proportion of people are able to structure their time independently. As a class, the most highly paid people in our society are the ones who can offer an entertaining time structure for those whose inner resources are not equal to the task.

For Albee, pastimes are most commonly a means, rather than an end in themselves. He uses them in those few of his plays in which the characters are not members of a family group who could, of course, be ready from the outset of the action of the play to begin showing off their habitual family favorite games. Berne explains:

The social value of pastimes is that they offer a harmless way for people to feel each other out. They provide a preliminary period of noncommittal observation during which the players can line each other up before the games begin. Many people are grateful for such a trial period, because once he is committed to a game, the individual must take the consequences.

If the opening lines of The Zoo Story are viewed as a pastime, it becomes plausible that Peter would not be disturbed enough to get up and walk away; on the contrary, for Jerry promises tacitly to help him (and he's a very ordinary man) "wait for Santa Claus" and pass the time. Likewise, in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Martha and George promise to entertain Nick and Honey, and--if Berne is correct about the value of leaders in structuring time--the younger

70 Ibid.  
71 Ibid., p. 151.
couple's passivity is much less atypical than some critics would like to believe. 72

Let us bypass a discussion of games for the moment to talk about intimacy, the most rewarding kind of interaction we can know. Harris tells us:

... the truly troubled people of history have been those who have refused to resign themselves to the inevitability of apartness and who have been driven on by a tormenting desire for unity. The central dynamic of philosophy has been the impulse to connect. The hope has always been there, but it has not overcome the intrinsic fear of being close, of losing oneself in another, of partaking in ... intimacy. 73

He explains: "Intimacy is made possible in a situation where the absence of fear makes possible the fullness of perception, where beauty can be seen apart from utility, where possessiveness is made unnecessary by the reality of possession." 74

In a somewhat more technical explanation, Berne reveals some of the negative aspects of intimacy and describes its different forms:

Intimacy is threatening for various reasons, partly because it requires independent structuring and personal responsibility. . .

. . . a striving for intimacy underlies the most intense and important operations. . . This striving, which gives rise to active individual proclivities, may be called the individual anacasm, the inner necessity that drives each man throughout his life to his own special destiny.

72 One critic who finds these two plays of Albee unbelievable is Tom Driver (see "What's the Matter with Edward Albee?" in American Drama and Its Critics, ed. by Alan S. Downer Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965 , pp. 240-244).

73 Harris, I'm OK--You're OK, p. 124.

74 Ibid.
There are individual differences in the meaning of intimacy: to most it means a loving sexual union, to some a one-sided penetration into the being of another through torture; it may involve self-glorification or self-abasement. There are differences in the kind of stroking received or given. Most want a partner of the opposite sex, some want one of the same sex, in love or in torment. All of these elements are influenced by the individual's past experiences in dealing with or being dealt with by other human beings. From the very day of birth, each person is subjected to a different kind of handling: rough and harsh or soft and gentle or any combination or variation of these may signify to him the nature of intimacy.73

Although intimacy usually involves only two people, "under special conditions, as in family life, more than two people may be engaged."76 Harris explains why intimacy is so satisfying:

It is a relationship in which the Adult in both persons is in charge and allows for the emergence of the Natural Child. In this regard the Child may be thought of as having two natures: the Natural Child (creative, spontaneous, curious, aware, free of fear) and the Adaptive Child (adapted to the original civilizing demands of the Parent). The emancipation of the Adult can enable the Natural Child to emerge once more. The Adult can identify the demands of the Parent for what they are--archaic--and give permission to the Natural Child to emerge again, unafraid of the early civilizing process, which turned off not only his aggressive antisocial behavior but his joy and creativity as well.77

Obviously, the opportunities for intimacy are limited and chances of observing intimacy are even smaller. Some forms of intense intimacy are simply psychologically impossible for most people. Therefore, "the bulk of the time in serious social life is taken up with playing games. Hence games are both necessary and desirable, and the only problem at issue is whether the games played

75 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, pp. 159-160.
76 Ibid., p. 148.
77 Harris, I'm OK--You're OK, p. 124.
by an individual offer the best yield for him."  

How do games fit in between pastimes and intimacy? Steiner describes the nature and purpose of games in this way:

A game is a behavioral sequence which 1) is an orderly series of transactions with a beginning and an end; 2) contains an ulterior motive, that is, a psychological level different from the social level; and 3) results in a payoff for both players.

The motivation for playing games comes from their payoff... to understand why people transact with each other at all, some driving force has to be postulated and this explanation is found in the motivational concepts of stimulus hunger, structure hunger, and position hunger. Games provide satisfaction for all three of these hungers and this satisfaction is referred to as the advantage, or payoff, of the game.

We have already discussed stimulus hunger and stroking, as well as structure hunger and five of the six ways of structuring time; we will discuss position hunger after we examine the nature of games more thoroughly. The key idea in the above passage is the ulterior basis for games, resulting from "attempts of various people to manipulate each other in a subtle way in order to produce certain desired responses." Berne clarifies this definition:

... a game is an ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions progressing to a well-defined, predictable outcome. Descriptively it is a recurring set of transactions, often repetitious, superficially plausible, with a concealed motivation; or, more colloquially, a series of moves with a snare, or "gimmick."

78 Berne, Games People Play, p. 61.
79 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 61.
80 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 148.
81 Berne, Games People Play, p. 48.
Berne has noted that the descriptions of games may bring to mind the English humorists, but "They form the stuff out of which many lives are made and many personal and national destinies are decided." They also form the stuff out of which Albee creates the bulk of his dramas.

Let us clarify the term "playing games" at this point. As the recently successful Sleuth by Anthony Shaffer shows so well, "playing" is not equal to "kidding," and may result in serious, even fatal consequences. Genuine and intense emotions usually accompany most play: "The essential point of social play in humans is not that the emotions are spurious, but that they are regulated." And they are also, therefore, predictable. Regulation means that true words may be spoken in jest, but the speaker cannot be held socially responsible for an insult providing he follows the rule of smiling as he says them. We will again notice how important smiling is when we look

82 For a delightful pastime, see the indomitable series by Stephen Potter, published over the past twenty years or so. Among the most fascinating of these books (which really defy categorization as fiction or non-fiction) are: Anti-Woo: The Lifeman's Improved Primer for Non-Lovers (London: Heinemann, 1965); Lifesmanship (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951); One-Upmanship: Being Some Account of the Activities and Teaching of the Lifemanship Correspondence College of One-Upness and Gameslifemastery (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1952); Sense of Humour (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1954); Supermanship, or How to Continue to Stay on Top without Actually Falling Apart (New York: Random House, 1959); and The Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship: or the Art of Winning Games without Actually Cheating (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, n.d.).

83 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 156.

84 Berne, Transactional Analysis, p. 88.

85 Ibid.
at life positions a little later.

Aside from the emotional risk of intimacy due to its not depending on rules as games do, there are obviously many societal (Parental) injunctions against achieving intimacy with more than one person, i.e., the individual's legally sanctioned spouse. Though we all crave attention, Steiner points out that "certain persons are unable to accept overt direct recognition, requiring more disguised forms instead. Such an example is the woman who rejects all admiration of her looks, interpreting them as sexual advances, but who accepts compliments about her sewing ability. People who cannot obtain or accept direct recognition for one reason or another will tend to obtain it by playing games which are a rich source of strokes." 86

If women are more prone, perhaps, to resort to this kind of game-playing than men, it seems fair to note that the pressures on them to avoid intimacy are greater than those men endure under our society's double standard. Both men and women, however, suffer some inhibition. Games often arise out of the necessity, then to structure time while obtaining the most deeply satisfying strokes possible, considering Parental taboos: "Thus a game is a carefully balanced procedure to procure strokes that are safe from Parental criticism." 87

Just how do games work? Any number two or over can play, but players seldom exceed five. The currency of the game is most usually words, but real money and parts of the body may be played with under

86 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 12.
87 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
special circumstances. Games may vary in flexibility, tenacity, and intensity, but once begun, like Monopoly on a winter's eve, they tend to be self-perpetuating. Games may be distinguished by stages also:

a. A First-Degree Game is one which is socially acceptable in the agent's circle.

b. A Second-Degree Game is one from which no permanent, irremediable damage arises, but which the players would rather conceal from the public.

c. A Third-Degree Game is one which is played for keeps, and which ends in the surgery, the courtroom, or the morgue.

Thus, although games may turn out painfully, there is a certain security they offer. Since the outcome of certain moves is guaranteed, the players learn to handle the customary pain. Harris has noted Albee's masterful understanding of the advantages of game-playing:

One of the most brilliant exposes of a game existence is written by Edward Albee in . . . Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? This play illustrates that despite all the desperation produced, there still are enough secondary benefits that the games, in a sense, hold the marriage together. Some marriages are held together by virtue of one "sick" partner. If that partner begins to get well and begins to refuse to get involved in the old games, the marriage begins to fall apart.

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88 Berne, *Games People Play*, p. 63.
91 Harris, *I'm OK--You're OK*, p. 60.
92 *Ibid.*, p. 137. Berne has also noted the importance of games in serious drama. He says, "One impressive thing about Shakespeare is that he can get several games going at once. Take the beginning of Lear: the king is involved in a game with his daughters, the daughters are playing another game among themselves, the dukes are playing a game among themselves and with the king. Within a few sentences all these games are established and in motion; the audience is drawn in very swiftly and deeply" (Berne, "Notes on Games and Theatre," p. 90).
Berne warns that games may be confused with straightforward operations, which properly belong to the realm of intimacy. Such an operation as asking for reassurance and receiving it directly does not constitute a game: "This only becomes a game if the individual presents himself as doing something else, but is really asking for reassurance, or asks for reassurance and then rejects it in order to make the other person feel uncomfortable in some way." 93

Analysis of individual games will be explained as appropriate when we examine the plays. For the moment, however, we can consider the most common game played between spouses, colloquially called "If It Weren't For You," which illustrates the characteristics of games in general:

Mrs. White complained that her husband severely restricted her social activities, so that she had never learned to dance. Due to changes in her attitude brought about by psychiatric treatment, her husband became less sure of himself and more indulgent. Mrs. White was then free to enlarge the scope of her activities. She signed up for dancing classes, and then discovered to her despair that she had a morbid fear of dance floors and had to abandon this project.

This unfortunate adventure, along with similar ones, laid bare some important aspects of the structure of her marriage. Out of her many suitors she had picked a domineering man for a husband. She was then in a position to complain that she could do all sorts of things "if it weren't for you." Many of her women friends also had domineering husbands, and when they met for their morning coffee, they spent a good deal of time playing "If It Weren't For Him."

As it turned out, however, contrary to her complaints, her husband was performing a very real service for her by forbidding her to do something she was deeply afraid of, and by preventing her, in fact, from even becoming aware of her fears. This was one reason her Child had shrewdly chosen such a husband.

93 Berne, Transactional Analysis, pp. 112-113.
But there was more to it than that. His prohibitions and her complaints frequently led to quarrels, so that their sex life was seriously impaired. And because of his feelings of guilt, he frequently brought her gifts which might not otherwise have been forthcoming; certainly when he gave her more freedom, his gifts diminished in lavishness and frequency. She and her husband had little in common besides their household worries and the children, so that their quarrels stood out as important events; it was mainly on these occasions that they had anything but the most casual conversations. At any rate, her married life had proved one thing to her that she had always maintained: that all men were mean and tyrannical. As it turned out, this attitude was related to some daydreams of being sexually abused which had plagued her in earlier years.

... The aim of IWFY may be stated as either reassurance ("It's not that I'm afraid, it's that he won't let me") or vindication ("It's not that I'm not trying, it's that he holds me back").

Transactional Paradigm. ...

Mr. White: "You stay home and take care of the house."

Mrs. White: "If it weren't for you, I could be out having fun."

At the psychological level (the ulterior marriage contract) the relationship is Child-Child, and quite different.

Mr. White: "You must always be here when I get home. I'm terrified of desertion."

Mrs. White: "I will be if you help me avoid phobic situations."94

The fact that Mrs. White needed to reinforce her old prejudice that "All men are mean and tyrannical," is based on a concept that is very important to full understanding of games, the idea of life positions.

94 Berne, Games People Play, pp. 50-55.
Life Positions and Life Scripts

Position hunger, mentioned earlier, is the need to justify certain basic, life-long, existential attitudes. Colloquially called a "racket," the life position can be expressed in the form of a comprehensive sentence which colors all of the individual's perceptions, such as "I am no good," "They are no good," or "Nobody is any good." On this basis, one may form an extensive unconscious life plan, or script. Steiner has noted that the script for many alcoholics is basically tragic and self-destructive, and points out the similarity to the ancient Greek drama:

In all tragic scripts, and in the Oedipus Rex cycle in particular, a hero, well known to all, does something that is known to all beforehand, and does it in a relentless, predictable fatal way. From the outset, the audience knows of the hero's eventual demise or change of fortune, yet is fascinated not only by the similarity between the events occurring in the tragedy and the events in their own lives, but also by the manner in which the script unfolds in a predictable and relentless manner.

The tragic deed and outcome of Sophocles' Oedipus are not only known before viewing by most audiences, but within the tragedy itself are known to three different oracles who all concur that Oedipus will commit patricide and incest. In addition, Tiresias predicts the events of the play when he says: "But it will be shown that Laius' murderer is a Theban/A revelation that will fail to please a blind man/Who has his eyes now; a penniless man who is rich now." All predictions of the tragedy come true, and inevitability adds to the fascination of the Oedipus cycle.

In scripts, too, a prediction is made of what is to come. For instance, a forty-five-year-old alcoholic ... reported to me that, as far as he was concerned, his alcoholism was the result of a prediction made fifteen years before by a Siamese sage. He explained that as a young man on leave

95 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 13.
from his aircraft carrier, he had visited Siam and gone to a soothsayer. The old man predicted, after some conversation with him, that he would die an alcoholic. Fifteen years later he found himself irresistibly drawn to alcohol and fearing he would indeed die an alcoholic. He realized (his Adult knew) that it does not make sense to believe his alcoholism was caused by the old man's predictions, but he nevertheless felt (his Child believed) that it was and that he was powerless in the face of the apparently inevitable outcome. This man was like the spectator of a tragedy on the stage. For him, the events of his life unfolded according to the prophecies of an oracle, just as Oedipus unbelievingly saw Tiresias' prediction come to pass.96

Steiner applies the Aristotlean idea of the basic flaw or hamartia of the tragic hero to life scripts, alcoholism being a common hamartic script, as well as similar self-destructive behavior like drug addiction, obesity, excessive smoking, suicide, some forms of mental illness, and certain self-destructive sexual deviations.97

Berne notes that a life position is assumed in early childhood (generally between the third and seventh year) which justifies a decision made on the basis of early experience: e.g., the position "All women are untrustworthy," may vindicate the decision "Never again will I love a woman, because mother deserted me for my baby brother," and will result in a script whose principle game is "If It

96 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 24. It is interesting to note that Berne contrasts the satisfying, believable quality of Oedipus's predicament to the falsity of Medea's situation: "Medea is an artificial play, a bad play. It's obvious right away that Medea couldn't maintain her position after one hour with a good psychiatrist, and it's silly for her to act the way she does. She's just a big sulky girl, who if her sulkiness were taken away from her would have no justification whatsoever. Yet you're supposed to be taken in by Medea or you're not considered literate! "It's just the opposite with Oedipus, who has real problems and contradicitons, real injuries and frustrations. Something had to give way and the denouement of Oedipus is justified" (from "Notes on Games and Theatre," p. 90).

97 Ibid., p. 23.
Weren't for Her."⁹⁸ Every game, script, and destiny arises from one of four basic positions (which can be subtly adapted to suit circumstances): 1) I'm not OK--You're OK; 2) I'm not OK--You're not OK; 3) I'm OK--You're not OK; or 4) I'm OK--You're OK.⁹⁹ Harris maintains that all children start with the first position, based on their experience in their first year of life.¹⁰⁰ An individual may, if his experiences are unfortunate enough, switch to positions number two or three, which are manifested as withdrawal (autism in its most severe form) or criminality.¹⁰¹ Harris points out that the fourth position, I'm OK--You're OK, offers hope because it has a qualitatively different basis from the first three in that it is based on a decision made by the Adult, who has the benefit of reality testing and data processing, unlike the other three positions which are based on decisions of the Child (often with the influence of the Parent) and which are almost entirely based on emotional impressions.¹⁰² Harris has also compared the fourth position to a Christian stance and the concept of grace, for Christ accepted both himself and others without "acts" or "tokens of sacrifice."¹⁰³

Berne theorizes that the existence of scripts is universal:

Each person has an unconscious life plan, formulated in his earliest years, which he takes every opportunity to further as much as he dares in a given situation. This plan calls for other people to respond in a desired way and is

⁹⁹ Harris, I'm OK--You're OK, p. 43.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 43-50.
¹⁰² Ibid., p. 50.
generally divided, on a long-term basis, into distinct sections and subsections, very much like the script of a play. In fact, it may be said that the theatre is an outgrowth of such unconscious life plans or scripts. The original set of experiences which forms the pattern for the plan is called the protocol. The Oedipus complex of Sigmund Freud is an example. In transactional analysis the Oedipus complex is not regarded as a mere set of attitudes, but as an ongoing drama, divided, as are Sophocles's Oedipus Rex, Electra, Antigone and other dramas, into natural scenes and acts calling for other people to play definite roles. 104

Harris points out that, in spite of the power of self-written scripts, a good number of people seem from time to time to escape their self-imposed destinies by following a counterscript, that is, a life plan which meets the conflicting demands of their parents' Parents and/or Adults (or Society) that they lead socially "useful" lives. This will often result in a postscript to the life position: "I'm not OK--You're OK (and I want to be like you)." Since this counterscript comes from the Parent or Adult of the parent, it is more likely to be "constructive" or socially useful than the script which has been dictated by the parent's "Crazy Child" which may demand that the young person act out fantasies of the parent's frustration. The achievements and skills that result from the counterscript cannot produce a feeling of satisfaction, however, unless and until the Adult can formulate the new position that will allow him to be comfortable with facts in conflict with his existential position which has become outdated. He needs to feel "I'm OK--You're OK," in order to enjoy the evidence of his OKness. Otherwise the counterscript will invariably yield and revert to the script behavior under emotional stress.

104 Berne, Structure and Dynamics, p. 160.
Another way of trying to avoid the compulsion of the script is to follow an "antiscript." This is simply a response to the script that brings about inverse behavior to whatever the script's directives call for. While it may seem to be free, it actually is free only insofar as it results in reactionary, rebellious actions. The script is thus seen to be operating, even when the person observed is defiant, unless he consciously makes a decision to give up his scripty behavior.

Berne stresses the idea that, since the little person decides the general outline of his script before his Adult is fully developed, magic, myth, and fantasy play a large part in shaping the script. In a bad script, the programming comes directly from the Child (sometimes called the "Crazy Child") of the father or mother. This is known as the Ogre Father or Witch Mother. In a productive script the programming comes from the Jolly Giant or the Fairy Godmother. Often both the mother and the father help the offspring write the script since couples tend for form unions for the express purpose of raising children. When the parents give conflicting orders to the offspring it may seem that he has no script when he is really alternating between two scripts. In both good and bad scripts the injunction to the little person is usually a command to fulfill the (often anti-social) frustrated wishes and dreams of the parents. Whatever the injunction, the less-than-fully-developed little person is apt to misinterpret or distort the suggestion to an absolute compulsion.

105 Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello?, p. 442.
One way of guessing the nature of a script is to ask the person to name his or her favorite fairytale or fictional or mythological hero or heroine. But one must be careful to note the way in which the individual's understanding of a myth or folk tale is peculiar to that person and different from the general version known to society or from the observer's own comprehension of the story. For instance, Jerry in The Zoo Story identifies with Christ, but his version of Christian love would not exactly coincide with many people's idea of Christlike behavior.

In understanding feminine scripts, I have found Elizabeth Jane-way's analysis of feminine roles of highest value, since her tripartite view of women's functions corresponds to the realms of competence of the tripartite ego states and her notion of the dark sides of each of the positive roles corresponds to the idea of negative or "bad" scripts. More of this will be discussed as appropriate when the plays are examined individually.

Life scripts, Berne observes, are often split up into acts exactly like theatrical scripts and a "complete performance may require a lifetime,"\(^\text{106}\) and since the last act of a script characteristically calls for either a miracle or a catastrophe, depending on whether the script is constructive or destructive, the corresponding games are accordingly either constructive or destructive.\(^\text{107}\) Berne observes, "A practical and constructive script . . . may lead


\(^{107}\) Berne, *Games People Play*, p. 62.
to great happiness if the others in the cast are well chosen and play their parts satisfactorily."108 But he also points out that much more is known about destructive scripts than constructive ones, since psychiatrists are approached for analysis by patients in trouble, while happy folk seldom "bother to find out how they got that way."109 It is the destructive script that Albee, also, is most usually concerned to portray.

Steiner insists that not everyone follows a script for his life. Those who do may have either a hamartic (dramatic or truly tragic), or banal (melodramatic or comic) script. In either case, the script may be good or bad externally:

A person with a script is invariably disadvantaged in terms of his own autonomy or life potentials. The distinction between good and bad scripts is based on whether or not it has socially redeeming features. For instance, a man whose script was to become the most successful surgeon of his city at the expense of a satisfying family life and happiness. This man had a script personally damaging, but socially useful, and therefore it could be called a "good script." On the other hand, a person with a hamartic script such as alcoholism, which is not only destructive to happiness but has no socially redeeming features, has one that is usually known as a bad script. It should be emphasized, however, that in either case—whether a good or a bad script—the fact that a person has a script is a detriment to the possibilities of living life to its fullest potential.110

Banal scripts, Steiner points out, are far more common than hamartic, and are "often adopted by large groups of people who are treated as sub-groups—such as women or blacks."111 When we examine The Zoo Story we will see a confrontation between strangers, one with a good

110 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 55.
111 Ibid.
but banal script, and one with a bad and hamartic one—a confrontation which should make clear the dangers of having even a "good" script.

The concept of "winners," "losers," and "nonwinners" is also helpful to understanding the way life scripts work. A winner is "someone who accomplishes his declared purpose"; a loser is "someone who does not accomplish a declared purpose"; and a nonwinner is "someone who works hard just to break even." While the difference between winners and losers may seem obvious, recognizing the nonwinner is rather more difficult. The nonwinner is likely to have a banal script; he may not be forbidden to succeed at some things, but that which would make him most happy (or which he believes would) must always elude his grasp. These are self-defining terms, and cannot be understood in any other context. Success or failure depends on the goals each individual sets for himself, and while these are not totally mutually exclusive labels, people will generally view themselves as one of these three types and arrange their scripts to consistently reinforce their own self images. Some scripts may have time limits on them, after which a nonwinner may be free to become a winner or even a loser. This is known as an "Until" script.113

The whole script of the alcoholic will be discussed in more detail when we examine A Delicate Balance, but we can talk about one aspect of the Alcoholic script at this time because smiles are uni-

113 Ibid., p. 206.
versally important in analyzing games. Steiner explains:

The position of the D & P [Drunk and Proud] player is "You're O.K., I'm not O.K. (ha, ha)." The player overtly agrees that his wife is, as she claims, O.K. and that he is not. But he always has a smile on his face, and he always says, "I'll show you it's not really that way; you're the one who's not O.K." That is why with "Alcoholic," as with other games, it is often important to watch the smiles of the player because they frequently reveal where the payoff is. 114

Smiles of the other players can also be important to the alcoholic, as Steiner warns:

Colloquially termed the gallows transaction, that smile [the indulgent response of warm understanding as the alcoholic just off a binge relates his latest escapade] is an unwitting but very powerful reinforcement of the alcoholic's self-destruction, equivalent to helpfully adjusting the noose around a condemned man's neck. An unwillingness to smile at the alcoholic's tragedy has been seen [by the alcoholic] as unfriendly. 115

Throughout our examination of Albee's plays, therefore, we will notice his stage directions indicating smiles, especially when they seem incongruous with the lines they accompany, to identify payoffs in the games his characters are playing.

A final colloquialism of TA will be helpful in our analysis. Steiner explains:

Related to the payoff in games is the concept colloquially called "trading stamps." Trading stamps, or enduring, non-genuine feelings such as anger, depression, low self-esteem, sadness, etc., are "collected" and saved up by persons who play games so that when enough are accumulated they can be traded in for a "free" blow-up, drunken binge, suicide attempt, or some other script milestone.

114 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 90.
115 Ibid., p. 82.
A racket, previously defined as the person's existential position, finds expression through the activity of collecting trading stamps. Steiner adds that "the only enduring feelings that are considered genuine are joy and despair due to a loss. Sudden anger may be genuine, but not if it endures beyond the events that cause the anger." Berne explains how the stamps work:

The "store" where transactional stamps are redeemed has the same assortment of prizes as the regular trading stamp store: the big ones, the little ones, and the toys. For "100 books" (say) the patient can get one of the big ones: a free suicide, a free homicide, a free psychosis, or a free quit (divorce, leave therapy, quit job). For "10 books" he can get a toy (unsuccessful) suicide. For one book he can get a little prize: a free drunk or sexual fantasy.

Sometimes it is difficult to find players psychologically equipped to supply the kind of stamps one wishes to collect, and people who customarily save one brand are usually uninterested in the others; but there are ways to manipulate transactions to yield the desired payoff:

If people do not spontaneously frighten you, provoke you, insult you, or entice you, then you initiate a game in order to make them do it; in this way you collect a free fright, mad, hurt or guilt (colloquially known as gray, red, brown, or blue trading stamps, respectively).

Jerry, in The Zoo Story, had apparently been looking to collect brown stamps through his encounter with his landlady's dog, who was, of course, more than willing to play at first. When the dog gives

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116 Ibid., p. 16. 117 Ibid.


119 Ibid.
up the game as too dangerous, Jerry must provoke Peter to supply his stamps. Berne explains that it is possible to stop collecting altogether or at least switch to gold stamps (affectionate or admiring strokes), but few collectors are willing to throw away their hoard.

Berne explains how he believes the concepts of TA apply to drama:

Theater—both acting and playwriting—is closely related to trading stamps, my name for a certain kind of child-satisfactions. You get trading stamps when you buy groceries; that is, they are earned during transactions which are more or less necessary. For instance, you go home and try to settle the budget or discuss how to raise the children. In the course of this, you are insulted by your wife: you've earned your stamps. Then you can go to a store—a bar, say—and trade them in. There are all kinds of prizes. The color TV sets are suicide or homicide. Then there are toy suicides (twelve aspirins), and little gifts like free drunks or adulteries. At the bar you can say, "Who wouldn't get drunk after what my wife said to me?" and the guy next to you replies with "You think you got troubles?" and tries to prove that his stamps are better than yours.

Transactions between people can be straight. You tell someone to pass you the hammer, and he passes you the hammer, without static. But transactions can be crossed and ulterior as well. Very often in theatre a character says one thing which is straight, which yields results in reality—and remember that in real life you collect trading stamps only when you're also doing something else which is necessary—but at the same time the character is getting a certain childish satisfaction from what he is saying or doing. These satisfactions may be good—joy or happiness, playing with or conning someone—or they may be bad—rackets involving anger, guilt, inadequacy. All this is pre-programmed; people are taught what kind of trading stamps to collect—hurt, fear, whatever. And this is the stuff of which dramas, in life or theater, are made, and the audience senses it intuitively. Trading stamps work in real economic life because they are intuitive derivatives of something that is psychologically correct. Everyone intuitively senses that his life has been programmed by his parents, is predetermined. We collect our trading stamps when we feel that something has violated this programming. The theatrical experience is based

120 Ibid.
on the same sense of predetermination: characters are always having their lives violated. A good play must work on two levels at once, showing both the necessary transactions and the collecting of trading stamps.121

It is, therefore, within the framework of the psychological insights into human personality and human interaction that we will examine the plays of Edward Albee. His work has already engendered much interest: examination of his life and plays is the major focus of half a dozen books and has provided a sizeable proportion of the subject matter for a dozen more. Over twenty dissertations have analyzed his artistry and more can be expected each year. Scores of scholarly articles add to the accumulation of interpretation. But it seems to have gone unnoticed that one of Albee's primary appeals is his portrayal of psychological reality. I believe, and it is the purpose of this dissertation to show, that Albee's plays, at their very best, illustrate Berne's assertions about not only the nature of the theatrical experience, but also his insights (and those of other transactional analysts, especially Steiner and Harris) into the nature of the human experience.

I will not in any way attempt to psychoanalyze Edward Albee or to speculate on the influence his personal life, present or past, has had on his choice of subject matter, although the fact of his growing up in a theatrical family surely must be assumed to have some effect on his perceptions of the possibilities of the theater and his dramatic consciousness. I do propose to show that the creation of psychological reality, as understood through structural

121 Berne, "Notes on Games and Theatre," p. 89.
and transactional analysis, is in large part responsible for the success of Albee's plays, and that even when his work falls short there are often moments that work on the audience a certain nearly magic effect— the aha! experience of recognition— that makes Albee a dramatist of important stature in contemporary American theater.
The Zoo Story was generally well reviewed when it was first produced in New York off-Broadway. Albee received much praise and encouragement then, and the play's reputation has continued to flourish, so that today many would agree it is a "flawless gem." A number of critics have attempted to account for the play's success, but none thus far has focussed on the sensitive portrayal of psychological realism that I believe is the key to the interaction of the play, realism which can be revealed through transactional analysis. Ruby Cohn, for instance, chiefly preoccupied with an excellent analysis of Albee's dialogue in terms of symbolic language and recurring themes, claims Albee "is generally misinterpreted as a realist," tacitly denying the possibility that psychological realism can be achieved without traditional "realistic" presentation. In fact, she insists that "Jerry's fragmented life and speech contrast with Peter's


2 Anne Paolucci, From Tension to Tonic: The Plays of Edward Albee (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press; and London and Amsterdam: Feffer & Simons, 1972), p. 44.

coherence and order,"\(^4\) conveniently ignoring the fact that throughout
the play both men resort to pauses, hesitations, and gropings, when
they are searching (with ulterior motives) for the right words to play
their favorite games. Another critic dismisses the dramatic impact
of the play because he believes it is "essentially a monologue,\(^5\)
which interpretation requires overlooking the beginning and ending,
and viewing only the middle of the play. C. W. E. Bigsby probably
summarizes the consensus of interpretation best:

The breakdown of communication which is apparent throughout most
of the play derives not from some fundamental estrangement be­
tween man and his predicament but from man's fear of reality which
might be exposed by true lucidity. So it is that Peter is con­
tent to talk only so long as the discussion is limited to re­
peting opinions and phrases sanctioned by society and having no
real meaning. It is when Jerry becomes dangerously articulate,
when he begins to expose with devastating accuracy the basis
of Peter's compromise with existence, that Peter places his
hands over his ears and refuses to hear any more. Communication
is not impossible in Albee's world. It is simply avoided as being
a threat to complacency and comfortable isolation. So it is that
Albee's chief weapon as a dramatist, and perhaps the most signi­
ficant gift which he has brought to the American theatre, is
precisely his lucidity.\(^6\)

But, as we shall demonstrate, communication does not break down
throughout the play, though spontaneous action is severely inhibited
by the rules of the games they play. Although it is true that Peter
relies heavily on words and phrases usually sanctioned by society,

\(^4\) Ruby Cohn, Dialogue in American Drama (Bloomington and

\(^5\) George Wellwarth, The Theater of Protest and Paradox:
Developments in the Avant-Garde Drama (New York: New York University

\(^6\) C. W. E. Bigsby, Albee (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969),
pp. 18-19.
his utterances do convey his real feelings to Jerry. This interpretation ignores what every Adult in the audience must see—that although Peter inadvertently exposes the narrowness and colorlessness of his life, Jerry also reveals the basis of his own compromise with existence, and his is hardly an attractive alternative to Peter's lifestyle. The delicate balance between the men and the combination of attractive and repulsive qualities of each are almost universally ignored. But in spite of his not acknowledging the complexity of Peter and Jerry's relationship, Bigsby does intuitively recognize the quality of Jerry's appeal to the audience:

Albee creates a hero who is crushed, not, like the protagonist of the naturalistic novel, by environment and heredity, nor, like the anti-hero of Beckett's plays, by the sheer weight of an indifferent universe, but by his own conscious submission. He is a self-created victim adrift in a society which has carefully constructed its own absurdity from the bricks and mortar of spiritual despair and material cupidity. If he emerges with any dignity at the end of the play, that is because Albee retains a diminishing faith in the possibility of meaningful action.

Jerry, however, is not a hero: he is merely the protagonist. And Peter, as a representative of society, acts as the antagonist, not villain; he is also a victim of his own self-written script.

Admittedly, there is a great deal of ambiguity inherent in this play, especially in the ending. Much of this ambiguity arises directly from the contradiction in Jerry's life position, on which he bases his script. It is in identifying and exposing the scripts

7 Cf., Bernard Grebanier, Playwriting (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1961), pp. 138 and 220-221. Grebanier goes so far as to insist that Peter is simply a foil and thus is forced to personify the bench and the knife in order to account for the play's dramatic impact (which he does admit is powerful).

8 Bigsby, Albee, p. 111.
of the characters, that the concepts of TA are most useful in clarifying the way this play works psychologically. Peter, we will see, is a man with a banal script, i.e., one that is commonplace and dull, although it is "good" by society's standards. Jerry, on the other hand, follows a socially "bad" script, and a tragic one. Because Peter's script is good, it is difficult at first to tell that he has one. But it becomes ever more apparent, as we see him reacting in his Child ego state, that his Adult is impaired from functioning autonomously and thus, though Peter's script is essentially banal, Jerry is able to coerce him into playing a role in Jerry's script, which calls for a tragic ending.

Peter's script rests on the most commonly assumed existential life position, "I'm not OK--You're OK." He has, however, been able to add a postscript, "(and I want to be like you)" which allows him to imitate socially acceptable models. He sees himself neither as Loser nor Winner and settles for being a modest "Nonwinner." His greatest achievement is producing his script uncommonly well, but because he always feels that his OKness is imitation, he cannot enjoy his success. He has learned to be the man who earns a comfortable but not spectacular living and who does everything in insipid good taste:

A man in his early forties, neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely. He wears tweeds, smokes a pipe, carries horn-rimmed glasses. Although he is moving into middle age, his dress and his manner would suggest a man younger.  

9 Edward Albee, The Zoo Story, The Death of Bessie Smith, The Sandbox (New York: Coward, McCann and Goeghegan, Inc., 1960), p. 11. All subsequent quotations from The Zoo Story in this chapter also refer to this edition; hereafter, page numbers will be cited in the text in parentheses immediately following each quotation.
The benefits of his script provide him and his family a fairly comfortable (though ironically circumscribed) life in the cultural capital of the United States, "between Lexington and Third Avenue, on Seventy-fourth Street" (22). The life script he follows severely limits him from full enjoyment of the fruits of his success, for he can never quite believe he is OK. Peter is not a leader, but a follower, one who is bright enough to know and do what is expected of him (e.g., reading *Time*), but not original enough, because of the imitative nature of his script, to be interesting, even to himself. Thus he is ripe for the diversion Jerry will offer.

Jerry's script is socially bad in that he has not used his talents constructively to provide himself with the comforts one might expect him to be capable of; he has not married or produced children; and if he has a job, he does not take enough pride in it to find it worth mentioning, even when he is revealing what he feels is most significant about his life. His script is tragically similar to the Alcoholic's; he believes "I'm not OK--You're OK (ha! ha!)"; the parenthetical addition to his existential position forces him to strive from time to time to reveal the not-OKness of others. Like the Alcoholic, he wallows in his degradation, living up to the expectations of society which he believes sees him as not OK (which evaluation he seems to accept), and he apparently refuses to try for material success. Surprisingly, Jerry's low life allows him some release from the tension of his life position: by living in a milieu where he does not have to confront OK people, he is relieved of the constant conflict inherent in his ironic parenthetical laugh. The
other inhabitants of his world are so obviously not OK that he needs to make no effort to unmask them. All around him he sees misfits and rejects: the colored queen who plucks his eyebrows and wears a Japanese kimono to and from the john in the hall; the Puerto Rican family, whom Jerry sees as currently lowest on the American ethnic totem pole, with too many kids for Jerry to keep track of; the lady on the third floor who cries constantly; and the revolting, amorous landlady. Jerry's vivid description of these individuals provokes Peter to claim, "It's so . . . unthinkable. I find it hard to believe that people such as that really are." Peter thus reveals that he has focussed on the models whom he wishes to be like, ignoring contrasts by which he might seem more successful to himself. Jerry has some fun at Peter's incredulous expense: "(Lightly mocking) It's for reading about, isn't it?" (34). Peter knows of such characters only in books; Jerry faces them every day. Unfortunately, however, slum life also worsens his dilemma; for while he is freed from the necessity to play unmasking games with the denizens of his boarding house, he cannot esteem their recognition of him either, and he suffers constantly from stimulus hunger and stroking deprivation, thus making growth to the position "I'm OK--You're OK" nearly impossible. Jerry cannot ignore his basic human drive for recognition from someone whose opinion he might possibly respect, someone truly OK whom he hopes can help him change his existential position. Jerry's choosing Peter as his partner for the final act in his script is perfect casting for the ambiguous tension his life position requires. Peter is, in many ways, OK, though he does not recognize
his own accomplishments and human value. In this sense, his doubts and insecurities make him Jerry's perfect foil.

As the play opens, Peter is sitting alone, on one of two visible benches in Central Park, idly passing time reading, or as Berne would say, "waiting for Santa Claus." Before many moments pass he is accosted by another man, not Santa Claus, but one who promises to amuse him and help him pass the time while waiting, a man not too different from himself at first sight:

A man in his late thirties, not poorly dressed, but carelessly. What was once a trim and lightly muscled body has begun to go to fat; and while he is no longer handsome, 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.

The differences, in fact, are of the sort that would reassure Peter that he has succeeded to some modest degree in imitating the OK people, surpassing another man who seems to have had more natural endowments. Although Peter has never been either handsome or athletic, the years have weighed less heavily upon him than on the average man, an important trait in our youth-worshipping American culture. Jerry, for all his natural gifts, is losing the battle against the ravages of time; and the outward signs of status, especially his clothing, reveal that he is less economically successful.

As the action of the play begins, Jerry enters the tranquil scene and strikes up a conversation. That Jerry is in a Child ego state is indicated by his addressing Peter as "Mister," as children will often do to strangers, and by his declaration of where he's been, a bid for attention in the manner of a child trying to interest
a grownup. Peter counters each of Jerry's childlike requests for information with an Adult reply. Although these transactions seem complementary at first, that is, Adult requests answered in kind, they are really crossed, for Jerry's Child is trying to capture Peter's interest and he fails to do so, making it impossible for Jerry to continue the conversation. Only momentarily thwarted, Jerry uses his "Professor," the little Adult in the Child, to engage Peter in a pseudo-Adult search for precisely identifying the direction in which Jerry has been traveling. But once having satisfied his own Adult with the nuance of "northerly," Peter loses interest, for the problem is too inconsequential to bother with. Then why does Peter stay to be annoyed and distracted by this intruder?

As the opening dialogue unfolds, we will begin to recognize a man who is incapable of structuring his own time in an interesting way, due to his narrow limitations of his script. 10 As much as Jerry needs to gain recognition from someone he might respect, Peter welcomes a diversion from his routine boredom. He appears to be a brighter-than-average man, but paradoxically, life seems to be customarily dull for him. He needs a "leader." Tongue in cheek perhaps, Albee has warned the critics, and presumably the rest of the audience as well, against seeing "too much of themselves in Peter."11

10 Michael E. Rutenberg, Edward Albee: Playwright in Protest (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1969), p. 22, concurs in seeing Peter as "not too demanding or original. He is not used to voicing his opinion, taking the initiative, or exerting pressure on those around him. It is not too difficult, therefore, for Jerry to keep him listening."

But of course we are encouraged to identify with Peter, with all his weaknesses, just as we are led to sympathize with Jerry; and we are kept from over-identifying with either character through precisely this balance.

One should not assume that either Peter or Jerry is "Everyman," or any other one-dimensional or allegorical figure. Both characters reveal themselves to be quite complex individuals, and the play will surely fail (as it does for some critics) if one cannot accept that they both have something to gain from their interaction. They both quickly, almost instinctively, sense this potential for mutual (psychological) profit, and this becomes a powerful enough incentive to prevent either of them from leaving before they've finished transacting business.

Both Peter and Jerry have been interpreted many times quite differently from Albee's description of them. The play could not achieve the theatrical effect which we perceive a psychological realism if, as Robert Brustein claims, Peter were simple a "straw man." Jerry needs stroking from an individual whose attention he can value. Through his socially "good" script, Peter has achieved not only considerable financial comfort, but also what may appear to Jerry (and to the audience at the outset) as an admirable peace of mind—or at least a complacency that is an attractive substitute for

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12 Typical and most bitter of these critics is Tom Driver; see his "What's the Matter with Edward Albee?" in American Drama and Its Critics, ed. by Alan S. Downer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 240-244.

true serenity compared to Jerry's perpetual agitation. But Jerry is not a "psychotic" (position #2, i.e., "I'm not OK--You're not OK," or withdrawal), though he does come close to this position, for he has no one around him from whom he can receive the strokes all men require from others perceived as OK. Nor is he a "criminal" (position #3, i.e., "I'm OK--You're not OK [and therefore, whatever I do is right]"), for he can never accept his own rightness--though he longs to do so--any more than Peter can. Admittedly, the act of suicide which he commits at the end of the play is legally defined as a crime in most localities in the United States, but the damage is self-inflicted and does not take the form of depriving another of life or property for personal gain or comfort, as the antisocial criminal feels justified in doing. In the psychological sense, suicide is earned because Jerry does not feel OK. And he is hardly "closer to God than anyone else," except in the sense that he does achieve the #4 position, "I'm OK--You're OK," just before he dies. Jerry may seem to be dangerously verging on the adoption of either position #2 or #3, but he is too old to make either such irrational decision. His life experience prior to age ten had not caused him to switch from his original decision, "I'm not OK--You're OK." But being orphaned then allowed him to add the cynical "(ha, ha)" for he was old enough to see that his parents were both less than OK. His Adult was already too fully developed to permit him to ignore the reality of good people in the world, like, for instance, his aunt, "who was given neither to sin

14 Ibid. 15 Ibid. 16 Ibid.
nor the consolations of the bottle," whom he claims he's nearly forgotten except for her dour aspect as she slept, ate, worked, prayed, and remained alive long enough to shelter him until his high school graduation. He calls her death on that particular afternoon "A terribly middle-European joke" (29), resting as it does on the bleak immigrant optimism of it-could-have-been-worse. His imperfectly developed ten-year-old Adult ego state pouts, Yes-but-it-should-have-been-better. Of course, it is easy for the audience to sympathize with Jerry. In America adolescence is the crucial time when children are (or are not) encouraged by parents to give up their not-OK feelings and assume position #4. Jerry's aunt faithfully provided all she could of the physical necessities, but her dour mien made her unable to provide the atmosphere of encouragement and nurturant Parental stroking that would enable Jerry to grow to accept himself as a worthwhile individual and to treat the rest of imperfect humanity as OK when they simply do the best they can.

During most of the play we see Jerry acting as the Professor—the part of the Child ego state which had been the budding Adult. Though essentially archaic and lacking the potency and stability of the true Adult, this part of the Child, remember, can often pass undetected for the true Adult. Moreover, the Professor is extremely sensitive and adept at manipulating others through their psychological weaknesses. In addition, he defiantly glories in appearing as a Frog, or Loser, adapted to what he believes society (or his Parent) expects of a man with his background. His Natural Child, for the
most of the play, is severely inhibited. For example, when he describes his landlady as "a fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic, cheap, drunken bag of garbage," he adds: "And you may have noticed that I seldom use profanity, so I can't describe her as well as I might" (33). Since the Natural Child would be free to use the vilest language, we can conclude that Jerry is adapting to societal (i.e., Parental) restrictions. It is not until very near the end of the play that Jerry's uninhibited Natural Child finally appears. When Jerry challenges Peter to fight for the "goddamned bench" and calls him a "miserable bastard" (58-59), Jerry's unleashed Natural Child will precipitate a violent catastrophe.

Peter also has inhibited his Natural Child. He customarily behaves as an Adapted Child, who yields to the pressures of the Parental Ogre, relying on socially sanctioned cliches whenever he is unsure of himself. Occasionally he also acts as Professor to defend or justify his position with a semi-rational argument. For instance, when Jerry taunts him, "You couldn't even get your wife with a male child," Peter's Adult judgment is contaminated by Parental prejudice and he answers as if such a "deficiency" really is a fault, but not his own: "It's a matter of genetics, not manhood, you . . . you monster" (59), rather than defending the value of his daughters as progeny to be proud of for their own sakes. Like Jerry, Peter does not reveal his Natural Child until near the end of the action. When he does, his Child may seem weak, but he is still charming in a simple and honest way. (Recognizing that people are OK does not require one
to overlook their human frailties; rather one can accept others as imperfect creatures who generally try to do their best for themselves and for one another.) Though Peter is not a warrior, not able to attack, he has the human courage necessary to defend himself when he finally realizes he is actually threatened. Ironically, he is thereby forced to participate in Jerry's death.

Let us return now to the opening lines to see how Jerry manages to persuade Peter to remain and talk to him. At first, Peter can see no point in bothering to notice the stranger who has intruded into his pseudo-pastoral afternoon. Jerry has failed to get Peter to respond as a Parent by addressing him as "Mister." Now he directly challenges Peter's Child (note the form of address): "Well, boy; you're not going to get lung cancer, are you?" (13). At first, Peter's Adult responds, but then his Adapted Child takes over with the "right" answers: "(Looks up, a little annoyed, then smiles) No, sir. Not from this." Jerry's Professor again speaks, cautioning Peter against cancer of the mouth (as well as warning the listener in the audience that he's not under the control of his true Adult as he prods Peter to supply the grownup word prothesis). Shifting back to his real Adult ego state makes Peter "Uncomfortable" (14), because he is rather a stodgy, rigid individual. By comparison, Jerry is much more flexible, and understandably so, for he has had to deal with the conflicts of his script which hides a contradiction, as well as cope with the social pressure incumbent with belonging to the outgroup of the economically unsuccessful in ostentatiously wealthy New York City. The vectors of
communication at the psychological level are again crossed by Peter's resuming his true Adult.

Now this is the ego state from which Jerry really needs to have Peter operate in order to receive acceptable stroking from Peter. But ironically, Peter will not continue the conversation from his Adult ego state. If Peter were aware that he was OK—if he were secure in his own feelings of OKness, he might be inclined to respond to the presence of another human being with the natural warmth of unsolicited human interaction. On a socially realistic level, he is justified, of course, in rejecting Jerry's advances as perhaps threatening. People do, after all, get mugged in the park, even on seemingly pleasant Sunday afternoons.

In order to keep the conversation going, then, Jerry has to re-engage Peter's Child. As the psychologically astute Professor, Jerry instinctively initiates a game of "Gee You're Wonderful, Mr. Murgatroyd." Jerry sees himself as an underdog and knows how to use flattery to obtain grudging acceptance and lull others into regarding him as an innocuous admirer. When Jerry tells Peter, "Well, Time isn't for blockheads," Peter shows clearly that this is a game that he is familiar with, although it is not his favorite game, which he indi-

17 Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove Press), pp. 152-153. Mr. Murgatroyd benefits through stroking and admiring recognition, which makes him willing to play, but the real payoff is in the power the other player gains in manipulating Mr. Murgatroyd through flattery; and it is usually, though not exclusively, played by minority group members, such as women and blacks.
cates by only modestly admitting, "No, I suppose not" (13-14), thereby passing up the opportunity to play the reciprocal game, "You're Uncommonly Perceptive,"\textsuperscript{18} to keep things going. Jerry lets Peter think he has won\textsuperscript{19} and switches the subject back to neutral pastimes.

Peter is now "Slightly wary, but interested," because Jerry may help him pass the time waiting for Santa or a miracle of some sort in a harmless and pleasant way. When first asked, "Do you mind if we talk?", Peter is puzzled; and although he obviously minds, he claims he does not. But it only takes Jerry's persistent childish taunt: "Yes, you do; you do," to make Peter, with a matching childish perversity, truly change his mind: "(Puts his book down, his pipe out and away, smiling) No, really; I don't mind" (15). Disposing of his symbols of adulthood helps Peter establish himself as a Child. After one additional challenge, Jerry lets them both be convinced by Peter's final decision: "No; I don't mind at all, really." And why should he? The intruder appears inferior and harmless and seems willing and able to structure time in a pleasant first degree game which fits into Peter's script, assuring him that he is behaving like the OK people of the world whom Peter wishes to emulate. The motivations for both characters are now established.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 153. If the reciprocal game is played, power is somewhat equalized, again through flattering the weaknesses of the opponent.

\textsuperscript{19} Walter E. Sanders, "The English-Speaking Game Drama" (unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1969), p. 292, calls Peter "a buffoon at whom we are invited to laugh," not quite recognizing the delicacy of either Jerry's advances or Peter's sidestepping.
In the next section of the play, up to the beginning of the story of Jerry and the Dog, a series of transactions and efficient games reveal the background of both men in considerable detail. Jerry really wants to relieve his own mind, tell his troubles to Peter, and perhaps be absolved, but he can only do so by allowing Peter to "confess" first. Then it will seem he is consoling Peter by allowing Peter to look OK, or at least more OK than Jerry by contrast.

Again Jerry mysteriously hints that something newsworthy happened there at the zoo, and asks if Peter has a TV set, whereupon Peter volunteers that he has two TV's, seemingly inadvertently supplying the additional information that one of them belongs to the children, thereby revealing that he has a family. Now we see what Peter's favorite game is—with great economy Peter has jumped into the first game played by virtually all children trying to relieve not-OK feelings, "Mine is Better than Yours," 20 by pretending a practical need for the ostentation that passes for convenience, which is an integral part of the upper middle class life based on consumerism he "enjoys." He's equally pleased to acknowledge that his family status is socially acceptable: he's married and has the socially proper number of children—even though he dislikes admitting they're girls, who are less highly esteemed by Western civilization. He becomes understandably

20 Thomas A. Harris, I'm OK—You're OK (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 75-76. Harris explains, "This game is played to bring a little momentary relief from the awful burden of the NOT OK . . . Grownups indulge in sophisticated variations . . . Some people achieve temporary relief by accumulating possessions, by living in a bigger, better house than the Joneses, or even reveling in their modesty: I am humbler than you are."
defensive when Jerry patronizes him with a platitude of homely American philosophy: "But that's the way the cookie crumbles?" Jerry's clichés ring of Madison Avenue rather than Wall Street. Peter becomes "annoyed," "a bit distant," "then back and irksome," and finally "furious," as he asserts: "That's none of your business!" (18). The Child, protesting against unfair play, is easily recognizable. The second time Jerry says, "(Softly) That is the way the cookies crumbles," Peter forgives him because Jerry claims to have understood Peter's position. We have now observed a second degree game of "Schlemiel," 21 which is Jerry's favorite way to justify his position, "I'm not OK--You're OK (ha, ha)." Peter likes to play also because he can pretend that he has the Parental authority to forgive, and as we see later, each of them can assume either role in their two-handed game to try to obtain forgiveness for his own weaknesses.

Peter is relieved now to get back to the story about the zoo, but Jerry stalls, again pressing Peter for assurance: "Do you mind if I ask you questions?" When Peter replies, "Oh, not really" (19), we can presume he tells the truth; Albee gives no stage directions indicating a conflict between Peter's words and his attitude (as Albee invariably does when he means such a conflict to be observable).

21 Berne, Games People Play, p. 61. He explains that the payoff in this game is to obtain forgiveness for making messes. In this variation, the forgiveness is required for Jerry's gauche remark about the way Peter crossed his legs. The player who is "it" never loses because he gets an additional immediate pleasure (even if he fails to win forgiveness) from simply offending or "creating a mess."
Playing games is a way of structuring time, much safer than true intimacy, which Peter avoids as carefully as Jerry. Both Jerry and Peter suffer for their evasions, though Jerry seems to be more poignantly aware of the source of his agony and takes the initiative in trying to circumvent pretense. He tries to explain to Peter that he wants to find someone he can really talk to and get to know all about. Peter is slightly flattered and laughs lightly, but he's made uncomfortable by Jerry's lack of orthodox social restraint. Peter is more willing to tell Jerry about himself than he is to hear about Jerry's life, for Jerry is an unattractive and threatening model. Peter egotistically presumes that Jerry is also looking for a model, and he preens as he thinks he is setting an example for the less fortunate Jerry.

Jerry then probes to discover that, besides his wife and daughters, Peter has cats and parakeets; and to support this "enormous household" Peter coyly admits, "I . . . uh . . . I have an executive position with a . . . a small publishing house. We . . . uh . . . we publish textbooks" (21). Textbooks, of course, also provide models for successful solutions of problems, problems nicely contrived to be soluble, in most cases. Jerry, cut by the condescension, loses control of himself and his attempt to avoid game-playing as he slips into second-degree "Gee You're Wonderful, Mr. Murgatroyd," inquiring about Peter's salary. Ironically, this is considered gauche in a society which honors money so blatantly but forbids such directs questions. Again, Peter knows Jerry is being rude, but with very little coaxing, he admits to a salary "around eighteen thousand a year." The Child is still in the executive as Peter's Professor finds it prudent to add,
"but I don't carry more than forty dollars at any one time . . . in case you're a . . . a holdup man . . . ha, ha, ha" (21). Again, it seems plausible on the surface that he is trying to keep the conversation from becoming too serious. On the psychological level, however, he is acknowledging that he knows such things happen but he is sure that Jerry would not "change the game" now. Like the young person who can understand that death means permanent separation from loved ones and that all people die, yet doesn't believe he'll ever die, Peter shows by his laughter that his true Adult is not in command. He cannot conceive of Jerry as a real threat, although the Adults in the audience may be quite uneasy.

Jerry now seems to be the more reasonable of the two as he assumes the Parental role of providing reassurance and support. When he persuades Peter to tell him where he lives, Jerry asks solicitously, "That wasn't so hard, was it?" (22). Peter claims, "I'm . . . normally . . . uh . . . reticent," an admission, finally, that he does not usually "really talk" to people either. But in groping for the exact word he needs, reticent, he inadvertently reactivates his own Adult. And it's Peter's Adult who asks the next question, a perfectly logical one: "Why do you just stand there?" (22). The next few lines are crucial. Peter's Adult, with his customary reserve broken down, might be capable of providing the stroking and/or helpful suggestions on how to change his miserable life that Jerry seeks. But, like the paradox of one's not being eligible for a bank loan unless he can prove he doesn't really need the money, the implicit contradiction in Jerry's life position prevents him from accepting any sympathy or
understanding he might encounter. He feels he must go "a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly" (25). Correctly, that is, according to his confused, not fully-developed Adult—the Professor—which is customarily in control of his ego. Compelled by his script to try to unmask anyone who appears OK, he turns to riddles to stall for time. He says, "I'll start walking around, in a little while, and eventually I'll sit down. (Recalling) Wait until you see the expression on his face." He seems to be in a vague world of his own. Peter coaxes him with long, encouraging strokes, which Jerry does not accept or return in kind:

PETER
What? Whose face? Look here; is this something about the zoo?
JERRY (Distantly)
The what?
PETER
The zoo; the zoo. Something about the zoo.
JERRY
The zoo?
PETER
You've mentioned it several times.
JERRY
(Still distant, but returning abruptly) The zoo? Oh, yes; the zoo. I was there before I cam here. I told you that. Say, what's the dividing line between upper-middle-middle-class and lower-upper-middle-class? [22-23]

The opportunity for communication—or contact, as Jerry would call it—passes, as Jerry thwarts Peter's supportive stroking by initiating an advanced game of "Mine is Better Than Yours." Peter sees the trap and his Professor stiffens: "My dear fellow, I ..." Again he is left speechless, unable to maintain his posture, and Jerry matches his pseudo-dignity with a word from his own Professor: "Don't my dear fellow me" (23).

Peter is truly unhappy at being caught in a false and pompous
attitude, but he sees an opportunity to take his turn being "it" in 
"Schlemiel." He contritely asks: "Was I patronizing? I believe I 
was; I'm sorry. But, you see, your question about the classes be-
wildered me." Because of their scripts, Peter can play both roles in
this game but Jerry is equally uncomfortable in either part, es-
pecially when he "wins." Jerry pushes Peter: "And when you're be-
wildered you become patronizing?" Peter tries again: "I ... I 
don't express myself too well, sometimes. (He attempts a joke on 
himself) I'm in publishing, not writing." Denying the word of for-
giveness, Jerry trumps: "(Amused, but not at the humor) So be it. 
The truth is: I was being patronizing" (23-24). Peter is once again 
maneuvered into offering assurance: "Oh, now; you needn't say that." 
As a consolation prize, Peter settles for being most humble in a 
variation of "Mine is Better."

Jerry's victory is hollow and depressing because it violates 
his not-OK existential position, but his script forces him to keep 
playing. Win or lose, he collects only brown (hurt) stamps. He col-
lects more, rapidly and efficiently, by forcing Peter to make a fool 
of himself twice in quick succession. First he calls Peter's bluff as 
a literate man when he can only mumble inanities about Baudelaire 
and J.P. Marquand. Again, Jerry ignores Peter's apology, refusing to 
let Peter collect his payoff for being "it" in "Schlemiel." Then he 
mocks Peter's attempt to reestablish his Adult as the executive. His 
speech not only titilates the audience by foreshadowing; it also is 
psychologically realistic as he perversely trumps Peter's inaccurate conclusion:
Oh; you live in the Village! (This seems to enlighten PETER)

JERRY

No, I don't. I took the subway down to the Village so I could walk all the way up Fifth Avenue to the zoo. [25]

Jerry's conflicting needs not only prevent his directly seeking help, they also force him to antagonize and alienate the potential helper, Peter, by continually calling to Peter's Adapted Child to come out and play.

Peter's pouting clearly indicates that his Child is firmly in control again as he listens to Jerry's revealing monologue. Up to this point, Jerry has been drawing out information about Peter—which Peter is surprisingly willing to give—but Jerry now claims equal time. With childish illogic he begins a travesty of Peter's game which might be called "Mine is Worse Than Yours." He flaunts his poverty and degradation with mock heroic fourishes. Peter's first reaction to Jerry's disclosures about his sordid roominghouse is embarrassment and childlike wonder. He asks, "Why . . . why do you live there?" to which Jerry replies "(From a distance again) I don't know" (26). Truly, he only half realizes that he has chosen this setting for its suitability to his script. Peter thwarts Jerry's triumph at "Mine is Worse" by genuine sympathy: "It doesn't sound like a very nice place . . . where you live." And again, Jerry rejects stroking with sarcasm: "Well, no; it isn't an apartment in the East Seventies. But, then again, I don't have one wife, two daughters, two cats and two parakeets." His scornful "sour grapes" attitude only half conceals his envy as he enumerates his own inanimate, homely practical treasures. Surprisingly, perhaps, he inter-
sperses three relatively useless items in his list of possessions:

... two picture frames, both empty, ... a pack of pornographic playing cards, regular deck, ... and a small strongbox without a lock which has in it ... what? Rocks! Some rocks ... sea-rounded rocks I picked up on the beach when I was a kid. Under which ... weighed down ... are some letters ... please letters ... please why don't you do this, and please when will you do that letters. And when letters, too. When will you write? When will you come? When? These letters are from more recent years. [27]

Perhaps out of tact or even insensitivity, Peter ignores the hint of recent heartbreak indicated by the letters which it seems Jerry cannot respond to because he is weighed down by what are now meaningless rocks of his childhood. It is not essential that we know exactly what these rocks represent for Jerry, for the feeling of inadequacy, the not-OKness of childhood, is virtually universal. It is even possible that the letters were not written to Jerry but by him, but for some reason Jerry was unable to mail them. Whether Jerry has written or received the letters, they appear to be demands for personal interest based on mutual regard. Please indicates that the writer respects the reader's autonomy. Why and when show Adult quests for understanding and hope for reciprocal response. But instead of reacting to the mention of the letters (which Jerry had saved for the climax of the list), Peter responds by inquiring why the picture frames are empty. He seems to be trying to initiate a socially acceptable (first degree) game of "Archaeology."[22

22 Berne, Games People Play, p. 156. This is a variation of "Psychiatry," which can be played in or out of the doctor's office. The point of both games is to go through the motions of analysis without benefitting so one can say "see how hard I tried." "Archaeology" dwells on childhood experience and thus avoids dealing directly with contemporary problems.
Jerry insists he has no one's picture to keep, since "good old Mom and good old Pop are dead." After stating the facts so bluntly, he uses tough, but ironically euphemistic wisecracks to fill in the details. As an older child, Jerry says he did not take his mother's abandonment of her family personally; he says, "good old Mom walked out on good old Pop when I was ten and a half years old" (28). He neither seems to feel responsible for or blamed for the desertion. And he refrains from trying to blame either of his parents. Understandably, he only half appreciates his fortune in having his mother's devoted but dour sister finish raising him. But he indicates that he is not particularly interested in playing "Archaeology" today: "that was a long time ago, and I have no feeling about any of it that I care to admit to myself" (29). Jerry has sarcastically referred to Peter's "truly enviable innocence" (28); now this innocence is about to be violated as Jerry makes an attempt at pseudo-intimacy with Peter. He asks Peter's first name and introduces himself by first name also—insuring Child to Child transactions. On one level, they seem to be establishing a personal relationship. No longer strangers idly passing time; they are potentially ready for intimacy. But Jerry is not able to give up his unmasking games.

Jerry reveals that he has no picture of a girl\(^{23}\) to fill his empty frames because he confines his sexual activities to one-time affairs with "pretty little ladies" who "wouldn't be caught dead in

\(^{23}\text{Note that both Jerry and Peter use this childlike form, girl, or lady (Child addressing Parent?), rather than the term woman—an indication that neither of them is thinking of an Adult-Adult relationship.}\)
the same room with a camera" (29). Associating with women less OK than himself obviates the compulsion to expose their weaknesses; they are self evident. But he can use his shockingly abnormal sex life to test Peter's sophistication. He confesses that, except for an eleven day homosexual affair at age fifteen he has never "been able to have sex with, or how is it put? . . . make love to anybody more than once" (30). It is an interesting reflection of our American moral sensibility that critics who comment on this passage at all seem almost universally preoccupied with its homosexual aspect, which admittedly is obviously there; but there is a greater anguish of a man's inability to maintain an intimate relationship of any duration with another person, of whatever sex. 24

Peter now seems about to offer a cliché as he begins, "Well, it seems perfectly simple to me . . ." But he breaks off. Again, he seems unable to predicate a pat phrase that comes almost involuntarily to his lips. Does he begin to realize that Jerry's problem is not "perfectly simple"? Jerry gives him no time to consider his response as Peter (or any thoughtful Adult) really should. But childishly unreasonable, Jerry angrily challenges Peter's capacity to give the advice Jerry has rather obviously been soliciting: "Look! Are you going to tell me to get married and have parakeets?" (30). This makes Peter "angry himself" because he's not sure how he's offended Jerry, and he resents the implication that having a family is not as

satisfying as OK people pretend. Again, Jerry has "made a mess" verbally with his childishly incoherent challenge. Quickly, he switches back to "Schlemiel":

All right, all right. I'm sorry. All right? You're not angry?

No, I'm not angry. [31]

Peter retains the illusion that he, as the forgiving Parent, has won; Jerry has again received his depressing payoff in brown stamps, for if Peter is a fool, his stroking diminishes in value. So Jerry switches the subject to the pornographic playing cards and encourages Peter to brag about his worldliness. In playing "Gee You're Wonderful, Mr. Murgatroyd," Jerry cannot lose. Even if he fails to unmask Peter, he will have reinstated the potency of Peter's strokes. Peter is "embarrassed" (32) because of Parental injunctions against discussing his sex life, but he is also justified from an Adult standpoint in declining to talk about his intimate affairs with a relative stranger.

Jerry is shrewd enough to back off. His explanation substitutes for an apology (which in all probability would only have won him another round of "Schlemiel," and he seems to be trying to avoid game-playing for the moment) and shows that he dreams of a better life than the one he's embraced: "What I wanted to get at is the value difference between pornographic playing cards when you're a kid, and pornographic playing cards when you're older. It's that when you're a kid you use the cards as a substitute for a real experience, and when you're older you use real experience as a substitute for the fantasy" (32). The cards become a parable for the difficulties of
avoiding one's script. Jerry's main fantasy seems to be his viewing himself as a Christ figure, as numerous critics have noted.25 Christ is undoubtedly Jerry's mythical hero, though in a drastically distorted form. Jerry's seeing himself as Christlike, of course, does not necessarily mean that Albee means the audience to be deluded also.

Now before Jerry's sober philosophy can re-engage Peter's Adult, Jerry quickly mentions the zoo again; children, of course, love zoos. Peter is "enthusiastic": Oh, yes; the zoo. (Then, awkward) That is . . . if you . . . " Once more Jerry coyly diverts Peter's attention: "Let me tell you about why I went . . . well, let me tell you some things" (32). He paints a more sordid than ever picture of his roominghouse and describes his abominable landlady and her dog, adding that she, in her drunken confusion, imagines Jerry is her lover.26 Peter is disgusted and horrified, but Jerry explains:

But I have found a way to keep her off. When she talks to me, when she presses herself to my body and mumbles about her room and how I should come there, I merely say: but, Love; wasn't yesterday enough for you, and the day before? Then she puzzles, she makes slits of her tiny eyes, she sways a little, and then, Peter . . . and it is at this moment that I think I might be doing some good in that tormented house . . . a simple-minded

25 This is worked out most elaborately by Rose A. Zimbardo, "Symbolism and Naturalism in Edward Albee's The Zoo Story," Twentieth Century Literature, VIII (April, 1962), 10-17.

26 Nelvin Vos, Eugene Ionesco and Edward Albee (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), p. 38, expresses the belief that Jerry is the one with the overactive imagination, that this "childish story" is "wishful thinking" and that "Jerry's landlady was not really interested in him." This interpretation seems unjustified considering the repulsiveness of Jerry's description of the woman. Surely if Jerry can fantasize an admirer, he is free to imagine one less unattractive than his landlady.
smile begins to form on her unthinkable face, and she giggles and groans as she thinks about yesterday and the day before; as she believes and relives what never happened. [34]

This passage reveals in unsentimental27 poignancy Jerry's human need to feel worthwhile, to believe that he "might be doing some good" in deluding another human being with a lie of kindness, rather than rejecting her outright. He is, perhaps, showing one way Peter might be able to help Jerry, if Peter could only see Jerry's need to be recognized and to feel self-respect.

Jerry now wants to explain further about his landlady's dog, but Peter responds: "(Nervously) Oh, yes; the dog." Although Peter has shown a childlike interest in the zoo—which promises wild and exotic (but caged and safe) species—the domestic dog has been introduced ironically as a "black monster" and Peter is not certain he wants to hear more. Jerry gently bullies Peter:

Don't go. You're not thinking of going, are you?

PETER
Well . . . no, I don't think so.

JERRY
(As if to a child) Because after I tell you about the dog, do you know what then? Then . . . then I'll tell you about what happened at the zoo.

PETER (Laughing faintly)
You're . . . you're full of stories, aren't you?

JERRY
You don't have to listen. Nobody is holding you here; remember that. Keep that in your mind.

PETER (Irritably)
I know that.

JERRY
You do? Good. [35-36]

27 Amacher, Edward Albee, p. 168, has noted the shock value of Albee's technique: "As a writer, Edward Albee brings to the American stage an extreme lack of sentimentality, one that in many cases his audience may not be prepared for."
A Parent amusing a Child, Jerry begins his tale: "(As if reading from a huge billboard) THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE DOG!" (36). After painting a verbal picture of the dog which somehow surpasses the description of his landlady for ugliness (or perhaps the effect is merely cumulative), he explains, "animals are indifferent to me . . . like people (He smiles slightly) . . . most of the time." But the dog hated him: "(Puzzles) I still don't know to this day how the other roomers manage it, but you know what I think: I think it had to do only with me. Cozy" (37). Jerry's initial position, "I'm not OK--You're OK," is thus satisfyingly reinforced, as indicated by his ironic smile at his sad rejection. Of course, the nature of the beast who rejects him allows him his postscript, "(ha, ha)."

Knowing that the dog hates him, Jerry's Professor devises a plan to buy peace, even though he anticipates that it will not work before he tries it: "First, I'll kill the dog with kindness, and if that doesn't work . . . I'll just kill him" (37). He tells of his failure to win the dog's approval in animated detail with appropriate gestures and action to fascinate Peter's Child. Jerry's Natural Child emerges for a few seconds as he admits, "To be truthful, I was offended, and I was damn mad too" (38). After persisting for a few more days in trying to win the dog's friendship, "I was less offended than disgusted. So I decided to kill the dog." At this point, "PETER raises a hand in protest," but Jerry reassures him, "Oh, don't be so alarmed, Peter: I didn't succeed" (39). According to Jerry's existential position he is (supposedly) not OK, and cer-
tainly cannot do anything right. He tells of the difficulty he had at the counter when he bought a hamburger without the roll and the counterman, benignly smiling, asked him:

A bite for ya pussy-cat? I wanted to say: No, not really; it's part of a plan to poison a dog I know. But, you can't say "a dog I know" without sounding funny; so I said, a little too loud, I'm afraid, and too formally; YES, A BITE FOR MY PUSSY-CAT. People looked up. It always happens when I try to simplify things; people look up. [39]

Jerry's Professor knows that he can not openly admit to the antisocial act of dog poisoning; his true Adult also knows that he cannot succeed in dealing with life as a Child trying to oversimplify complex things--people notice his inappropriate behavior and he suffers sadness and disgust. For a moment, Jerry's Natural Child reacts spontaneously in despising the despicable dog. Childlike, he anthropomorphically imagines the dog smiling, as if the dog were enjoying a payoff from their games.

Jerry now borrows authority to intimidate Peter by using cadences from that supreme authority, the King James Bible: "AND SO IT CAME TO PASS THAT THE BEAST WAS DEATHLY ILL" (40). He cynically mocks the sobering effect of fear on his landlady and indulges in sly self-aggrandizement:

She stopped me in the hall the same evening of the attempted murder and confided the information that God had struck her puppy-dog a surely fatal blow [40] She sniveled and implored me to pray for the animal. [40]

Though he really wishes he could explain that he doesn't know how to pray, and if he did, there are people more worthy than her dog to be prayed for, again "to simplify things" he yields: "... I
told her I would pray. She looked up. She said that I was a liar, and I probably wanted the dog to die" (40).

But with childish perversity, which recalls Jerry's similar manipulation of Peter earlier in the play, Jerry claims that he had now changed his mind:

I wanted the dog to live so that I could see what our new relationship might come to. (Peter indicates his increasing displeasure and slowly growing antagonism) Please understand, Peter; that sort of thing is important. [40]

Jerry is now appealing to Peter's OK Adult as he gropes for the name of the "puppy that guarded the gates of hell," and confesses, "I'm not up on my mythology. (He pronounces the word myth-o-logy) Are You? (Peter sets to thinking, but Jerry goes on)" (40-41).

Besides "puppy" Jerry uses the even more childish forms "bow-wow" and "puppykins" and claims, "I was heart-shatteringly anxious to confront my friend again" (41). Peter's Adult, momentarily recathcted, "reacts scoffingly." (Such behavior might also be construed as Parental judgment, but under the circumstances, skepticism is well justified from an Adult viewpoint.)

Jerry's sensitive Professor realizes he needs to recapture Peter's Child, but only half-succeeds:

Yes, Peter; friend. That's the only word for it. I was heart-shatteringly et cetera to confront my doggy friend again. [41]

Describing his confrontation with the dog, he claims, "during that twenty seconds or two hours that we looked into each other's face, we made contact" (41). Children, of course, have trouble keeping
track of time's passage. He seems to hypnotize Peter as he reveals his hope that the dog will now love him. We've noted before that Peter is relatively inflexible about shifting from one ego state to another (unlike Jerry) and he usually reacts with anger or confusion when forced to do so. During Jerry's next speech we cannot really know whether Peter's Adult is in the executive or his Child, for Peter is passive, even when Jerry pauses for a "prolonged silence." It may be that the Child is permitted to control Peter's body and actions while his Adult is listening to and taking in the significance of Jerry's words and actions.

During his next speech Jerry is "abnormally tense," as he reveals his anguish and his ambivalent feelings resulting from the conflict between his script and his normal human desire for recognition and self-respect. The whole character of this speech is childishly illogical; Jerry's Professor is trying, based on his incomplete understanding, to make sense of his experience; but his conclusions inevitably lead to disappointment. People, he finds, even in their lowest forms, are harder to deal with than any animal, or any inanimate object, or intangible emotions and ideas, and even harder to understand than God. His childlike hope is truly appealing, both to Peter and to the audience:

It would be A START! Where better to make a beginning . . . to understand and just possibly be understood . . . a beginning of an understanding, than with . . .

(Here JERRY seems to fall into almost grotesque fatigue)

. . . than with a DOG. Just that; a dog.

(Here there is a silence that might be prolonged for a moment or so; then JERRY wearily finishes his story)
But at last he admits that he has been unable to make a friend of man's best friend, and his bright idea has ended unhappily:

Whenever the dog and I see each other we both stop where we are. We regard each other with a mixture of sadness and suspicion, and then we feign indifference. We walk past each other safely; we have an understanding. It's very sad, but you'll have to admit that it is an understanding. We had made many attempts at contact, and we had failed. [43]

Recalling his previous assertion that he had made "contact" with the dog, both Peter and the audience must be baffled by this confession of failure. Jerry attempts to clarify the new relationship he and the dog have achieved:

The dog has returned to garbage, and I to solitary but free passage. I have not returned. I mean to say, I have gained solitary free passage, if that much further loss can be said to be gain. I have learned that neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates 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. And what has been the result: the dog and I have attained a compromise; more of a bargain, really. We neither love nor hurt because we do not try to reach each other. And, was trying to feed the dog an act of love? And, perhaps, was the dog's attempt to bite me not an act of love? If we can so misunderstand, well then, why have we invented the word love in the first place?

(There is silence. JERRY moves to PETER's bench and sits down beside him. This is the first JERRY has sat down during the play)

The story of Jerry and the Dog: the end.

(PETER is silent) [43-44]

One critic, presumably largely on the basis of the above passage, has reached the conclusion that "Jerry teaches Peter," and that "Jerry opens a new world to Peter." This interpretation minimizes

the reciprocity of their transactions. Peter has never really known much about slum life, true, but Jerry has never dealt with true gentleness, either. His teaching emotion has worked with brutes only, and even then it did not produce a satisfying relationship. By the conclusion of the play, the audience may believe that Jerry learns more than Peter does, for he learns to accept both Peter and himself before he dies. And sympathy probably again shifts to the antagonist Peter as the audience is left with sharing his involuntary involvement in a man's fate.

With cheerful animation, Jerry now prods Peter to tell him what he thinks of the story. Jerry has at last sat down on the same level with Peter. He wants to know what Peter makes of the story, because he himself is confused. He has contradicted himself by claiming he did and then admitting he did not "make contact" with the dog. With sophomoric wisdom he pontificates about the teaching emotion he's discovered, kindness and cruelty combined, but he concedes that the gains brought by such teaching are only further loss. He is not sure of the nature of love, how one expresses it, how one recognizes it in himself or others. His script calls for Peter, the Adult, to explain everything to him, at the same time it implies that Peter, the Child, is really a fool. Objectively, Peter probably is really OK, though he does not know this himself. Even if his Adult has been listening (and we can't be sure whether Peter's Adult or Child has been in control during Jerry's monologue), Peter cannot explain the complex emotion of love, which by its nature is irrational,
to a stranger. Peter has tried to understand, but since Jerry's dilemma is in his own attitude toward himself, and since Jerry's explanation of his problems is logically deficient and contradictory, Peter cannot possibly "understand," much less articulate his understanding to Jerry's confused Child; and Peter's inadequacy triggers his not-OK feelings. Jerry's tragic script is very near to being completed.

Peter's first reaction to Jerry's prodding is numbed confusion and he nearly breaks into tears as he claims he does not understand why Jerry has told him the story. Jerry bullies Peter: "Why not?" and Peter shouts: "I DON'T UNDERSTAND!" Jerry becomes furious, but tries to control his temper as he accuses Peter of lying. In desperation, Peter tries to withdraw from involvement:

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE. I don't understand you, or your landlady, or her dog. . . .

JERRY

Her dog! I thought it was my . . . No. No, you're right. It is her dog. (Looks at PETER intently, shaking his head) I don't know what I was thinking about; of course you don't understand. (In a monotone, wearily) I don't live in your block; I'm not married to two parakeets, or whatever your setup is. I am a permanent transient, and my home is the sickening roominghouses on the West Side of New York City, which is the greatest city in the world. Amen. [45]

Tacitly admitting that he knows as little about how Peter lives as Peter knows about Jerry's lifestyle, Jerry again collects his payoff in brown stamps of depression and weariness as he exposes the sham of the city's seamy side. But Jerry's self-pity takes an unrealistic form, for the people who do live on his block would not understand him either, even though they might have similar scripts: Jerry, like so
many others, has made up his mind to be a Loser and his natural talents are enlisted to help him achieve his end efficiently. If a bus will not cooperate by running into him (the way his father managed his suicide), Jerry will contrive to have another representative of society help him prove his life position valid. He cannot, of course, simply take poison or jump from a building, for that would clearly indicate that it was Jerry's fault and not allow the ironic laugh.

Although confused, Peter seems genuinely concerned for a moment: "I'm ... I'm sorry; I didn't mean to . . ." (45). Jerry is distracted and proffers careless forgiveness: "Forget it. I suppose you don't quite know what to make of me, eh?" Thinking that Jerry is willing to begin playing their pet games again, Peter attempts a joke and " chuckles" over his own wit. Jerry "forces a laugh" to match and calls Peter a "richly comic person." Peter's script is comic rather than tragic, but Jerry will succeed in involving Peter in his own tragedy nevertheless. Peter is "still chuckling" as he imagines in his innocence that Jerry is again playing "Gee You're Wonderful, Mr. Murgatroyd." This makes sense; Jerry showed his willingness to play earlier. But Jerry no longer seems playful, so Peter threatens to go home. When his cajoling fails, Jerry begins tickling Peter and "as JERRY continues to tickle him his voice becomes falsetto" (48), like a child's. He surprises himself by becoming quite silly and enjoying himself almost to hysteria: "As his laughter continues, then subsides, JERRY watches him, with a curious
fixed smile" (48). Peter is not merely passively acted upon or responding in formal cliches; his released Natural Child, reached by direct—not symbolic—stroking, demonstrates a creative capacity for inventiveness and enjoyment that shows Jerry plainly for the first time that Peter is really OK. But the expression on Jerry's face indicates a serious disturbance. Though he needs stroking from an OK person, his script calls for Peter to be revealed in the end as not OK. The violation of his script has given him his penultimate book of brown stamps. Berne has noted that "some . . . collect 'counterfeit' stamps. If no one will provoke them, they imagine a provocation." 29 And now Jerry will try to collect the last book, a counterfeit one if necessary, that he needs to cash in for his suicide. He "calmly" admits: "Yes, that was very funny, Peter. I wouldn't have expected it" (49).

Now Jerry again promises he'll reveal what happened at the zoo, as soon as he explains why he went there:

I went to the zoo to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other, and with people too. It probably wasn't a fair test, what with everyone separated by bars from everyone else, the animals for the most part from each other, and always the people from the animals. But, if it's a zoo, that's the way it is. (He pokes PETER on the arm) Move over. [49]

He continues bullying Peter for several moments, but Peter now responds, not with his not-OK Adapted Child, but with friendliness. The experience of releasing his Natural Child has been therapeutic

and he acts accordingly. It's harder this time for Jerry to re-engage the Parentally Adapted Child in Peter. Peter takes Jerry's punching and taunting, becoming only at last "very annoyed," "flabbergasted," and "flustered" (50-51).

When Jerry demands that Peter give up the bench entirely, Peter reasons: "People can't have everything they want. You should know that; it's a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can't have everything" (52). While to the audience it may seem ironic that Peter forgets that he does have nearly "everything" a person is supposed to want out of life, Peter has implied his dissatisfaction with his own "ideal" life and has explained the philosophy that he, like most people, has accepted as a compromise for complete happiness in life. Jerry "laughs" recognizing bitterly that he, at least, has not settled for Peter's kind of insipid mediocrity. Peter's mentioning rules also signals his defensive resumption of games playing.

Jerry begins unmistakably insulting Peter by calling him an "Imbecile," "slow witted," and a "vegetable" (52). Peter is "intense" as he makes a last effort to retain Adult control: "Now you listen to me. I've put up with you all afternoon." Jerry deflates his hyperbole by pointing out,"Not really." Still struggling, Peter insists:

LONG ENOUGH. I've put up with you long enough. I've listened to you because you seemed . . . well, because I thought you wanted to talk to somebody.

JERRY
You put things well; economically, and, yet . . . oh, what is the word I want to put justice to your . . . JESUS, you make me sick . . . get off here and give me my bench.
We're reminded that, on one level, economically, Peter succeeds where Jerry fails. Jerry has already hinted that he considers this success only fair, and now he implies by calling on Jesus that it makes him want to vomit, as Christ was sickened by likewarm devotion. Peter's OKness as a sympathetic fellow human is equally unimpressive, for it is not backed by self confidence resting on self-awareness.

Peter finally responds to the challenge. His Natural Child has an angry side, too, but he seems mild by comparison to Jerry's violence: "God da ... mn you. That's enough! I've had enough of you. I will not give up this bench; you can't have it, and that's that. Now, go away" (53). Slowly, Peter begins to realize that he is no match for Jerry and threatens Jerry with the police. The scorn Jerry shows, here and throughout the play, for figures of authority, is understandable in light of his being orphaned so young. Peter reacts "with disgust and impotence," accusing Jerry of being mad. The true Parent, remember, carries the force of real power, which Peter reveals he does not have. Jerry continues to taunt until Peter becomes "furious" at which point Jerry mocks: "Aw, ... look who's mad" (54-55). Peter tries shouting: no avail; Jerry holds firm. Peter is "almost crying" and he no longer cares if he seems ridiculous. For a man who doesn't change from one ego state to another easily, Peter has had an exhausting workout; he now clings stubbornly to the security and stability the bench represents for him. Jerry's Professor challenges Peter's proprietary interest in the bench. He uses Peter's own logic about not being able to have everything to "prove" that Peter does not deserve the bench. He questions
whether a bench can be an honorable object to fight for. Jerry goads Peter, "Can you think of anything more absurd?" (56). Peter clings to his advantage as an OK member of society until Jerry subtly reminds him that dogs, not cats, are the socially sanctioned pet for a man. Jerry declares Peter is "Stupid!" and challenges, "Don't you have any idea, not even the slightest, what other people need?" Peter's Adapted Child is now activated as he tries to regain the upper hand: "Oh, boy, listen to you; well, you don't need this bench. That's for sure." Nor does Peter, of course, by his own logic, need the bench. Again the audience is reminded of the contrast between the man who has everything and the one who has virtually nothing. Peter has again addressed Jerry's Child, but we see that Jerry cannot be bullied in this way as easily as Peter can, as he replies: "Yes; yes, I do." Peter is "quivering" as he makes a last try to preserve his "rights":

I've come here for years; I have hours of great pleasure, great satisfaction, right here. And that's important to a man. I'm a responsible person, and I'm a GROWNUP. This is my bench, and you have no right to take it away from me. [56]

The weakness and defensiveness Peter exhibits reveal that his ineffective Adapted Child ego state is once more in control. Jerry is finally successful in provoking Peter to yield the counterfeit stamps which Jerry needs to justify the climax of his script, suicide:

Fight for it, then. Defend yourself; defend your bench.  
PETER  
You've pushed me to it. Get up and fight.  
JERRY  
Like a man?  
PETER (Still angry)  
Yes, like a man, if you insist on mocking me even further.

Peter has stood his ground; he has proved he is OK--and Jerry's
collection of violations of his script is complete. He is now entitled to commit suicide. But as he maneuvers Peter into holding the knife for him, he reveals that he has become aware that, even though he used a counterfeit ploy to collect his last hurt, there is a certain validity to his final estimation of Peter. Though Peter's vegetative nature cannot compare to Jerry's animal aggressiveness for ability to act, Jerry cannot help being impressed with Peter's true assets: "... but, you know, as they say on TV all the time—you know—and I mean this, Peter, you have a certain dignity; it surprises me. ..." (57).

Jerry takes out the knife, which Peter believes Jerry means to use against him. The threat finally activates Peter's true Adult:

(Suddenly awakening to the reality of the situation) You are mad! You're stark raving mad! YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME! (But before PETER has time to think what to do, JERRY tosses the knife at PETER'S feet) [58]

Peter's true Adult is capable of imagining his own death and perceiving danger as his Child could not in the earlier transaction.

As Peter's actions prove within the next few moments, it is not cowardice that makes him "horrified" and causes his refusal to pick up the knife—Peter is not just a civilized man; he is a gentleman. Jerry now has to force Peter to play the role Jerry's tragic script requires. After "struggling" unsuccessfully to escape, he finally "darts down, picks up the knife and backs off a little":

I'll give you one last chance; get out of here and leave me alone!

(He holds the knife with a firm arm, but far in front of him, not to attack, but to defend) 58-59
Peter is enraged, but justly so. His Adult does not lose control; he knows that genetics—an Adult concept as well as a sophisticated word—determines the sex of children. Having no previous direct experience with violence, he tries to use reason while he prepares for Jerry's attack. Again, we see Peter is truly OK: he does what he can in a most unexpected situation.

As Peter proves himself OK, it may seem that Jerry's script is violated here unnecessarily, for Jerry already has collected sufficient "hurt" stamps to warrant a suicide on the basis of his reasoning that if others are OK, he himself is to blame for his own troubles. But this final contradiction of Jerry's covert life position is important, as it coincides with his impaling himself on the knife—which Peter holds—with a heavy sigh. Though it comes too late to save his life, Jerry seems to reach a new life position, i.e., "I'm OK--You're OK."

Peter is now calling on the supreme authority: "(Whispering) Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God. ... (He repeats these words many times, very rapidly)" (60). Jerry reacts to Peter's distress as a nurturing, comforting Parent, or even a benevolent God answering a Child's whispered prayer, as he gives the gratitude and forgiveness he had so mercilessly withheld before:

(JERRY is dying; but now his expression seems to change. His features relax, and while his voice varies, sometimes wrenched with pain, for the most part he seems removed from his dying. He smiles)

Thank you Peter. I mean that, now; thank you very much.

(PETER's mouth drops open. He cannot move; he is trans-fixed) [60]
Though Peter doesn't say anything during the next speech of Jerry's, he seems again caught in the Child ego state with his Adult helplessly looking on. Jerry asks: "... could I have planned all this? No... no, I couldn't have. But I think I did" (61). Too late, he becomes conscious that he has directed his own fate. He recognizes that Peter is not to blame for his death, but Peter was necessary for the fulfillment of his script: "Peter... thank you. I came unto you (He laughs, so faintly) and you have comforted me. Dear Peter" (61).

Much has been made of these last lines, equating Jerry and Peter with Jesus and Peter of the New Testament, and surely there are many Biblical echoes, but they are invariably ironic and seem to amuse Jerry even in his agony. But to suggest the audience should make an equation hardly seems justified. That Jerry saw himself as a Christ figure or martyr is undeniable: Jesus is Jerry's mythical hero. But Jerry changed the myth to suit his own needs. Though Jesus also lived with outcasts, He forgave them their sins and reformed them. This Jerry could not do—certainly did not do, as evidenced by his loathing descriptions of his neighbors—because of the compulsion of his script. Just as Jesus was destined to be a sacrifice so that others could be saved, Jerry tries now to help Peter. Peter, the truly gentle man, continues to call on his God for solace and direction; he seems unable to move.

Jerry attempts to provide the guidance Peter requires: "You'd better go now. Somebody might come by, and you don't want to be here
when anyone comes." With his last faint dying breath Jerry selflessly tries to reassure Peter, You're OK and so am I and I know it: "You've lost your bench, but you've defended your honor. And Peter, I'll tell you something now; you're not really a vegetable; it's all right, you're an animal. You're an animal, too" (61). Jerry then wipes clean the knife handle, reminds Peter to come back for his book and ends by repeating the joke which first revealed Peter's Natural Child to him.

Is it Peter's Adult who sees the wisdom of Jerry's advice at the end or his Child who blindly follows the only voice he can hear? This we can never know. Peter's "pitiful howl" offstage may be his Child being permitted to respond by an Adult who has found the data of reality are beyond his control and who turns to God for help as a nonswimmer might seek for someone else to rescue a drowning person. Jerry echoes Peter, "a combination of scornful mimicry and supplication": "Oh . . . my . . . God. (He is dead)" (62). In his greatest extremity, Peter retains his faith while Jerry clings to his doubts that anyone other than Man can help Man. Thus, even Jerry's conversion to the "I'm OK--You're OK" position is psychologically realistic; for though he held this position momentarily, had he gone on to live out a natural lifespan, his long-standing doubts may very well have overcome his newly found wisdom.

Albee, I believe, does not take sides—that is for the audience to do. He does portray two human beings, each having written a different kind of script to cope with the same basic existential position,
"I'm not OK--You're OK." Both Berne and Harris believe that this is the most prevalent position, the one that all men start with and most men retain throughout their lives. One of these characters outgrows his archaic position, but too late to save himself. The other? The play ends and we cannot know for sure whether Jerry, who sees himself as the Son of Man and savior, has helped or hurt Peter. Perhaps the audience can learn vicariously by watching the mistakes of two men not very different from most of us, at least in basic life position. Albee only shows that growth is possible.
CHAPTER III

THREE MORE SHORT ONES:

THE DEATH OF BESSIE SMITH,

THE SANDBOX, AND

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Albee's next three short plays seem quite different from one another in technique; that is, Bessie Smith is divided into a number of small scenes, each with its own setting, and the action and dialogue are traditionally realistic. American Dream takes place all in the same realistic setting and the dialogue borders on the surrealistic and is consciously theatrical. Sandbox uses a surrealistic setting and relies heavily on lighting to indicate passage of time and mood, and the dialogue and actions are definitely stylized and symbolic rather than naturalistic representations. But in all three of these plays Albee again captures the psychological realism that he demonstrated in his first play. They also show a growing complexity in the kinds of relationships and interactions Albee undertakes to dramatize. The Zoo Story, being limited to homogenderal interactions, is not really typical of Albee's work, in that the play avoids showing the psychological games men and women play together. The next

1 I coin this term in preference to the common word "homosexual" which can imply more than transpires in The Zoo Story, and thereby confuse my meaning in this passage.
three plays we'll examine illustrate these male-female games very well.

The Death of Bessie Smith has had a mixed critical reception from the outset, with much of the adverse commentary bearing on its characterization.² Strangely, it is not so much that critics do not believe in the vividness of the characters as portrayed; rather critics often take the tone of not liking the characters as they are shown. For instance, Michael Rutenberg faults the play for not providing someone for the audience to side with, "a person whose greatness we could have been drawn to."³ This comment implies that audiences always need a strong and sympathetic character with which to identify and seems narrowly arbitrary in conceiving the possibilities of the drama. Robert Brustein makes a complaint about Albee's elusive themes, bemoaning Albee's lack of "commitment," and treating his ambiguity and balance as if they were faults, rather than excellencies in reproducing the tenor of human relationships. Given Brustein's announced value system, it is not surprising that he finds Intern's motivation in pursuing the "malignant" Nurse "unaccountable."⁴

Michael Rutenberg, in a typical exegesis, relies heavily on Philip Wylie's description of "momism" to dismiss the need for further exami-


nation of Nurse's character, a trick of damning her for the "sins" of all women who overstep their power over their sons, even though Nurse has no children, and is not shown in a mothering relationship with any of the other characters. "Momism," like the malignant "bitch" label, seems to be a useful concept which is misapplied here to oversimplify the role of woman. We will discuss the "bitch" figure later.

By contrast, in defending this play, Anne Paolucci claims that Nurse is "by far the most interesting and articulate figure" in it, but thinks she is an "embittered, evil-possessed villain." Interestingly, Paolucci finds Father "even worse" but maintains that "since he has little impact on the action of the play, his part is less significant." Jack, she believes, is "the symbol of naive, unsuspecting goodness," and she finds the main conflict of the play is between Nurse and Orderly.

A middle ground is held by Ruby Cohn, who finds Nurse "the only coherent character" in the play. Cohn does not blame Nurse for Bessie's death, though she finds Nurse personally unattractive. I hope to show that careful study applying the principles of TA can also make the other characters comprehensible; moreover, the blame for Bessie's death falls on all of them, including Bessie herself,

5 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, pp. 66, 69-70.


though Albee wisely avoids showing Bessie's complicity. Nearly all the assumptions of the critics can be modified by TA to make the play not only coherent as a whole, but also successful in sustaining an important theme which unifies the play: oppression breeds oppression.  

Of course, Nurse is not a character with whom most of the audience will presumably identify, but she is far from comparable to Iago in evil "otherness" about which nothing can be understood. Rather than simply label her a bitch in order to dismiss her as unworthy of our attention, Albee encourages us to see the genesis of her trouble. She, like Bessie, is partly victim, partly active participant in perpetuating a system of socially sanctioned oppression. She is just one link in a long chain of power which does not begin with Father nor end with Intern or even Orderly. This is not to claim that the interpretation of Nurse as bitch is totally without validity as the "momism" argument seems to be. It is, however, not altogether adequate to describe the ego states Nurse displays.

Let us establish at this point that the most widely-recognized authorities in TA have as yet described no clear picture of the bitch figure. Berne, Harris, and Steiner do talk at length of a

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8 I am indebted to George Wellwarth's analysis in The Theater of Protest and Paradox (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 278, although I cannot accept his conclusion that the play fails because Nurse is "an entirely incredible character as portrayed." I must also acknowledge Jean Gould's interpretation in Modern American Playwrights (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1966), pp. 278-279. Gould sees the theme of the play as "the destructive force of blind prejudice."
"Witch Mother" (or Electrode), the shadowy counterpart of the "Fairy Godmother." Depending on whether the Witch or Fairy Godmother is present in the mother, the young person will be programed with a good or bad script. Either Witch or Fairy is capable of giving an injunction to either son or daughter, though most usually the programing is determined by the parent of the opposite sex of any given child. Furthermore, the female parent has an equally influential counterpart, the Ogre Father or the Jolly Giant, ready to command the destiny of girls in scripty families. When a person of either sex interacts with another person of either sex in a repetitive pattern of transactions which result in a payoff for both psychologically, both are victims of Parental programing which occurred long before.

Games are always played for mutual benefit, or one person will pack up his or her marbles and quit. For instance, if a wife or husband "gets well" under TA therapy and gives up gameplaying, she or he may often divorce or be divorced from the spouse who no longer can play customary family games one-handed. It is significant that Albee's characters never mention divorce as a way out of the often painful games demanded by their scripts, because this indicates that they are continuing to get paid off by the strokes they earn. At the end of The Death of Bessie Smith, though Nurse is not married to Intern, there is the clear threat-promise that their relationship will not terminate; neither will leave the hospital; neither will give up games.

Although the original protocol for the kind of games Albee usu-
ally portrays may have dealt with two opposite sexed individuals (i.e., mother and son or father and daughter, the older always influencing the younger generation), games are more than just a traditional battle between the sexes, especially the battle in which the ideal woman yields gracefully at the end to be dominated by the virile man—even though at least one game, "Gee You're Wonderful, Mr. Murgatroyd," may seem to result in such acquiescence. As we saw in analyzing The Zoo Story, this game can be enjoyed by players of the same gender, as long as both players admit that one is more socially admirable, thus paying off both by confirming their respective existential positions. A happy ending to a Taming-of-the-Shrew plot can be wrought only if the woman accepts her role. In Bessie Smith, we can surmise from Nurse's innuendos that Father plays this game with the mayor and Orderly plays it with Intern.

Some work is now in progress to develop more terminology to describe the possible roles for women, enlarging on the groundwork of Berne, Harris, and Steiner. For example, Dean Niles, D. Mn., is currently working out women's scripts in some detail. Niles postulates that most American women are scripted into at least one of four major roles: Servant, Bitch, Madonna, or Whore,9 and the different demands

9 These terms are taken from unpublished material prepared by Dr. Niles for distribution at the TA seminar featuring Dr. Thomas Harris, held at Harper College in Palatine, IL, Jan. 18–20, 1974, and sponsored by TA Associates, Ltd., of Rolling Meadows, IL, of which Dr. Niles is a director. Dr. Niles reports that he is establishing script checklists for these roles now and invites experiential reports from women and clinicians.
of each of these scripts could produce a great deal of pressure on a woman. Nurse, for instance, may be seen as trying to fulfill the Servant's role by becoming a nurse and by taking care of Father. She is thwarted in both cases, first by Father's inability to accept her nurturing, though he demands it, and second by being assigned to admissions rather than being a "floor nurse" (which name smacks of Cinderella).

She might like to be Madonna, the most honored of Women's roles and a position compatible with the image of the Southern Belle, but Nurse is frustrated from filling this post by a lack of children. She resists being cast in the alternate role of Whore, though both Father and Intern try to push her into it. Thus, all that seems left for her is to Bitch ineffectively; for after all, she succeeds in dominating neither Father nor Intern. It is true that she dominates Orderly, but her dominance in this relationship is authorized by social custom whereby the sanctioning of male dominance over female is superseded by historical legal approval of white oppression of blacks, rather than by the force of her own personality. Her blithering threats to Intern at the end are innocuous despite their tone. She has no real power, and Intern recognizes that there is really no power.

10 Eric Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello? (New York: Grove Press, 1972), devotes an entire chapter [pp. 231-243] to explaining the Cinderella scripts commonly found. While much of the fable does not, obviously, coincide with Nurse's situation, Nurse is unprotected by her mother (whose absence is never explained by Albee).

nothing she can do to force his compliance. His sneering defiance, though it comes from his ineffectual rebellious Child ego state, clearly establishes her failure to control the situation, for all her Bitching.

Elizabeth Janeway, a scholar of women's mythology, has identified six women's mythic roles which fit into the TA conception of the tripartite ego amazingly well. Janeway sees each of the three roles that women are expected to fulfill as having a "dark" or rebellious side, and each of the roles parallel the function of one of the observable parts of the ego. Thus, she identifies the three basic "desirable" functions of woman as Mother, Housewife, and Wife, which correspond to the realm of competency of the Parent, Adult, and Child ego states respectively. For the obverse side of the Mother, Janeway uses the same terminology as TA, the Witch, and she also cites fairytale and folk mythology to support this usage, just as TA does. 12 She also identifies the shadow role of the dominant male as the Ogre, 13 just as TA does. She identifies the negative side of the Housewife, whom she also calls the public, pleasing woman, as the Shrew. For the shadow of the Wife, or the private, loving woman, she reserves the term Bitch. The separation of Housewife from Wife and the distinction between Bitch and Shrew seem important to TA, as their actions are

13 Ibid., p. 125.
14 Ibid., p. 199.
governed by different parts of the ego. To fill the void in TA terminology in this area, therefore, I will use both Janeway's and Niles' labels to fit TA concepts as they seem appropriate.

In this play Nurse is not shown as either Fairy Godmother or as Witch Mother. No children fall under her influence, however malignant she may seem. She is, however, torn between the dark and the acceptable sides of both her Adult and her Child, and she becomes caught between the conflicts of these roles in her real life with the myth of the Southern Belle which is not a role she can realistically choose.

In the scene with Father, she submits to his commands to turn off the "goddam nigger records" and wearily caters to his hypochondria. It becomes obvious that she is the Adult who works to support the family financially when she mentions the expensive cigars she cannot afford to buy him, but which he insists on smoking because they are the mayor's brand. Yet she has to submit to asking for (and being refused) a ride to work in Father's car, symbol of male independence of motion, which she may well have paid for also. She certainly is sarcastic about his refusal: "You going to sit here with a shotgun and make sure the birds don't crap on it . . . or something?" (75); but in spite of her shrewishness she submits to his decision to refuse her the favor. In fact, she indicates by using her "tone"

15 Edward Albee, *The Zoo Story*, *The Death of Bessie Smith*, and *The Sandbox* (New York: Coward McCann & Geoghegan, 1960), p. 73. All other quotations from *The Death of Bessie Smith* and *The Sandbox* in this chapter are from this edition and page numbers will appear in parentheses immediately following where necessary.
that she had expected to be refused before she asked. Her antagonizing
tone, of course, insures the negative response which affirms her sub-
servient position. Like the Orderly later, she is not content with
her position, but she knows her "place" and does not really expect to
triumph in any battle of wills against her Father. The Orderly, like-
wise, does not expect to rebel successfully against Nurse's petty
oppression. Both reaffirm their life positions of "I'm not OK--
you're OK."

Dominating the theme of the play is the ironic, outdated South-
ern code of honor and the tradition of the Southern Belle who is ex-
pected to do nothing except bear her husband's children, decorate the
home and spend husband's or father's money. She should be sexually
desirable yet chaste, and she is totally unattainable for the black
man. This figure is parodied both by Nurse's useful profession,
which ironically prevents her from nursing, and by Father's anti-
heroic posture as a lackey to a not-very-admirable mayor. Father
comes closer to fitting the picture of the parasitic Southern Belle
than Nurse does. This ideal helpless southern woman, if she ever did
truly exist, may have been amusing to a few individuals, but generally
harmed most men and women, both white and black, by her self-centered
shortsightedness. She could only be cultivated and indulged in a
system dependent on slave labor to ease her life, and the white man
treated her as an object to be possessed or coveted rather than as a
person. This paradigm of virtue and beauty whose position essentially
"I'm OK--You're not OK (because no matter what you do you'll never
deserve me)," could only be maintained at the cost of many individual's
self-respect, including her own if she had any intelligence at all. This myth results in injunctions from Father to Nurse which conflict with the reality of their relationship: Be Chaste, Fragile, Dependent, Desirable but Untouchable. But Father needs Nurse to be strong enough to support him, loving and loyal. He is physically dependent upon her Adult, the Servant, while he fears her Child's needs for sexual love, which he is forbidden to fulfill. His recognition of her sexual attractiveness leads him to taunt her into playing "Uproar,"¹⁶ so they can avoid the proscribed incest. The scene ends in the predictable slammed door.

At one point, when Nurse says, "(Under her breath) You make me sick" (78), she speaks the psychological truth. Her Father's unreasonable demands for her unquestioning and unrewarded obedience and submission to his whims are what are making the Nurse socially sick. Though she is helpless to challenge overtly the system of oppression that permits her Father to domineer, she has learned to let off steam by playing "Uproar," "Harried,"¹⁷ and "Blemish."¹⁸ Clearly, Nurse

¹⁶ Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove Press, 1964), pp. 130-131. "Uproar" begins as a way to ease sexual tension between fathers and daughters (especially when the mother is dead, frigid, or otherwise absent), and is then played with the spouse whenever either partner wishes to avoid sexual intercourse. It may also be a part of foreplay for some couples.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 101-103. For a time the housewife playing "Harried" may be able to keep up with all the demands made on the "Perfect" wife, but she eventually has a breakdown, as Nurse does.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 113. This game, which puts the player "up" by finding a way to put the opponent "down" is "usually based on sexual insecurity, and its aim is reassurance."
feels the demands made on her are unreasonable, but since the overt social code reinforces Father's authority to make such demands, she relishes becoming a harried martyr. Being able to find one another's weaknesses helps both Father and Nurse avoid their unmet sexual needs. Father jibes at Nurse for liking uncouth sensual music; Nurse retaliates by complaining she is not properly appreciated. Nurse learns by example that those who have power use it to torment the helpless; it's the way of the world. She later tries to imitate Father's model when she is in the position of power, playing games with Orderly and less successfully, with Intern. The games between Nurse and Father, it should be noted, are second degree games which are somewhat "socially beneficial" in that they alleviate the strain of their living together, and they are based in love, not hate.

When Father responds to Nurse's calmness with impotent anger and pathetic flailing of his cane (indicating that his rebellious Child is in command), Nurse becomes tender and tries sincerely to nurse her Father. But her attempts at conciliation are rejected, of course. Though love binds Nurse to Father, their games continue in the pattern he sets: he will not treat her like a pampered Southern Belle, yet he expects her to act like one and taunts her because Intern doesn't treat her chivalrously either. Nurse is caught in a vise by love and convention. Amacher claims that "the scene ends on a note of mutual hate," ignoring not only Nurse's attempted

19 Amacher, Edward Albee, p. 63.
tenderness, but also Father's childlike plea for her attention: "If you were a... what-do-you-call-it... if you were a floor nurse... if you were, you'd give your patients better attention than you give me" (80). Tacitly Father admits he feels unworthy of the affection he believes she is capable of giving to someone else. Intern later uses the same ploy, but he plays a much harder game. Nurse's reminder to her Father that his behavior is inconsistent echoes Peter's advice to Jerry about one not being able to have everything he wants:

What are you, Father? What are you? Are you sick, or not? Are you a... a... a poor cripple, or are you planning to get yourself up out of that chair, after I go to work, and drive yourself down to the Democratic Club and sit around with that bunch of loafers? Make up your mind, Father; you can't have it every which way. [80]

In this tirade she also reminds the audience through double entendre that her Father and his cronies are far from democratic in their actions. It also raises the existential question of a person's own responsibility for determining the way he or she continues to live. Of course, Nurse and Father resume their games even though Nurse has shown herself capable of unmasking the foundation on which they are based. In later scenes with Intern, we will see Nurse take the dominant role in parallel games, but this time she is blocked by the fact that the myth of the Southern Belle has faded and by the realization that Intern is not bound to her by love as Father is.

Though Nurse shows she is fully aware of Father's shortcomings and absurd postures, she reveals her reliance on Father for support when she boasts to Orderly that her Father knows what's what in the
world of affairs. She backs up Father's opinion that Franco will be victorious in Spain with a childlike assertion: "I've told you my father is a . . . a historian, so he isn't just anybody. His opinion counts for something special. It still counts for something special" (122). Under stress, she wishes to return to the comfort of the myth: Father knows best and Father will protect the helpless girl.

When Intern teases Nurse that "The west is burning . . ." (99), he implies not only the sunset of his passion, but also the demise of the old values of the South, and perhaps of all Western civilization. They go on to light verbal love play, but Nurse is reminded that enough of the old code still remains to proscribe her sexual activity. Later when Intern taunts Nurse that he is "probably the only white man under sixty in two counties who has not had the pleasure of . . ." (113), he not only echoes Father's childish pouting, he is also directly attacking her vestiges of honor, and she responds with impotent rage similar to Father's earlier tantrum. Intern, however, does not show the kind of nurturant love toward Nurse that Nurse had displayed toward her Father. Nurse has been correct in her surmisal that Intern's passion is more lust than love.

Though Nurse has normal sexual appetites and might enjoy making love with Intern, the code of the South holds her in check. Nurse, Intern, and Father all tacitly accept the part of the code that regards sex as "favors" that women bestow either for pity or money out of wedlock, or for protection and financial support in marriage. Nurse is socially proper in rejecting Intern's proposal as merely a ruse for seduction. Intern can talk freely of marriage, knowing full
well that he cannot economically afford a wife. Since Nurse is already supporting Father, she is unlikely to take his proposal seriously. However she responds to Intern's sexual advances, Nurse cannot win. If she yields, she will be a Whore; when she refuses, she is a Bitch.

Now, whereas Nurse's threats of revenge to Intern have been relatively mild ones of making him cater to the myth of feminine helplessness by waiting on her every small comfort (a game which they have shown both enjoy thoroughly when it doesn't go beyond the first or second degree), when she trumps his hand, Intern makes a vicious comeback, almost a curse:

I just had a lovely thought . . . that maybe sometime when you are sitting there at your desk opening mail with that stiletto you use for a letter opener, you might slip and tear open your arm . . . then you could come running into the emergency . . . and I could be there when you came running in, blood coming out of you like water out of a faucet . . . and I could take a hold of your arm . . . and just hold it . . . just hold it . . . and watch your blood flow. . . .

In going to the third degree game with its threat of death as a payoff, he mocks his profession of healing far more bitterly than Nurse's mere impotency as an admissions nurse. She follows his lead, responding in kind: "(Grabs up the letter opener . . . holds it up) This? More likely between your ribs!" (120). Here double entendre reminds the audience that Eve is made of the same stuff as Adam.

Those critics who, like Paolucci, see the principal conflict of the play between Nurse and Orderly might benefit by directly contrasting the transactions Nurse engages in with Father and with Intern to those she engages in with Orderly. Just as Father browbeats Nurse
about her ineffectual "messing around" in the Intern's car (although openly going to a motel or to Intern's room is strictly forbidden), Nurse plays the hand with all the aces when she is "maliciously solicitous" to Orderly about his attempts to placate the white men which result in his alienating his family without gaining the desired acceptance from "the Man." She asks, "Is it true, young man, that you are now an inhabitant of no-man's-land, on the one side shunned and disowned by your brethren, and on the other an object of contempt and derision to your betters?" (95). No one knows better than Nurse how bitter such a double bind can be; yet, perhaps, she may be driven to torment Orderly by similar drives to those which motivate Father. Sexual relations between white women and black men are as unthinkable as incest. In fact, it is by suggesting miscegenation that Intern is able to arouse her fury. The magnitude of Nurse's response is a measure of the power of the proscription. Both Nurse and Orderly see through their respective oppressors, but each is unable to fight the social sanctions which demand their acquiescence. Nurse does suggest an out for Orderly—to go North—but reminds him that if he stays, he plays. She too has no choice but to play Father's games as long as she remains under "his" roof.

Those who see Nurse only as an evil Bitch figure tend to misinterpret Intern as an idealist who is the victim of Nurse's hardheartedness and then fault Albee for not making Intern stronger. If the Interns of the South, and North too, were better people, there probably wouldn't have been a Bessie Smith, blues singer. Intern reveals
that his idealism is based on childish, adventurous escapism, and his liberal, tolerant platitudes mask a shallow rebellion. He sees a "cause" in Spain worthy of his sacrifice but he does not recognize any injustices in Memphis which merit his attention. He tells Nurse in an unguarded moment: "It is a criminal offense to set fire to interns [i.e., whites] . . . orderlies [i.e., blacks] you may burn at will, unless you have other plans for them . . ." (108).

In the conversation where Nurse tries to persuade Intern to hustle the mayor (the very plan for which she had been mocking Orderly), Intern reminds the audience how important a man's car is to his self concept. He knows he is not the type for a Cord. Intern also admits openly that his ideals are more romantic than realistic:

You misunderstand me so! I am . . . all right . . . this way . . . My dissatisfactions . . . you call them that . . . my dissatisfactions have nothing to do with loyalties . . . I am not concerned with politics . . . but I have a sense of urgency . . . a dislike of waste . . . stagnation . . . I am stranded . . . here. . . . My talents are not large . . . but the emergencies of the emergency ward of this second-rate hospital in this second-rate state . . . No! . . . it isn't enough [110]

Though he claims that she misunderstands him, he agrees essentially that "people here aren't good enough" for his attentions. He wants to do something grand, something gallant—but not for Nurse or any other Memphis Belle. He feeds hopes to Orderly because Orderly admires him for his grand dreams. When he rushes out to help Bessie, the gesture of rebellion impels him, rather than compassion.

The final scene between Nurse and Orderly before Jack rushes in is an interesting echo of the interplay between Father and Nurse.
This time, Orderly, in the underdog position, remains calm and "contained but angry" (123). Unlike Father, however, Nurse is able to articulate her frustration: "I am sick. I am sick of everything in this hot, stupid, fly-ridden world. I am sick of the disparity between things as they are, and as they should be!" (124). Nurse is able to face the reality that Father, Intern, and Orderly avoid, and the reality is truly sickening. This reality, of which Nurse can see only a small part, is that a social pecking order exists, based not on merit but on accident of color and sex at birth, with the black woman at the very bottom.

The actions which frame Nurse's story reveal the end of this inhumane order. In the first scene Jack meets his old friend Bernie and allows himself to be coaxed into revealing his plans to go North—the Southern Negro's symbol of freedom, dreams, prosperity, recognition. As the scene fades Jack cannot resist the temptation to drink and brag. The game "Mine is Better" is strongly implied and Jack's words in the next scene in which he appears confirm this.

In scene three Jack attempts to rouse Bessie to start their trip northward. He admits he has drunk "a few" and describes his conversation with Bernie. Though at first he emphasizes Bessie's being "free as a bird," he now refers to her as a bird he is "cartin'" around. Subtly, as she does not seem to respond to his prodding, he shifts to threats: her public has not quite forgotten her, but (as Intern later implies to Nurse) this may be her last chance. Like Father, he relies on the woman he loves to support him financially,
but he pretends that he takes care of her:

... an' you gotta hustle for it now. You do; cause if you
don't do somethin', people are gonna stop askin' where you been
the past four-five years ... they're gonna stop askin' anything
at all! You hear? An' if I say downstairs you're rich ... that don't make it so, Bessie. No more, honey. You gotta make
this goddam trip ... you gotta get goin' again. (Pleading)
Baby? Honey? You know I'm not lyin' to you. C'mon now; get
up. We go downstairs to the bar an' have a few ... see my
friend ... an' then we'll get in that car ... and go.
'Cause it's gettin' late, honey ... it's gettin' awful late.

Jack needs to play "Mine is Better" with his possession, Bessie. Al-
though she had seemed immune to his bullying, Bessie responds to
Jack's weakness with acquiescence. Jack then takes her downstairs
to drink some more with his friend Bernie. Drinking, of course, is
probably the last thing Bessie needs, and Jack has already drunk enough
to make his tongue loose, but he cannot resist boasting and showing
off his latest "fat lady." Albee's stage directions indicate "The
sunset is predominant" (85). The sunset, beautiful but fleeting,
symbolizes Bessie's vulnerability. Jack's last words offstage indi-
cate his mood of childish glee: "Ha, ha; thanks; thanks a lot. (Car
door slams. Car motor starts) O.K.; here we go; we're on our way.
(Sound of car motor gunning, car moving off, fading)" (85). The car
here, as elsewhere in this play, symbolizes the man's independent
power of motion and the woman's dependence on him, as the "sunset
dims again."

Now, certainly, Jack is not the only one responsible for Bessie's
death because he drinks and drives. Bessie knowingly complies and ap-
parently willingly depends on Jack, even though Jack seems more inter-
ested in showing her off than in taking care of her. In writing a life script for herself, Bessie chose one typical of many black women. The black woman has traditionally been the victim of both black and white men, as well as of white women. The black woman has raised white children, done the cooking and the laundry, and been deserted by all shades of men to raise her own children as well as she could. Since the emancipation, some black men have exploited their previous slavery to excuse their oppressing, exploiting, mistreating, even deserting all but the strongest of black women.

Out of such continued oppression, long after black men had the vote, the black woman of the South gave birth to the blues—a special kind of jazz which dignified heartbreak and loneliness. At the end of the line in a chain of oppression, the black woman had no one for a scapegoat and so created a great wailing song to celebrate her misery. In TA terms, she embraced her existential position and derived her payoff from witnessing its validation in the real world. Each time she was abused she was comforted by the affirmation of her estimation of her own inferiority and not-OKness. Albee did not need to show Bessie in this play because Bessie is the end of the scapegoat line. Hers is primarily a pathetic\textsuperscript{20} rather than a hamartic tragedy, and Albee avoids the maudlin by not depicting Bessie directly.

The blues, then become a script for the black woman, a script which Bessie fulfills. In a sense Albee prepares the audience for

\textsuperscript{20} Dr. Harris, in a conversation at Harper College, Jan. 20, 1974, acknowledged that not all misfortunes can be ascribed to scripty behavior; some can only be accounted for as accidental—in this case, it is an accident of birth which in large part determines Bessie's death.
Bessie's non-appearance by the mayor's non-appearance. The mayor, for purposes of this play, represents the other end of the chain of oppression, and as such is the real "villain" of the play. The only thing that oppresses him is his own physical ailments, which, while symbolically grotesque, are appropriately at the "seat" of his trouble. Everyone's concern for his comfort and approval is contrasted to everyone's indifference to Bessie's suffering, both physical and spiritual, and everyone's demand that she please.

Near the end of the play, when Jack arrives, he seems to be truly concerned about Bessie for the first time. Like the other characters, the audience does not yet know that there is already no hope for Bessie. Jack admits he is drunk but insists, "I got someone outside . . ." (126). He refuses to be turned away and makes an appeal on the basis of humanity: "Please . . . I got a woman . . ." (128). When he finally tells Nurse who the woman is, he is no longer bragging; he is mourning, for he knows she is already dead and he has waited too long to insist on her right to be treated. He has taken up her protesting wail and even Nurse, the realist, recognizes the individuality of her loss. But none of them, not even the light-skinned Orderly who has some hope of gaining a higher rung on the social ladder—none can understand Jack's act of defiance in bringing the dead woman to a white hospital, an act as futile and as poignant, as melancholy and despondent as the blues themselves. But this defiant gesture of Jack's is as self-serving as Intern's; neither can save Bessie and neither Intern nor Jack admits that the real oppressor is not just "society," but also themselves.
The play ends without a true recognition scene, despite Nurse's "sick" aria. If the audience is led to hope that Nurse has had a true insight into the way things ought to be, her reaction to Jack dashes their hopes. Her idea of the way things ought to be is obviously the way they used to be, or at least the way people say they used to be, in the good old days of the deep South, with its honored traditions. Albee depicts a situation which could not, in historical honesty, supply a recognition scene which would cause the protagonist to change.

Admittedly, judged by Aristotelian standards,\(^\text{21}\) the play may be less than satisfying. It tastes too much of Brecht. But the play has the power of a class action suit for those who are willing to face the psychological cause of Bessie's death: human beings exploiting and oppressing other human beings. Albee portrays a relationship between men and women and between whites and blacks, a situation which has not altered greatly in the last hundred years despite legislative attempts to provide social protection to the underdogs. The unwritten laws passed from one generation to the next prove harder to upset than romantic idealists like Intern and Orderly might like to imagine, both of whom would like to solve their problems simply by turning their backs on Memphis. They are not alone, of course, in their inability to recognize that any problem exists except insofar as certain members of our society have been deemed "maladjusted" to

\(^{21}\) Amacher, Edward Albee, pp. 72-74, discusses why the play does not fit the classical conception of tragedy.
the roles open to them. TA recognizes that such problems as Nurse's result more from adjustment to societal demands than from maladjustment.

Albee has said he does not know whether the play is "a better play than I had at first conceived, or whether, in its final form, the piece is only diffuse and directionless; I know only that the play, printed here, is, whatever its failings or successes may be, most exactly what I had to say on the matter."22

At first glance, Albee's next plays, The American Dream and The Sandbox, seem quite unlike The Death of Bessie Smith, except for their brevity, the male-female conflicts, and the theme of social criticism in all three. In writing The American Dream Albee moves on to a new theatrical challenge (for him), working with a recognizably surrealistic dialogue,23 even though the setting is realistic.24 In The Sandbox, he goes even further from realism, using a surrealistic setting as well. But in the representation of psychological reality, Albee again reveals a masterful understanding of what makes people continue to transact, even when these transactions are painful.

22 From the back cover of The Zoo Story, op. cit.

23 Amacher, Edward Albee, p. 166, voices the opinion that "too much" is made of "its similarity in matter and technique to Ionesco's The Bald Soprano." However much is too much, the similarities are undeniable, though the intention and effect of Albee's work may be quite different from Ionesco's.

24 Nelvin Vos, Eugene Ionesco and Edward Albee: A Critical Essay (Grand Rapid, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), p. 26, notes that "Other than its location in a well appointed suburb, the setting of the play [The American Dream] is deliberately unspecific. The characters too, as usual in the Theater of the Absurd, have no family names and have no particular vocations."
Since both plays use the same principal characters, we can discuss them together.

Mommy has been almost universally interpreted and dismissed as a Bitch; Daddy as her castrated victim. Grandma is often seen as a symbol of the good sense of a dying age and the "vigorous old frontier spirit." Mommy is indeed a Bitch in the sense that she accepts the monetary benefits of her marriage contract but withholds the sexual favors which are her part of the deal. One critic sees Mommy as "a wildly exaggerated study of the emancipation of women." But this interpretation ignores the fact that Mommy is dependent on Daddy's continued financial support, something of which Mommy herself is painfully aware. Although she rebels, she does so from a position of dependency, and she must get her way by playing "Gee You're Wonderful, Mr. Murgatroyd," as she does to get Daddy to open the door for Mrs. Barker.

Viewed through TA, Mommy and Daddy share the same bottle containing 50% of its capacity. To Mommy, it's half full, to Daddy, half empty. Mommy is a Winner, Daddy a Loser. Both are scripty; attitude makes the only difference and both cling desperately to their respec-

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25 Robert Brustein, "Fragments from a Cultural Explosion," p. 47, simplifies the triangular relationship of the main characters as "aggressive Mommy and castrated Daddy tormenting sweet-crusty Grandma."

26 Cohn, Dialogue in American Drama, p. 137.

tive positions in spite of any evidence to the contrary. Winning in this case is determined by the goals Mommy set for herself. In The American Dream Grandma reports Mommy's primary goal:

> When she was no more than eight years old she used to climb up on my lap and say in a sickening little voice, "When I gwo up, I'm going to mahwy a wich old man; I'm going to set my wittle were end right down in a tub o' butter, that's what I'm going to do."29

Mommy also achieves other less tangible goals than marrying wealth, like "getting satisfaction." She is at first thwarted by the "chairman" (emphasis mine) of her woman's club, which results in her making a "terrible scene." When Daddy points out that Mommy got the same hat (the one she originally wanted, of course) their exchange underscores the clarity of Mommy's vision; and she ends by reassuring him: "You can't get satisfaction; just try. I can get satisfaction, but you can't" (16). Determined to be a Winner, Mommy regroups her forces and manipulates. She can be stymied momentarily by other Winners such as Grandma and Mrs. Barker, but she tenaciously perseveres and ultimately turns every situation to her satisfaction.

Later, when Mrs. Barker arrives, Mommy "gets satisfaction" again: when at first Mrs. Barker insists her hat is different from

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28 Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello?, p. 425, observes that Winners and Losers in soap operas are established simply by getting or losing a man.

29 Edward Albee, The American Dream (New York: Coward-McCann, 1960), p. 25. All subsequent quotations from this play in this chapter are also taken from this text and page numbers will appear in parentheses immediately following each as appropriate.
Mommy's—its cream-colored—Mommy acquiesces to Mrs. Barker's reminder, "Now, now; you seem to forget who I am" (37). But Mommy then applies Mrs. Barker's own logic to trump: "I won't have you smoking in my house, and that's that! You're a professional woman" (38). In the end she not only get satisfaction in the form of the American Dream, but she also gets rid of Grandma who has become an embarrassment now that she is no longer needed to shelter Mommy from Daddy's unwelcome sexual demands.

Grandma is the only one who knows Mommy's games well enough to compete verbally against her daughter because she's had more experience than Mommy. When Daddy ventures the suggestion that Grandma might have something to say, the following exchange takes place:

**MOMMY**

Nonsense. Old people have nothing to say; and if old people did have something to say, nobody would listen to them.

(To GRANDMA)

You see? I can pull that stuff just as easy as you can.

**GRANDMA**

Well, you got the rhythm, but you don't really have the quality. Besides, you're middle-aged.

**MOMMY**

I'm proud of it!

**GRANDMA**

Look, I'll show you how it's really done. Middle-aged people think they can do anything, but the truth is that middle-aged people can't do most things as well as they used to. Middle-aged people think they're special because they're like everybody else. We live in the age of deformity. You see? Rhythm and content. You'll learn. 44-45

30 Ruby Cohn, Dialogue in American Drama, p. 138, sees the distinction between beige, wheat, and cream as a meaningless nuance. Beige, undyed and unbleached, has at least neutral and perhaps even healthy connotations; whereas wheat smacks of peasant associations and cream suggests aristocratic or affluent origins. Thus the differences in these words as descriptive colors, while subtle, are not totally irrelevant to the power play.
Grandma, like Mommy, appears to have a Winner's script, though she has an "until" clause. In *The American Dream* Grandma cannot abandon her daughter until she has seen Mommy happy with the next generation. And she cannot also truly succeed until she disguises herself as a man to win financial independence in the baking contest with "Uncle Henry's Day-Old Cake," which is really store-bought. When Daddy complains that he does not care to be surrounded by women and wishes there were "some men around here" (45), Mrs. Barker agrees, and Grandma reasons, "I don't hardly count as a woman, so can I say my piece?" (45). Clearly, Grandma realizes how little women are valued except by obvious mental defectives like Mrs. Barker's brother, the Village Idiot, who's "even been written up in psychiatric journals" for being the "chief exponent of Woman Love in this whole country" (43).

Grandma competes with Mommy for lack of any other worthy competitor, to the point of competing for things she probably does not want, like sleeping with Daddy (26). Her attitude is crucial in making the audience see her as a Winner at the end of *The Sandbox*. She is not defeated by the Angel of Death; she welcomes him and praises him, and even though she understands his shortcomings, she finds him beautiful.

In all their exchanges, Mommy and Grandma, both Winners, usually balance fairly evenly as they attack and counterattack in their continuing games. One critic claims that *The American Dream* reveals "the impossibility of communication even in the closest of relation-
But Mommy and Grandma do communicate and understand one another all too well. And the tension between Mommy and Grandma is particularly interesting if one takes everything they say to and about each other as expressing a true feeling, even when these feelings seem incompatible. That is, their contradictions do not attempt to hide what they mean; rather they reveal the conflicting emotions of protective love and competition which mother and daughter feel for one another in a world where the accepted way for a woman to get ahead is to gain the protection of some man and where every woman competes against every other for a supporter.

The transactions between Mommy and Mrs. Barker are also sometimes astonishingly frank. Had he used naturalistic dialogue, perhaps, Albee might have gradually established Mrs. Barker's scorn for Mommy's and Daddy's home by having her slyly damn all the furnishings with faint praise. But with a surrealistic slash Mrs. Barker exclaims, "My, what an unattractive apartment you have" (35) just moments after she arrives. And she continues to the end: "What dreadful sauterne" (92). Mommy accepts each of Mrs. Barker's insults complacently; as a Winner she ignores challenges to losing battles and saves her efforts for times when she knows she has the upper hand.

For all the hostility between Mommy and Grandma, and Mommy's power play against Grandma, Mommy is "near tears" when Mrs. Barker tells her the van man has taken Grandma away. She insists, "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. Grandma? Grandma?" (87).
And even Mrs. Barker recognizes the similarity between Mommy and
Grandma when Grandma enjoys being able to give or withhold information
at will:

GRANDMA
Oh my; that feels good. It's been so long since anybody im­
plored me. Do it again. Implore me some more.
MRS. BARKER
You're your daughter's mother, all right! 56

And when Grandma is correcting Mommy's usage of the term enema
bottles, Grandma explains:

She means enema bags, but she doesn't know the difference.
Mommy comes from extremely bad stock. And besides, when Mommy
was born . . . well, it was a difficult delivery, and she had
a head shaped like a banana. 47

Later, of course, Grandma claims that she herself gets her resource-
fulness from "pioneer stock" (75). In The Sandbox Albee implies
strongly that Mommy is a bastard, since Grandma is 86 (her age in
both plays) and Mommy is 55, and Grandma explains that her farmer
husband died when she was 30, "and I had to raise that big cow over
there all by my lonesome" (150).

Neither Mommy nor Grandma admits defeat as they constantly
top one another's witticisms. It is clear that Mommy learned her
role from Grandma when she tells the story of Grandma's sending her
to school with her lunch in a nicely wrapped box. Grandma "sacri-
ficed" the dinner she cooked each evening for Mommy to take in her
lunchbox the next day. But the sacrifice was more apparent than
real, since Grandma eventually got to eat the chicken legs and choco-
late cake (a Child's idea of a perfect meal) cooked the day before which Mommy faithfully brought back every evening. Thus they both played Martyr but both ate. Mommy explains how she learned to manipulate others from a position of seeming weakness by using their condescension. When Daddy comments on her deceitfulness she defends her duplicity, "We were very poor! But then I married you, Daddy, and now we're very rich" (22). And Mommy is painfully explicit about the terms of the marriage contract as she understands it.

Mommy is anxious to get rid of Grandma because Grandma will not let her win or dominate totally, which disturbs Mommy's self concept. Mommy wanted to play Martyr for Grandma by marrying Daddy and bringing Grandma along, without allowing Grandma to make a mutual "sacrifice." At first Grandma had earned her keep by letting Mommy sleep in her room when Daddy "got fresh." Grandma complains that she gave up going into the fur business or becoming a singer for Mommy's sake, though no one seems to take this seriously but Daddy, who claims he never heard her mention this ambition to be a singer. Mommy simply says she forgot to tell him and dismisses it as past history. Now Grandma insists on doing the cooking and housework, polishing silver and moving furniture to earn her keep. When Grandma reveals how Mommy really feels about Daddy and again when Grandma describes Mommy's banana-shaped head at birth, Mommy complains of Grandma's ingratitude and she finally threatens to have the van man come for Grandma. When Grandma is not intimidated, Mommy tries to lessen her humiliation by making Daddy share it. She tells Mrs.
Barker, "You stop listening to her; she'll say anything. Just the other night she called Daddy a hedgehog" (48). Mommy looks forward to the day when Daddy dies: "And when you do, Grandma and I can live by ourselves . . . if she's still here" (23). Mommy loves Grandma but would like to "do something with her!" (23) so Mommy can be the top Winner.

Daddy is obviously a Loser, despite his wealth. Not only has he lost his vital organs in his operation and failed to win Mommy's love and respect with her hand in marriage, Daddy has been thwarted in his career ambitions as well. Mommy explains, "All his life, Daddy has wanted to be a United States Senator; but now . . . why now he's changed his mind, and for the rest of his life he's going to want to be Governor . . . it would be nearer the apartment, you know" (42). By aspiring to unrealistic goals he insures he will never get satisfaction. But even though he no longer wishes to sleep with Mommy or even to sleep in the apartment, he needs (loves?) Mommy because she continually reinforces his self-image as a Loser.

In The Sandbox Mommy and Daddy reinforce one another's self-images perfectly: Daddy agrees that whatever Mommy says is fine and Mommy accepts this acquiescence with a little laugh indicating a payoff. Though Mommy claims she "can't bear it" (154) to lose Grandma, she finally persuades herself "We must put away our tears, take off our mourning . . . and face the future. It's our duty" (155). Brainwashing herself even further, she finally turns loss to triumph as she looks at Grandma who is faking death, "(Before the
sandbox; shaking her head) Lovely! It's . . . it's hard to be sad . . . she looks . . . so happy. (With pride and conviction) It pays to do things well" (156). The appearance of things means more to Mommy and Daddy than the reality. Only her heavy sigh reveals that Mommy has not completely fooled herself as to her loss.

Grandma's reaction to Mommy's shallow grief is scorn; she knows that she herself has most to lose. But note that Grandma is not just the passive victim of Mommy and Daddy in The Sandbox. Even more clearly than Bessie, she actively embraces her fate. She directs the lighting technician (as Mommy had previously directed the musician) to wait until she half covers herself with sand. Only after she has succeeded in fooling Mommy and Daddy into believing she is already dead does she find she has trapped herself and cannot get out of the sand. This recognition quickly produces "resignation," then a "sweet smile," and a final assurance that the Angel of Death is both "welcome" and "dear" (157-158).

The ending of The American Dream is perhaps less grim, but nonetheless bittersweet. When the Young Man enters, Grandma at first thinks he might be the van man, come to take her away. She doesn't find him frightening; she recognizes him very quickly as the American Dream. She claims, "All those other people, they don't know what they're talking about" (70). All those other people can be assumed to be the Mommies and the Mrs. Barkers who have settled for the Daddies and the husbands who live in a swing, rather than the physical fulfillment which the Young Man promises with the face he himself
describes: "Yes, it's quite good isn't it? Clean-cut, midwest farm boy type, almost insultingly good-looking in a typically American way. Good profile, straight nose, honest eyes, wonderful smile..." (70). This sexually attractive Young Man is out of work and looking to do "Oh, almost anything... almost anything that pays. I'll do anything for money" (72). He appears to share Mommy's morality and yet he hints that he will willingly service Grandma, whereas Mommy resisted Daddy's sexual demands. Even though Grandma prevents him from coming any closer, she assures him she might not mind making love with him but she's afraid of how it would look to others. Grandma here shows the same quality of concern about appearances that Mommy displayed in disposing of Grandma in The Sandbox, as well as the same suppression of her true feelings. Both Grandma and Mommy know what they want most, however, and both do seem at least fleetingly aware of what they give up in order to get their fondest desires.

The Young Man relates a story which corresponds and contrasts to the "hint" Grandma had given Mrs. Barker, which was the best she could do because, Grandma explains, "I'm a muddleheaded old woman" (57). Though Grandma's tale is only thinly disguised, Mrs. Barker has an amazingly hard time grasping Grandma's intent in her comic-grotesque narrative which lends itself to a figurative interpretation of the mutilation of the bumble. Mrs. Barker's direct, blunt, literal, (parody of a masculine?) mind is baffled by oblique nuances. By contrast, Grandma modestly ventures that she may be "nearly old enough" (77) to understand the true meaning of the Young Man's experi-
ences. In fact, she understands broader implications of his tale than he himself does, of course. In addition to explaining the demise of his own spiritual and emotional life, he tells an allegory for the evisceration of the American Dream. And the story finally becomes an explanation of the death of his Natural Child:

... there are more losses, but it all comes down to this: I no longer have the capacity to feel anything. I have no emotions. I have been drained, torn asunder . . . disemboweled. I have, now, only my person . . . my body, my face. I use what I have . . . I let people love me . . . I accept the syntax around me, for while I know I cannot relate . . . I know I must be related to. [78]

As the Young Man tells his horror tale, Grandma repeatedly addresses him as "child," and at the conclusion of the story repeats, "Oh, my child; my child" (79).

She is not only showing pity and compassion for his plight; it is her Child, too, who understands what it means to have to give up her own sexual pleasure in order to please others. This time as she talks again in riddles about "someone very much like you" she may be grieving for herself and for Mommy as well as for the twin of the Young Man.

In the Preface to this play written May 24, 1961, Albee says he meant The American Dream to be "an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society" (8). Insofar as Americans praise "well adjusted behavior" (i.e., adapted to Parental demands), and suppress and/or repress the expression of the Natural Child; insofar as we value wealth as an end rather than a means to other goods; this substitution is well dramatized in this play.
But after all, Grandma reminds us, this play is a comedy and thus ends with everyone happy for the moment with "what he thinks he wants" (93), and Grandma is no exception. Directing the action from a position of seeming powerlessness, she is once again able to manipulate everyone into fulfilling her plans. Furthermore, she's gained her freedom—which she believes she wants—and can now live independently, her script being finished and her economic situation secure. The question, of course, is: Is this what she really wants? Without Mommy to provide strokes, can Grandma survive? She knew it hurt her fingers to tie up her boxes containing the fixtures of her life, but will she have the strength to untie them elsewhere? Or will she be left like many old people whose "until" scripts are fulfilled too late for them to formulate a new plan for life. Albee leaves the audience with the feelings that if anyone could do it, Grandma—the Winner—would be the one. Thus, the play, though tempered with irony, ends on a hopeful note.
CHAPTER IV

A FEARSOME CONTROVERSY:

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

In each of Albee's first four short plays he undertook a new (for him) theatrical challenge. In Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, his first Broadway production, he wrote his first "full length" play. Those critics who disliked it thought it was, in fact, considerably too long. Typical of this kind of criticism is George Wellwarth's remark: "Although the play could be tightened (it has at least one hour of purely excess dialogue), the process would merely result in making meaninglessness more playable." 1 Others, however, saw the length of the play as effective and even necessary to its success. A. C. Hilfer claims:

The wearing effect of the passage of time cannot be conveyed in the drama as in the novel, and those plays in which we see a character first as young, later as middle-aged, finally as old are more triumphs of make-up than of artistry. But the drama can gain something of the same effect by using sheer sustained pile-driving, repetition of verbal violence. Hence it should be evident that it is by the very circumscription of characters and limitation of time that Virginia Woolf . . . can carry out the process of wearing down the characters and

spectators. The very length of the play... acts as a formal element almost numbing the audience into a punch-drunk compliance. Time actually spent at the theatre watching the same four people repeat and yet again repeat their charges and countercharges has the corrosive effect on the spectator of the play that the passage of time has on the character of the novel. Restated, my thesis is that the emotional equivalent in the drama to the long-drawn-out passage of time in a novel is the time that the spectator actually spends in the theatre. This time seems all the longer when the drama is limited to a few characters and a fixed limit of time. It is as if the spectator were really there, like Nick and Honey, trapped at a prolonged emotional debauch.\textsuperscript{2}

Whether the audience felt "trapped" or not, the play was a success with the public, enjoying an initial run of 663 performances on Broadway.\textsuperscript{3} Despite its public reception, the critical dispute the play has generated has continued.\textsuperscript{4} Even upon calm reflection, critics disagree violently about its attributes, merits, and weaknesses.

For instance, whereas one critic finds George's and Martha's games "lack order," another complains because he believes games ought to be playful and spontaneous.\textsuperscript{6} Joy Flasch has shown that the games do indeed have order and correspond to Berne's descriptions of common


\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 166. Amacher summarizes the initial controversy over the meaning(s) of the play and its overall effect.

\textsuperscript{5} Hilfer, "George and Martha," p. 131.

games amazingly well. 7 The meaning of the term "game" as used by TA is, of course, antithetical to the idea of spontaneity. When the Natural Child of the grownup personality plays spontaneously, he enjoys the charm of intimacy. The characters in this play, however, carefully regulate their games in order to avoid painful intimacy. Presumably, George and Martha do not use the term "game" with the special meaning TA ascribes to it, either; though they may be using the concept as understood by Dr. Thomas S. Szasz: 8

Briefly, games are characterized by the following features: (1) A set of rules which impart a special identity to the game; (2) An expectation that the players will adhere, voluntarily or otherwise, to the rules; and (3) The fact that games are interpersonal or social events. To start a game, two or more players are required. It may be noted, therefore, that the common-sense view which regards games—and especially competitive games or sprots—as aggressive and socially disjunctive is false. Without denying the aggressive (in the sense of "competitive") features of certain game-playing activities, I wish to emphasize the overriding significance of games as means of uniting people in common endeavor. Playing a game earnestly, implies that one’s partners, opponents, and team-mates will be taken seriously. Games are therefore paradigms of human engagement or commitment. Disengagements from human relationships could thus be analyzed in terms of not playing a game or as taking the role of spectator who merely watches the human drama of life but does not participate in it. This maneuver is of considerable significance in our contemporary culture. Others have spoken of it in terms of man’s alienation from himself and those around him... or as the borderline state... or as problems or crises of identity.

7 Joy Flasch, "Games People Play in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," Modern Drama, X, iii (Dec. 1967), 280-288. This inquiry will not attempt to duplicate Flasch's observations, but her study is highly recommended for full understanding of the applicability of TA and the concept of games to this play.

8 Dr. Szasz is cited for his assistance in analyzing games that lead to psychiatric disability by Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove Press, 1964), pp. 64-65.

Robert Brustein, ordinarily not overly sympathetic to Albee's efforts, calls it both "an ambitious play" and "a comedy of concealment," and summarizes its effect thus:

The central conflict—a Strindbergian battle royal between George, a contemplative history professor with an unsuccessful career, and Martha, his bitter shrewish wife—proceeds through a series of confessions, revelations, and interior journeys . . . Glued together by mutual hatred and mutual recriminations, the couple can connect only through enmity, each exposing the other's failures, inadequacies, vices, and secret illusions in language of savagely ironic scorn. Though the climax of the work is built on such an exposure, however, Albee seems less interested in the real history of his characters than in the way they conceal and protect their reality: the conflict is also a kind of game, with strict rules, and what they reveal about each other may not be true . . . George and Martha—each by turns the aggressor—shift their identities like reptiles shedding skins. And as the evening grows more alcoholic, and the atmosphere more distended and surrealistic, their "total war" becomes a form of ritual play-acting performed upon the shifting sands of truth. 10

But after some insight, bordering on praise at times, Brustein concludes his review of the play by condemning Albee for lacking a "selfless commitment to a truthful vision of life which constitutes the universal basis of all serious art." 11

Tom Driver, on the other hand, faults Albee for the "always moral content" of his work, 12 implying that Albee's playwriting skill is impaired by too great a commitment to revealing Albee's own vision of truth.


11 Ibid., p. 148.

Interpretations of the tone of the ending also vary widely. D. C. Coleman claims, "Albee's conclusion is optimistic, for Nick and Honey learn their lesson from George and Martha."13 Joy Flasch believes the ending is hopeful also, but thinks it is George and Martha themselves who benefit from the Exorcism:

... George and Martha will attempt to face reality, their fears, and the past experiences which have warped them into human beings with feelings of guilt and failure. They will attempt to put aside the destructive Games which have taken the place of true Intimacy.14

But Ruby Cohn thinks a happy ending, while not altogether impossible, is highly unlikely, given the characters as they have been presented: "It is difficult to imagine a purified George and Martha. Without their potential for witty cruelty, they are virtual amputees."15

Driver sees the whole play as flawed in a more fundamental way, claiming that the only way he can deal with the characters is to see them as four disguised homosexuals. He asserts that "George is not very masculine and Martha not feminine."16 Now this is a difficult position to confront, since this interpretation implies innate qualities of masculinity and femininity but does not spell out what they


14 Flasch, "Games People Play in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", p. 287.


are, except as contrasting to the entire characterizations in the play. Paul French, on the other hand, not only defines what he means by masculinity, but finds George abundantly endowed with the "proper" qualities of his gender:

George reasserts the masculine prerogatives on their authentic level—reason, self-direction, and strong protectiveness—rather than on the superficial levels of sexual prowess and the manipulation of persons as seen in Nick.17

The difficulty with French's assumptions can be countered more readily than Driver's. Following French's explicit definition of masculinity and logically excluding what is claimed to be masculine from what it means to be feminine leads one to the inevitable but unacceptable conclusion that irrationality, self-denial, and weak dependency are the natural attributes of the other half of humanity. Such male chauvinism would quite likely be disturbed by Martha's intelligence and ambitions. Furthermore, Nick also exercises reason, self-direction, and strong protectiveness toward his wife, and actually fails in his attempt to demonstrate his sexual prowess. Honey, not Martha, displays weakness and all the negative qualities in the course of the play, but this hardly makes her a more attractive model of femininity than Martha.

Some critics have tried to avoid the problems of sexual roles in this play. C. W. E. Bigsby resists interpretations which rely too heavily on the sexual conflicts in the play:

... it would clearly be misleading to consider Albee simply as an American Strindberg whose chief value lies only in his ability to modernise the battle of the sexes. For, to Albee, the breakdown in the relationship between husband and wife is indicative of a more fundamental failure in communication, while the impotence of the male is a particularly accurate symbol of what he takes to be the sterility of the contemporary world. His real subject, then, is not marriage but society; his real aim human contact and not sexual reconciliation, and his real enemy illusion and not feminine dominance.18

Bigsby is obviously trying to view the play in the context of a larger vision than most critics have done. It seems to me, however, that one cannot deny that Albee is showing what is wrong with society in general not symbolically, but specifically; that is, by the means of examining one of the institutions of society, marriage.

What Albee shows is wrong with marriage—and I believe this is a point the majority of critics deliberately or inadvertently obscure—is that, although marriage is ideally supposed to be a fifty-fifty proposition, it is not at all, as it is practiced in this country at least, a contract promoting equality, fraternity, and cooperation; rather it deals with power, coercion, and oppression.19 As such, the marriage contract is in direct conflict with modern notions of the desirability of democracy and freedom of choice. For the wife, once she (presumably freely) selects her mate, further choice is severely limited, except as she may choose divorce, which carries a consequent penalty of admission of failure to choose wisely. Her surname, domicile, social status, occupation, credit, etc., are either partly


19 I am grateful for this contrast of qualities to Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness, p. 229; the application to the marriage situation is my own.
or fully determined by her husband and his capabilities, rather than her own. In return for this self-effacement, the husband promises to support and protect his wife so she can be free to bear and raise the offspring of the marriage. Society collectively believes, and most individuals concur, that the single most important justification for the perpetuation of the institution of marriage is the propagation of humanity. If, however, the marriage produces no children, the pressures on the marriage contract are bound to be enormous.

Michael Rutenberg codified the complaint that Martha is an unsatisfactory portrayal of a woman because he can find no other reason for her disappointment in her marriage than that "George has been content with a subordinate position at the college," and finds that "her frustrations do not go beyond the fact that George does not have a public-relations personality." Albee himself dismisses this accusation by simply calling it "an enormous over-simplification." Martha's frustrations, I submit, are much more complex than have been generally recognized, and TA can again help to illuminate this complexity.

Martha's frustrations involve her Parent, her Adult, and finally her Child ego state as well. First and foremost of her disappointments is her barrenness. Though the myth of femininity prizes motherhood above all other womanly functions as being a female prerogative alone, Martha is unable to fulfill her Parental role. She is unable


21 Ibid., p. 232.
through no choice of her own—even against her will—to fill the position accorded the highest honor. Insofar as George's Parent is also frustrated from fulfilling this role, they share a common misery which they both recognize as a tragedy. They have, however, agreed to play a game in order to avoid dwelling in mutual commiseration on the unhappiness that uninhibited intimacy would acknowledge. Thus they build an imaginary child that is all the more desirable because they are free to endow it with whatever qualities they find most beautiful rather than having to cope with the inevitable disappointments, however minor, of almost any real baby. Even where they differ in opinions as to qualities which would be desirable, both can be pleased. Thus George gives the baby blue eyes and Martha insists they are green like her father's.

Martha's Adult is also frustrated. She "admired" and "worshipped" her father whose "sense of history" is simply a notion of "continuation" (79). But though Martha declares, with deliberate awareness of her childish grammatical violation, "I been to college like everybody else" (73), she never for a moment considers that she herself might be the logical heir-apparent to succeed her father in running the college. Her father was looking for a man to groom for the succession. Not being a man, Martha figures out another way to achieve the power she desires. She claims, "It wasn't Daddy's idea that I had to necessarily marry the guy. I mean, I wasn't the alba—

22 Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (New York: Atheneum, 1962), p. 77. All further quotations from this play in this chapter are taken from this edition, and page numbers will appear in parentheses following each quote as necessary.
tross . . . you didn't have to take me to get the prize, or anything like that. It was something I had in the back of my mind" (79). She accepts without question (i.e., her Adult is contaminated by a Parental assumption) the premise that the only way she can continue to influence the college after her father's retirement is to find some male agent through whom she can exercise control. This strategy is, of course, extremely dangerous and almost certainly doomed in advance to defeat. If she would choose a husband with a mind of his own she could not hope to control the college through him because his ideas would almost certainly conflict with hers at some points. To be safe then she needs a figurehead who does not desire to control, and she finds this person in George, but ironically he lacks the motivation in himself to further his career in this way. He is not opposed to exercising his leadership, only indifferent. He ran the History Department during the war when there was no one else ambitious enough to do so, but he quickly yielded to the aggressive men who returned from the war. Thus for Martha he is a "flop" because he doesn't provide her with an outlet for her desire for power and mastery. It is no wonder that her Adult appears "shrewish."

By contrast, George acknowledges with bitterness that he knows that in his wife's eyes he is disappointing because he does not control or even want to control, but he does feel at least partially successful in the career goal he's set for himself. Though he refers to his tenure at the college as "dashed hopes, and good intentions" (32), he presumably refers to his failure to publish his novel rather
than to take over the History Department and the college. He is apparently pleased with his own accomplishments as a scholar, asserting frequently, "I know something about history" (68). He also shows amusement in his own and Martha's intelligence and erudition, which he regards less as fighting than, as he expresses it to Nick, "walking what's left of our wits" (34).

No critic, to my knowledge, has dealt with the covert admission of failure Martha reveals when she seemingly accuses George of not succeeding. They are, after all, Martha's ambitions for power which are thwarted, not George's. George's unrealized ambition to publish a novel is not a quest for power, but presumably a true effort to communicate to the world. The form of his novel, bizarre as it is, gives an insight into the way George views life: the boy inadvertently harms those he loves most in an effort to protect them from harm. The dilemma of the boy's experience is a parable for the dilemma of George's life. Both their destinies are part of their own doing and living; yet at the same time are also partly beyond their own conscious control.

The intellectual exercise of creating the fictional child provides both Martha and George with a challenge worthy of their talents. Albee complained that in the production of the movie version "the intellectual importance of the fiction isn't made quite as clearly as it could be. In the film it's nowhere near as important as the emotional importance to the characters. In my view, the two of them
have got to go hand in hand."  

Finally, Martha's Child is frustrated as she repeatedly makes sexual advances to George which he rebuffs. More about this later. Martha's summation of Bette Davis's role applies to Martha herself: "She's discontent" (6). Thus Albee makes Martha's position clear from the opening lines.

Let us now contrast Martha's character with Honey's. Honey may appear to have been better socialized than Martha in some ways. For example, Honey is modest, submissive, and polite. But Martha hints that she sees through her appearance and is not impressed with Honey's inner qualities: "(Sternly, to HONEY) Some people feed on the calamities of others" (77). Though Honey seems not as quick intellectually as Martha, paradoxically she has learned to manipulate her man with amazing efficiency. Her pseudocyesis allowed her to seem to be fulfilling the "most noble" function of woman and thus entitled to the protection of marriage. This turns out to be an efficient way to coerce Nick to marry her, but the total dishonesty of her deception is revealed to George as she comes to consciousness from her frightening dream and cries "... I ... don't ... want ... any ... children. I'm afraid. I don't want to be hurt ... PLEASE!" (176). Though George's first reaction to this confession is compassionate


24 Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness, p. 298, calls this phenomenon a pantomime or dumb-show of the idea "I am pregnant."
understanding, he becomes "ugly again" and accuses her of "secret little murders stud-boy doesn't know about" (177). Though George can accept Martha's apparent weaknesses of Alcoholism, infidelity, and shrewishness and still love her, he simply cannot comprehend what he obviously regards as Honey's moral deficiency. Inadvertent barrenness is horrible enough; deliberate avoidance of parenthood is inexcusable. He asks incredulously, "And you, you simpering bitch . . . you don't want children?" (178).

Honey is also apparently content to accept furthering her husband's career (in whatever direction he picks) as a sufficient challenge for her Adult to master. Her idea of fulfilling this responsibility is revealed as she explains (in agreement with Nick) how much she appreciated Martha's father's social assistance as opposed to her experience in Kansas: " . . . We had to make our own way . . . I had to go up to wives . . . in the library, or at the supermarket . . . and say, 'Hello, I'm new here . . . you must be Mrs. So-and-so, Doctor So-and-so's wife.' It really wasn't very nice at all" (27). She objects to the "hard day at the grocery store" à la Bette Davis, but she does not object per se to the housewife role, or to being identified simply as someone's wife. On the contrary, she accepts this as natural and assumes other women consider themselves in this role also. In fact, not once does Honey or Nick mention an Adult talent or admirable attribute of Honey's (other than her money, an accidental, not intrinsic quality), though Honey brags quite freely about Nick's mental and physical triumphs. Her achievements seem to range from the pointlessly ineffectual ("I peel labels" [212]) to
the self destructive "(I . . . I throw up . . . I mean, I get sick . . . occasionally, all by myself . . . without any reason" [119]).

Her Child ego state is also severely suppressed. She has to be quite drunk to assert, "I dance like the wind" (127), and when Nick, embarrassed, tries to stop her, she protests defensively, "You're always at me when I'm having a good time" (28), and "I like to dance and you don't want me to" (129). Her Adapted Child ego state responds to Nick's desires customarily, rather than to her own. Essentially Honey has chosen to withdraw from direct experience. In the expression of her Child she is narcissistic as shown when George asks her to dance and she answers, "(Petulantly) No! If I can't do my interpretive dance, I don't want to dance with anyone" (130). So far has she inhibited her Natural Child that when Honey notices how well Martha and Nick dance together, she rejects George's explanation that it's an "old ritual" by claiming, "I . . . I don't know what you mean" (131). Though Nick claims she and Nick were playing "Doctor" since she was six and he was eight, she feigns ignorance of any pleasure the body can provide. We might presume that her hesitation in protesting her "innocence" is either an indication of a deliberate maneuver or that it is the result of true confusion, but the former explanation seems more plausible in view of her cautious admiration of her husband's "firm body" (52) and her awareness of Nick's obvious wish to see his wife as someone who needs sheltering when he tells George "You might not understand this . . . but I wish you wouldn't talk that way in front of my wife" (47). Thus, in every way, in order to please her husband, Honey avoids the maturation of her ego.
We see Honey willing to deny her own intelligence and feelings in order to maintain her place as Nick's wife. When George attempts to make Honey admit to herself that Nick and Martha are attempting adultery in the kitchen, Honey protests, "I don't want to know anything!" and when George becomes more explicit she insists, "(beside herself) I . . . don't . . . understand . . . you . . ." (178).

Thus, though she may seem more socially well-adjusted than Martha, her ego is not just frustrated, it is quite crippled. Honey knows that the only way she can achieve is indirectly through her husband. To insure her position, she lies about her willingness to assume Parental responsibility; she sublimates any needs of her Adult to show mastery over physical objects to helping her husband attain whatever career goals he chooses; and she denies pleasure to her Child by pretending sex is a mystery beyond her comprehension. Thus a very limited type of compliant, honeyed behavior is open to her and yet the resources she musters to maintain her position are impressive. She gets her way, by using illness as an escape when social situations get beyond her ability to cope. Szasz explains the phenomenon in this way:

In general, whenever people feel unable—by means of "normal" mechanisms, such as ordinary speech—to prevail over the significant objects [including people] in their environment, they are likely to shift their pleas to the idiom of proto-language (e.g., weeping, body signs). In other words, when one's love object fails to "listen" to verbal complaints or requests, one will be compelled or at least tempted to take recourse in communicating by means of iconic body signs. We have come to speak of this general phenomenon, which may take a great variety of forms, as "mental illness."25

25 Ibid., p. 130.
Szasz, it should be emphasized, does not accept the label "mental illness" as a meaningful one in this usage, either scientifically or socially. First, he claims the label, though originally useful as a metaphor, has more and more, under the influence primarily of Freud and Charcot, become taken as a literal explanation, which leads to his second objection, that the concept of mental disease removes all blame for the affliction from the "victim" and thus encourages irresponsibility for any actions committed by the "sick."

As Martha and Honey contrast significantly, especially in their attitudes toward motherhood, so George and Nick are also quite different. Nick does have ambitions to take over the college. George sees Nick as a threat because Nick wants to control, not just the college, but education. While George does not want to dominate, he does not want to be dominated, either, and he sees scientific biological engineering as a potential limitation on the possibility for human expression and development. Nick regards Honey's "dowry" as compensation for the lack of "any ... particular passion" (105) in their marriage. By contrast, Martha assures George not only that she originally "fell" for him, but that her devotion, such as it is, continues unabated. She touches on his fear that she married him primarily to legitimize her potential offspring and thus reminds him how he failed her inadvertently (as the boy of his novel harmed his loved ones unintentionally):

MARThA
George's biggest problem about the little ... ha, ha, ha, HA! ... about our son, about our great big son, is that deep down
in the private-most pit of his gut, he's not completely sure it's his own kid.

GEORGE (Deeply serious)

My God, you're a wicked woman.

MARTHA

And I've told you a million times, baby . . . I wouldn't conceive with anyone but you. . . . you know that, baby.

GEORGE

A deeply wicked person. [71-72]

Here, as elsewhere in this play, Martha's use of the term "baby" signals the level of emotional involvement she is addressing in George.

George's following speech in which he accuses Martha of lying about his self-doubts works on two levels. First, superficially, he is exercising his wits again, transposing the hair and eye color for sophisticated humor. His tone implies that he doesn't take the things he is saying too seriously. But the important hidden message to Martha is his assurance of partnership in the creation of their imaginary offspring. Martha acknowledges the cleverness of the maneuver by which it appeared to Nick and Honey that he was joking when he was most serious, and tells him in deliberate imitation of childlike grammar, "You rose to the occasion . . . good. Real good" (72). This apparent regression also covers up her moral approval of George just after he has expressed some doubt over his own "practical morality" (72). She is, in effect, telling him she shares his priorities: fulfilling the Parental role is the most noble task of all humanity's endeavors.

Throughout the play, as we mentioned previously, George rebuffs Martha's sexual advances, in spite of the fact that he still appears to care for her and find her sexually attractive. Rather than stem-
ming from indifference, George's abstinence seems to be deliberate, a self-punishment as well as a denial of the needs of Martha's Child ego state. Again, his message to Martha works on more than one level. His rejection is justified considering the presence of the guests. But on another level, George seems to be appeasing his own punishing Parent who demands that he not enjoy lovemaking and sex since he does not expect to take on the responsibility of Parenthood which ought to be the natural result. And he may be inviting Martha indirectly to find another source of insemination. The dilemma facing George makes a mockery of his lack of free choice. He cannot simply choose to conceive a baby; on the other hand, Honey can easily prevent conception.

Martha's reaction to George's first rebuff sounds like a threat: "I swear . . . if you existed I'd divorce you . . . ." and she goes on to claim, "I can't even see you . . . I haven't been able to see you for years . . . ." (16). Hindsight makes these lines ever more ironic until the climax of the play when the boy is "killed" by George as he reaches the age of legal "existence." But even at this point the audience is aware, as the intelligent Martha must be, that the logical contradiction of addressing someone who does not exist negates the threat and even turns it into a promise of continued devotion. Elizabeth Janeway observes:

Adult two-person relationships, including sexual relationships, are bound to include an element of contest, but they must also include a minimum of trust, even if it is no more than a tacit agreement between the partners that their contests will not be mortal, that there will be some sort of limit and a certain enjoyment in the struggle, that an approach will receive a
response. The battling couple in Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, for instance, knew each other well enough to play their desperate game and trusted each other never quite to bring it to the horrid conclusion which the audience was invited to expect. . . . At least we can say for our time that truly lethal marriages no longer exist. Those who stay together choose to do so, even if they seem to be bivouacking on a battlefield. 26

Later, after Nick's failure to perform sexually, she tells Nick earnestly, "There is only one man in my life who has ever . . . made me happy" (189). She correctly assigns Nick's incredulity to his inability to see beyond appearances to the level on which she and George truly communicate, and Martha gives Nick a lesson in irony:

MARTHA

. . . George who is out somewhere there in the dark . . . George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK (Echoing, still not believing)
Sad.

MARTHA

. . . whom I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes, this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK (Puzzled)
Sad.

MARTHA

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

NICK
George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.[190-191]

Martha is describing how her Child finds solace in George and how her Parent refuses to let her accept this comfort. The audience at this point may be as puzzled as Nick. Martha appears to be berating George for failing to exercise the male prerogative of movement, i.e., coming to rest, but it is not his career that she is now talking about; it is his marriage to her. In retrospect, it may seem she assumes all the blame for the barrenness of their marriage here by implying that had he married someone else George might have been able to have children. But in light of their later mutual assertion, "We couldn't" (238), it may be an indication that she believes that either of them might not have been infertile had they each married someone else. It may also indicate that Martha's alleged infidelities have been as imaginary as her child.

George and Martha are mismatched in another sense as well, perhaps a more important one. While Martha's goals in life and way of coping with her marriage are diametrically opposed to Honey's, Martha's assumptions are in some ways very much like Honey's in that she accepts the undemocratic aspects of the marriage contract. Martha sublimates her career plans, hoping to find a man to fulfill them for her. She also assumes that marriage cannot be an egalitarian or democratic affair. She claims, "I wear the pants in this house because somebody's got to" (157). Nick and Honey both agree that Nick should "wear the pants" in their marriage, but George and Martha are in disagreement as to the need for anyone to dominate.

Not only does George show little interest in taking over the
college or even in running the History Department, he does not try to dominate Martha. He tries rather to balance evenly with her. The game he ultimately leads in the last act, in fact, is part of a desperate desire to get even with Martha for siding with Nick in a sudden commitment to reality as she gives up the game of treating her unsuccessful lover as a houseboy. George decides to match her by exposing a game that is all important to them both. The distinction may be a fine one, but it is important that all the way to the end, George leads rather than simply dominates Martha, and he is careful to appeal to her sense of gamesmanship to gain her acquiescence.

Much has been made of George's assertion that the reason he "kills" their son is that "You broke our rule, baby. You mentioned him ... you mentioned him to someone else" (236). But only passing attention is given to George's leading Martha into this breech of "regulations." Notice the similarity of George's defiant warning "Just don't start in on the bit about the kid, that's all" (18) to Nurse's negatively phrased request that Father drive her to work in The Death of Bessie Smith. The implied dare in both instances insures the expected response. Just in case Martha has forgotten his challenge, he repeats it the last thing before Martha leads Honey out of the room: "Just don't shoot your mouth off ... about ... you-know-what" (29). Thus he allows Martha the final freedom to choose, knowing that her sense of competition will tempt her to disobey. Thus he can influence her without domineering as any politician in a free society must coax the voters into believing they retain their freedom while dele-
gating the power to lead.

George does dominate Nick—and Honey through Nick—in the sense of threatening to create a scandal which he hints will wreck Nick's timetable. But he is not committed to Nick, by marriage contract or by friendship. And this is a move of desperation rather than his habitual strategy. In fact, all evening long he has been warning Nick to protect himself but Nick's arrogance has prevented Nick from taking George's suggestions at face value. Szasz explains the difference between George's implicit values on the one side and Martha's, Nick's, and Honey's on the other: "The ethics and psychology of oppression must be contrasted with the ethics and psychology of democracy and equality." George may seem less masculine than he should be to anyone who endorses the traditional concept of the marriage contract; but George is a man of democratic principles. Szasz explains further:

If we define a free, self-governing, democratic man . . . as one who rejects the roles of both master and slave—then we have the picture of a man into whose scheme of life the Biblical rules fit poorly or not at all. And this brings us to the question of the religious implications of this play.

Hilfer clarifies the significance of the allusion of the title of the second act:

St. Walpurgis was an English nun who became abbess of a Bavarian convent and whose day was May 1; however, the Walpurgisnacht it-

28 Ibid.
self is not a celebration in honor of the saint but rather the traditional date of the witch revels on the Brocken, atop the highest point of the Harz mountains. The connection of the saint's name with such unsaintly doings is probably twofold: first, the saint is a charm against the witches; secondly, the worship of the saint was imposed on a traditional pagan ritual. But this is mere speculation. What is certain is that in German folklore and in Goethe's Faust the Walpurgisnacht is a wild explosion of evil forces, an utterly depraved orgy characterized particularly by the young witch who offers lovely fruit to Faust but upsets him when a scarlet mouse springs out of her mouth.29

The first act, then, seems to be a prelude, like Halloween, to more serious games to follow. The third act suggests that the evil will be vanquished. But like other metaphors Albee creates, these titles may be taken ironically as well as at face value. The play is set in fall, rather than spring, for example—at the beginning of a new academic year. There are a number of references, both by George and Martha, comparing her father to a white mouse with red eyes, perhaps an appropriate reversal of colors from the legend since Martha springs from her father rather than the reverse. The young witch may be Honey, rather than Martha, and it may be she who is exorcised in the final act. She does claim suddenly to want a child (three times, in fact) after hearing Martha describe her fictional baby. Though Martha claims to be an atheist, George corrects her by accusing her of paganism. Yet we actually see Martha in no superstitious act other than her immoderate use of profanity to express every emotion from delight to disgust.

Actually, Martha does not seem either to fear or blame a supernatural power for her predicament. Her soliloquy at the opening of

29 Hilfer, "George and Martha: Sad, sad, sad," p. 132.
the third act shows that, even though she claimed earlier that she worshipped her father, she sees his weaknesses as clearly as George does. She has been "abandon-ed. Left to her own vices" (185) by everyone, presumably including Daddy, God, and/or the devil. Though she knows she and George would do anything for one another, there is one supremely important thing they cannot do, conceive a child together, and no one else can help them either. Her reaction to this frustration is anger alternating with despair.

Szasz has described in great detail how the phenomenon known as "witchcraft" in the middle ages has come to be regarded in this century as "mental illness." Whatever the label, he maintains the rules of the game are so construed as to allow the socially powerful (i.e., males, whites, the wealthy, the educated, etc.) to accuse the socially inferior (i.e., females, colored peoples, the poor, the ignorant, etc.) of being responsible--albeit involuntarily--for the social ills which afflict the socially powerful. Thus these labels function as scapegoats for guilt feelings of the powerful. 30

In the first act, George repeatedly accuses Martha of wickedness and sinfulness, but like the true atheist she shows herself to be, Martha dismisses these religious judgments as having little real meaning for her. Since she shows her indifference to this game, George then shifts, especially in the last act, to labeling her as "sick," in the sense of suffering from an illness beyond her control, thus again implicitly relieving her of the responsibility for her acts,

30 Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness, p. 211.
which are now attributed to an affliction of her mind rather than to the devil's influence. Szasz further contends that although we have humanized (somewhat) our attitudes toward the behavior variously called "witchcraft" or "mental illness" the phenomenon itself and the social forces which promote it are relatively unchanged:

... social life--through the combined impact of ubiquitous childhood experiences of dependence and of religious teachings--is so structured that it contains endless exhortations commanding man to behave childishly, stupidly, and irresponsibly. These exhortations to helplessness, although perhaps most powerful in their impact during the Middle Ages, have continued to influence human behavior to the present day. 31

Rejecting the "mental illness" label as just as obfuscating as the "witchcraft" theory in explaining deviant social behavior, Szasz postulates that the concept of scapegoating (sometimes called projection) is more illuminating. He claims:

All scapegoat theories postulate that if only the offending person, race, illness, or what-not could be dominated, subjugated, mastered, or eliminated, all manner of problems would be solved. 32

The imaginary child then comes to represent, for George, the most significant manifestation of Martha's "sickness." So obsessed does he become with destroying it, he seems momentarily to forget his own vehement avowal of responsibility for the creation of the fiction. But remember, the child is largely a product of George and Martha's Adult, their intellectual frustration, that is, a conscious fiction; whereas the wish to destroy it springs from George's punishing Parent, who accepts society's label of "mental illness" as a convenient

31 Ibid., p. 13. 32 Ibid., p. 209.
explanation of disturbing behavior. Albee confirms that he did not intend to make it seem that George and Martha were not aware of the fiction they had created for themselves. He says, "they're much too intelligent to make that confusion. For me, that's why the loss is doubly poignant. Because they are not deluded people."33

It is tempting to credit George with more complete insight as to the nature of the problems in his marriage than he actually displays. Though as a man of sincerely democratic principles he appears more admirable than the other three characters, one can only conclude that if he has clearly understood the nature of his and Martha's marital difficulties for a long time, he has been simply inhumane not to have "exorcised" these problems sooner. The concept of "sickness" which George has used to describe what's wrong with Martha may be applied metaphorically to their relationship insofar as their arguments displace their aggression and frustration to her "alcoholism" (though she drinks no more than George apparently) and his career failure (though Martha succeeds no better in controlling the college), but there are no lines which reveal George's understanding of their mutual scapegoating. As long as they do not confront what they are really angry about, they cannot settle anything through their arguments. George, in fact, seems as baffled and childlike as Martha at the end of the play as to the full implications of the step he has led Martha to take with him.

33 Interview with William Flanagan, Writers at Work, p. 339.
Rather than simply expose their mutual sterility and their subsequent refusal to admit heartbreak, he at first focuses attention on the story child. If he proves wrong in his hope that this exposure will somehow be therapeutic, he has saved face by treating the experiment as a game. That Albee intended George to be less in command than a true exorcism would require was confirmed in an interview when Albee was asked if the couple could survive the "exorcism" at the end. He said, "I don't know . . . I don't give pat answers."34 The ambiguous ending seems more psychologically realistic than "solving" the couple's problems might be. If they had complete insight into their difficulties, presumably, most of them would disappear. Though they disagree on George's career goals, the most important goal for them both is fulfillment in Parenthood. If they could honestly face how disappointed each is by their inability to conceive a child instead of making believe that the problem of infertility was simply non-existent, they might be free to move on to more productive activity. Without articulating it, George and Martha seem to believe deep down that all their problems would disappear if only they had the baby they long for, or at least that the birth of a baby years before might have promoted a more harmonious marriage. The audience may be somewhat more skeptical (as Ruby Cohn is) about these characters' capacity, at least in the present and future, for developing a more amiable relationship.

34 "Albee: Odd Man In on Broadway," Newsweek, LXI (Feb. 4, 1963), 50.
Szasz outlines the alternatives for new behavior which are open:

... unless a person finds others to play his own game, according to his own rules—or wishes and is able to coerce others to accept life on his terms—he has a choice among three basic alternatives.

One is to submit to the other person's coercive rules and accept the masochistic-submissive posture offered...

The second alternative is increasingly to renounce socially shared activities and to withdraw into certain relatively idiosyncratic games. Such activities may be labeled scientific, artistic, religious, neurotic, or psychotic, depending on various, generally poorly defined criteria...

The third alternative to the basic life-problem sketched above lies in becoming aware of one's own games, as well as those of others, and in trying to make compromises among them. This is an arduous undertaking which often can be, at best, only partially successful. Its main reward lies in guaranteeing the integrity and dignity of one's own self and of all others with whom one interacts. Yet its hardships are such that it need not surprise us if many prefer easier means leading to what must appear, to them, as more glorious ends.35

Nick is one of those who finds others who play his game (until he meets George and Martha). Honey chooses to submit. George tries to withdraw into an "artistic" game (novel writing) while Martha withdraws into neurotic behavior (alcoholism). The ending offers the hope that George and Martha may now try the third alternative, but it is by no means certain Martha can accept George's basically democratic posture, or that either of them can live openly with the failure to produce a child. There is likewise little assurance that Nick's newfound insight and Honey's sudden aspiration to motherhood will make a lasting change in their customary relationship.

Steiner suggests that "strokes can be obtained without resorting to games, which are basically subterfuges," but reminds us that "A

person giving up a game has to develop an alternate way of obtaining strokes and structuring time, and until he does he will be subject to despair resembling marasmus in children who do not receive enough stroking.\textsuperscript{36} This seems to be an accurate description of the emotional state of George and Martha at the final curtain. Though they agree that they cannot return to their former games, it remains to be seen whether they will be able to tolerate the sight of each other constantly emphasizing their infertility to each other. The strong bond of their mutual sexual (Child) attraction may be the only hope for their marriage. To a puritanically biased audience, this may provide little hope indeed. To an audience which believes, like many transactional analysts, that the Child is the most valuable manifestation of the ego and the fount of all creative activity as well, the play will seem somewhat more optimistic.

CHAPTER V

ADAPTED TWINS; McCULLERS AND PURDY

Albee's adaptations from McCullers and Purdy deal with the mythic materials and grotesque characters of the original stories, both of which contained dwarves. While Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? was still enjoying huge success, Albee hurried his first adaptation to Broadway, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, from the novella of the same name by Carson McCullers. While the play was not the hoped-for smash hit, it still ran 123 performances before closing.¹

Albee expressed fears that he might not be able to transform the art from one medium to another:

I'm doing [The Ballad of the Sad Cafe] because it's sort of a challenge. I've never seen an adaptation of anything that was any good. I'm curious to find out if it's possible to do one without running into what usually happens—the lessening and coarsening of the material.²

His apprehension proved well grounded, for many critics would agree with Gerald Nelson's description of the play as "merely a mistake."³

In retrospect in 1966 Albee claimed, "the only two plays that


I've done very much revision on were the two adaptations—even though the shape of them was pretty much determined by the original work.4

Perhaps most articulate of Ballad's detractors is Robert Brustein, who hated both its subject matter ("unnatural love") and treatment ("one shrill chorus of self-pitying squeaks"5). He sees Amelia as a "bull dyke," and a "dwarf-loving lesbian,"6 and blames the fundamental problem of the play on its source, ascribing a "quavering voice" to Carson McCullers:

Miss McCullers' Gothic stories were modish twenty years ago, but, since they were so obviously written for female readers, they eventually found their proper level among the pages of Vogue and Harper's Bazaar. For beneath her bizarre costuming, Miss McCullers wears the girdle of the genteel lady novelist—Charlotte Brontë gone sour on too many chitlins and grits. Mr. Albee's new play also belongs in the women's magazines, but whereas Miss McCullers' novella is at least partially redeemed by a suggestive style and a penumbral atmosphere, the playwright's adaptation is unredeemed and unredeemable. The Ballad of the Sad Café is a mannerist play without the slightest hint of manner; a work in the Southern decadent tradition by a writer who, apparently, has never set foot in the South.8

Brustein continues his tirade against the play, attacking the dialogue ("almost indistinguishable from Basic English"), the narrator ("whose single function is to provide the information which the author has been too lazy to dramatize"), and the dramatic timing ("both under- and overwritten, . . . too long and too short"9).

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6 Ibid., p. 157. 7 Ibid., p. 158.

8 Ibid., p. 156 9 Ibid., pp. 156-157.
Other critics are divided as to whether the deficiency is Albee's or McCullers'. Ruby Cohn feels that in spite of his "muscular dialogue" in his adaptations, "their thematic facility is unworthy of him... evidence of self-indulgence."\(^{10}\) Richard Amacher has reserved judgment on both Ballad and Malcolm, simply summarizing their plots and damning them with faint praise.\(^{11}\) Michael Rutenberg has compared Ballad to Sartre's No Exit, but he concludes that the story should never have been dramatized:

The proximity of the play's characters and situation repel us, where the novella's lyric distance intrigues us. . . .

In the last analysis, the events of Ballad do not stand up to the intriguing concept that initiated the work; namely, that for some, the state of being loved is intolerable. What happens is that the theme becomes subverted by an overwhelming sense that what we see is not the human condition, but a freak show. It becomes impossible to identify with a petulant, vengeful dwarf, an ex-drug Pushing rapist, or a hostile, semi-frigid ignorant woman.

Albee's ever-present concern with the outcasts of society has mistakenly led him to recreate for the stage what is, despite its haunting lyricism, essentially not engrossing dramaturgy.\(^{12}\)

Ronald Hayman raises similar objections to the suitability of McCullers' tale for dramatization and summarizes the technical difficulties:

The Ballad of the Sad Cafe is about a hunchback dwarf, an asexual woman over six feet tall, and a lazy criminal, each of whom is unhappily in love with one of the others. . . .

It is easy to see why this attracted Albee but it is less easy to understand what made him think the story belonged on the stage. The novella's action is mostly centered on a single

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locale, but it is spread out over a long period of time. There is comparatively little dialogue in it and most of the charm depends on Carson McCullers's prose style, which captivated many readers in the Forties but no longer seems irresistible today. It is vivid and direct, richly flavored, intimate and cosy, with an appealing semblance of toughness. But it is more sentimental than it seems, and it tends to mythologize its material. She cannot tell a story without making it sound like a fable.¹³

C. W. E. Bigsby is one of the very few (the only one of those who have published book-length criticism of Albee's work) who feels that Albee's adaptation of Ballad is in any comparable to the quality of his entirely original plays:

... it also represents a logical extension of Albee's thematic concerns as revealed in the earlier plays. It demonstrates, too, a continuing sense of affinity with some of the perceptions of the absurdists. For the absurd is not a purely European invention, and Albee clearly sees in the grotesque distortions of Southern literature images every bit as relevant and accurate as Beckett's Pozzo and Ionesco's Amédée. The view of human isolation accepted by these "American absurdists" is no less terrifying than that accepted by their European counterparts, but almost invariably they formulate a viable response to that nameless terror—either in the frenzied power of primitive religion (Flannery O'Connor), or in an insistence on the endurance of the land (Faulkner) and the power of love and the human spirit (McCullers). It is this fact which attracts Albee to the violent parables of Carson McCullers and later to the equally violent images of James Purdy, a Mid-Westerner who, ... shares the Southern concern with the grotesque. While these writers do share certain assumptions with writers like Kafka, Beckett, and Ionesco, their concern with the possibility of hope, of amelioration, establishes what is clearly a closer affinity with Albee's work. It is particularly ironical, therefore, that Albee should have been accused of writing intensely pessimistic plays at precisely that moment when he was attempting to formulate a tentative but nonetheless hopeful response.¹⁴


In addition to the absurd and grotesque aspects of the story, there is another reason it should not be surprising that Albee, with his intuitive grasp of psychological interaction, chose this novella, with all its difficulties, for dramatization. For there is one concept in TA which this story illustrates very well: the Karpman Drama Triangle.  

Drama in life, as in the theater, is based on "switches," ... Each hero in a drama or in life (the protagonist) starts off in one of the three main roles: Rescuer, Persecutor, or Victim, with the other principal player (the antagonist) in one of the other roles. When the crisis occurs, the two players move around the triangle, thus switching roles. One of the commonest switches occurs in divorces. During the marriage, for example, the husband is the persecutor and the wife plays the part of the victim. Once the divorce complaint is filed, these roles are reversed: the wife becomes the persecutor, and the husband the victim, while his lawyer and her lawyer play the part of competing rescuers. In fact, all struggles in life are struggles to move around the triangle in accordance with the demands of the script.

Obviously, all three roles need not be filled by principal players; two can play a game by taking any two of the roles with each switching to any of the other two roles for the payoff. The action becomes more exciting to watch, however, if all three roles are filled by persons significant to one another, because the switches of two of the players more or less determine the third. Such is the situation in The Ballad of the Sad Café.

As the play opens, the Narrator describes the barren setting:


and introduces the image of the chain gang. The men on the gang are not free to make switches, hence may not play games with one another. Their existence is entirely dreary. All victims, all locked in the chain, their opportunities to "switch" are, for the duration of their prison sentences, cut off. They must either share intimacy or suffer despair.

As the Narrator takes us on a flash-back to just before the opening of the café, the townfolk and Miss Amelia are not in much better a situation than the men on the chain gang. The townfolk depend on Miss Amelia's liquor to help pass the time. Though it helps make life in this dreary town just a little more bearable, even the liquor with its remarkable qualities is not enough to make life really interesting, for it can only provide narcissistic stroking. Folks do pass time together, but they do not get emotionally involved enough with one another to give and receive the rewarding stroking that games provide. No real leaders are apparent. Only Miss Amelia (the ameliorator), with her liquor and her propensity toward lawsuits, seems to be potentially a rescuer or a persecutor. Albee describes her less precisely than McCullers (who made her 6' 2" tall) by simply noting her garb: "Levis and a cotton work shirt (red?), boots."\(^{17}\)

Into this dull setting comes Lymon Willis, who claims a remote and obscure relationship with Amelia Evans. Albee also describes him

\(^{17}\) Edward Albee, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1963), p. 7. All further quotations from Ballad in this chapter refer to this edition and page numbers will be noted in parentheses following each quote.
quite simply: "his clothes are dusty; he carries a tiny battered suitcase tied with a rope. He is a dwarf; a hunchback" (11). Cousin Lymon is already marked as a victim of fate by his deformities. Should Miss Amelia react by persecuting him further, no switch would be likely; no games would ensue. But Miss Amelia chooses instead to rescue the pathetic Lymon, beginning a series of games.

In actuality, it is clear that Miss Amelia has the power to persecute, or at least the prerogative to ignore Cousin Lymon. It is clear from the remarks of the townspeople that they expect her to evict Lymon, or even worse. The gossip continues and the excitement grows as they speculate on exactly how she has "taken care of" the intruder, until just when it seems the men and women of the town will be moved to confront (persecute) Miss Amelia in order to relieve the tension, the "switch" is pulled for them, announced by "a high, soft sustained chord of music":

COUSIN LYMON descends the stairs, slowly, one at a time--imperiously, like a great hostess. He is clean; He wears his little coat, but neat and mended, a red and black checkered shirt, knee breeches, black stockings, shoes laced up over the ankles, and a great lime green shawl, with fringe, which almost touches the ground. The effect is somehow regal . . . or papal. [29]

Transformed, Cousin Lymon is no longer the victim; having been rescued himself, he takes on the role of rescuer for the whole town. And he now "persecutes" Miss Amelia by dropping the respectful "miss" and by demanding that she show her love for him by serving the people inside the store. Miss Amelia seems changed also. She dotes on Cousin Lymon, and MacPhail notices "something puzzling to her face"
which Merlie Ryan (the town idiot) accounts for, "Miss Amelia in love" (37).

During the next four years, everyone seems to benefit from the switch. Though Cousin Lymon becomes a petty tyrant, Miss Amelia reacts to his surly commands with amused tolerance; her switch is really voluntary and she knows she still is objectively more powerful than Lymon. Miss Amelia shows gentle affection for the weak man she has chosen to shelter, while Cousin Lymon enjoys the mischievous power he is able to exercise, probably for the first time in his miserable life. Their relationship appears to be asexual, as Miss Amelia's only previous close happy relationship with her father had been. Cousin Lymon, however, objects to sleeping in her father's bed, which he regards as a coffin: "You father's bed is too big for my size, Amelia; I am not comfortable in a bed that size" (42). He demands, "I want a small bed, Amelia. I want a bed my size" (43). Cousin Lymon is not comfortable as the persecutor; he longs to return to his familiar role of victim which corresponds to his strong not-OK feelings. Again and again he tries to cast Miss Amelia as persecutor, accusing her of everything from keeping secrets to frying the grits "too quick" (45). His discomfort at being rescued begins to show even more clearly when Miss Amelia offers to give up the acorn which she's kept as a memento of her dearly beloved father.

MISS AMELIA
Do you want it, cousin Lymon?

Cousin Lymon

(After a brief, almost unkind hesitation; gifting her)
Why no, Amelia, you may have it. It were your father's and he were dear to you. [44-45]
In the next exchanges Miss Amelia follows her own thoughts back to the comfort of the days when her father was her protector while Cousin Lymon tries to recapture her attention through petty tyranny. He must play her game in order to get any attention at all. She suggests some subliminal sexual attachment to her father, describing her sleep when she was little, "—why I'd sleep like I was drowned in warm axle grease" (45), but she keeps these feelings under control and hesitates to admit outright that she loved her father, until Lymon coerces her.

Though Lymon had refused the acorn, he demands her kidney stones, with a great gold vest chain to hang them on. As she acquiesces, he proclaims, "(Quite coldly) Oh, Amelia, I do love you so" (48). Her reaction to Cousin Lymon indicates that she does not seek a reciprocal emotional tie with Cousin Lymon: she wants to rescue him from the world, protect and comfort him like a nurturing Parent, but she does not want to meet him as an equal. In fact, when she had met a man potentially her equal, she had rebelled.

The Narrator now introduces the name of Marvin Macy for the first time, and the question of why Miss Amelia cannot bear to hear his name is suspended while the audience sees how Cousin Lymon enlivens the café on a typical evening. The little gadfly pokes his nose into everyone's business as both rescuer (reconciling the Rainey twins) and persecutor (antagonizing Emma Hale), thus entertainingly passing time for all bystanders.

Finally Henry Macy announces that his brother will soon be
returning and Miss Amelia utters, "(A commandment) He will never set his split hoof on my premises! Never. That is all" (61). This, naturally, is a challenge to Cousin Lymon, both to find out who Marvin Macy is, and to test Miss Amelia's determination to rescue him.

Albee again supplies the Narrator to answer Cousin Lymon's question: "Who is Marvin Macy?" (63). Unfortunately, as Rutenberg observes about Miss Amelia's motivation in marrying Marvin Macy also, "the answers are not clear in the play alone, and the reader must go back to the novella for clarification." While Albee does suggest an origin for both Lymon's and Amelia's inability to accept love, or strokes without games (i.e., she lost her mother and he lost his father, so both of them lacked a grownup sex role model and the stroking the absent parent could have provided to help them learn to feel OK), he is less clear about the source of Marvin Macy's difficulties. Though the Narrator does tell us that Henry and Marvin are "the living remainder of a brood of seven children" (63), he omits the information which McCullers had supplied that the seven children had been abandoned by their childish, irresponsible parents. Albee does, however, dramatize Marvin Macy's own selfishness and irresponsible character through dialogue contrasting the stable, sensible Henry Macy's attitude with Marvin Macy's arrogance. But it is not made entirely clear that it is Amelia's rejection of Marvin Macy which makes her so attractive, since she thereby resembles his mother. Even her size (again, McCullers clearly makes Miss Amelia an inch taller than Marvin Macy but Albee omits this specific information) recalls his relative helplessness

18 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 175.
as a Child looking up to his large and powerful mother.

The puzzle as to why Miss Amelia accepts Marvin Macy's proposal can be solved by examining Albee's dramatization carefully. Marvin Macy does not speak of love, tenderness, and warmth; rather he talks of his own social and economic desirability. He offers an alliance which Miss Amelia's business sense coaxes her to accept. She seems oblivious of the sexual "favors" which a woman tacitly promises to surrender in the marriage contract. Rutenberg's explanation for Miss Amelia's strange behavior is somewhat helpful:

[Amelia's] fear of having children, because her own mother died in childbirth, would not allow her to take the chance that family history would repeat itself. Marvin's incontinence panicked Amelia and she finally had to drive him from her or face her sexual phobia. Replacing Marvin with Lymon gave Amelia the opportunity to be the subservient wife without the threat of coitus. This asexual arrangement is perfectly acceptable to Lymon because his seeming conquest of Amelia gives him stature (she is taller than most men) without disturbing his homosexual orientation. In addition, Amelia could not reconcile herself to a life with Marvin because she bears too much resentment toward her father for being indirectly responsible for her mother's death. The more virile and masculine a man is, the more she is reminded of what killed her mother.19

However, Miss Amelia's attitude toward Cousin Lymon seems more parentally nurturant and indulgent than wifely, since she continues to be the family provider. In her marriage, she seemed to have been prepared to continue as joint breadwinner; and since she did not expect Marvin Macy to support her, she apparently hoped not to have to surrender her sexual "favors" in payment. Unfortunately, Marvin Macy turns over the deed to his property, eliminating Miss Amelia's incentive to continue the alliance. When he turns to drinking for courage

19 Ibid.
to help him consumate the marriage, Miss Amelia now feels wronged and
turns him off with a shotgun.

Henry Macy tries to intervene in behalf of his brother, and
Albee again introduces the symbol of the chain gang, as Miss Amelia
tries to change the subject. The men on the chain gang, who are not
able to play games because they are all victims, are going to build
a bridge. But Marvin Macy will not be able to build a bridge to Miss
Amelia because (she fears) he wishes to dominate her and perhaps even
hurt her. Her fears prove not ungrounded as he threatens, "I gonna
bust your face open, I gonna ... I gonna tear your arms outa your
body like they bug wings" (103). The image suggests a warped, sadis-
tic child. Thus he projects onto Miss Amelia all the love and hate
he felt for his mother who abandoned him. Unfortunately, Albee does
not make the genesis of his corruption really clear.

As he leaves his brother, Marvin shows a consciousness of his
life script, which was only briefly interrupted by his counterscript
for two years:

MARVIN MACY
(A brief, rueful laugh)
You know, Henry? I wouldn't be surprised one bit if I did?
Wouldn't surprise me I turned into one of the worst people you
ever saw? [105]

Having tried the socially acceptable counterscript in order to be
worthy of Miss Amelia, he can now return to the much more powerful
script he has long planned, one that confirms his not-OKness.

As the action returns to the present, it may seem strange that
Cousin Lymon is so quiet and serious "with no trace of sport in it"
(107), as he pins down Miss Amelia, getting her to admit her marriage to Marvin Macy:

Cousin Lymon
You promise you never have secrets from me, Amelia. Give me a real funny feelin', . . . knowing you keep things from me; give me a feelin' I don't like.

Miss Amelia
It weren't no real secret, Cousin Lymon. I don't . . . I don't like you to worry none about things; I like you to be comfortable, an' . . . an' happy. [109]

At last, Miss Amelia has exposed the true nature of their relationship, that she was indulging him voluntarily, that his apparent power over her derived from her benevolence. Cousin Lymon now shows his fascination for the chain gang, because they are "together" (112) in a sense he clearly thinks is different from the way he and Miss Amelia are together. They do not have to pretend that any one of them is stronger or weaker than any other; they are clearly victims together and no pretense is possible. Since Cousin Lymon is happiest in the role he knows best, Marvin Macy becomes even more attractive to the dwarf when he treats Cousin Lymon contemptuously. And as Marvin Macy was attracted to Miss Amelia as a strong mother figure, so Cousin Lymon longs to be adopted by Marvin Macy.

At this point (nearly four-fifths of the way through the play) Albee has the Narrator interrupt the action with a speech about the peculiar nature of love. Many critics have chosen the statement that "the state of being beloved is intolerable to many" as the central theme of the play. However, what precedes this statement is necessary to make the play totally comprehensible: i.e., "the quality and value of any love is determined solely by the lover himself. It is for this
reason that most of us would rather love than be loved" (116).

The quality of Marvin Macy's love for Miss Amelia is such that it seems he will redeem himself socially in order to be worthy of her. To please the nurturant mother who will raise children differently, more reliably than his own mother, he reforms his character for two years, a considerably long time. But it is also to please his mother's Crazy Child, the Electrode, or Witch, that he runs off and leaves Miss Amelia just as his own mother abandoned him. This point is, of course, much less clear in the play than McCullers had made it.

The quality of Miss Amelia's love for Cousin Lymon reflects a (socially) better character than Marvin Macy displays. Everyone benefits from her indulging the dwarf's need for companionship by opening the café. This too is made far more explicit in McCullers' novella, though Albee's suggestion through dramatization is clear enough. What is omitted in the play is Amelia's skill in doctoring, her especial tenderness with children, her altruistic policy of trying out all her cures on herself first, and her intolerance of women's complaints. However, in the play, the remarks of the townspeople make obvious that most of them, even Marvin Macy's own brother, appreciate Miss Amelia and the café, product of her love for Lymon.

When Henry Macy tries to persuade his brother to leave town peacefully, Marvin claims that it was "all on account of her" (121) that he had to rot in the penitentiary, but Henry protests, "That ... that kinda thing you can't blame on no one person, Marvin" (121). But since Marvin's mother and Miss Amelia have blended into one in his
mind, he can and does focus his revenge on the woman he can reach, Miss Amelia.

Cousin Lymon's love for Marvin Macy also may be rooted in a frustrated parental love, and Marvin's indifferent tolerance of him confirms the identification. And Cousin Lymon's love, of course, also proves ultimately socially destructive. The final switch comes as Lymon instigates a game similar to "Let's You and Him Fight," but there is a significant variation of the rules here. Whereas in the classical game, the player who is it promises herself (or himself) to the victor of the fight, Cousin Lymon will follow Marvin Macy win or lose. Miss Amelia acknowledges that she cannot win Cousin Lymon back short of killing Marvin Macy: "If I drive him off then . . . then Cousin Lymon go off with him" (138). Had her doctoring been emphasized more in the play, the dilemma facing her might have been even more poignant.

Merlie Ryan, the town idiot, begs to know why they are going to fight.

THIRD TOWNSMAN (Laughing)
'Cause they know each other, Merlie.

(A couple of people laugh at this, but mostly there is tense silence)

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20 Rutenberg's remarks (Edward Albee, p. 174) about Lymon's latent homosexuality seem in part valid; he does, however, confuse and extrapolate considerably from the little biographical information Lymon supplies about himself (McCullers made Lymon the son of Fanny's third husband; Albee changes Lymon's father to Fanny's first husband).

Symbolically, it is social good and social evil which "know" each other through Miss Amelia and Marvin Macy. The combatants have become symbols of the kind of love each has shown him- or herself capable of. Albee's stage directions make Marvin Macy's character clear; he is "vicious," "ugly," and "wicked" (145) in his last remarks before the fight begins. By contrast, once having decided to fight, the only emotion Miss Amelia shows is impatience. In a fair contest, good proves stronger than evil, and Miss Amelia seems to be about to strangle Marvin Macy when Cousin Lymon intervenes, turning the victory to Marvin Macy.

True to his character, having subdued Miss Amelia with Cousin Lymon's help, Marvin does not attempt a reconciliation—he is not interested in a taming of the shrew. He is not even content to leave be; he must destroy the café and whatever good Miss Amelia has created for the town through her love for Cousin Lymon. In the novella her destruction is complete, for she gives up doctoring as well as the café when Cousin Lymon leaves. The play ends with the mention of the chain gang—the terrible, grim alternative to gamesplaying.

Certainly the stuff of drama is present in this story. The Karpman Drama Triangle is fulfilled at the climax as Marvin Macy switches to persecutor of Miss Amelia and Rescuer of Cousin Lymon, Cousin Lymon mutually rescues Marvin Macy by persecuting Miss Amelia, and Miss Amelia becomes the true victim of them both. But nuances in the novella that helped make these complex characters vivid and plausible in spite of their grotesqueness are missing in the play.
Hayman observes, "Albee has said that if her were rewriting the play he would combine the roles of the Narrator and Henry Macy. This would certainly be an improvement, but only a slight one." 22 Another possible improvement might have been to use the singing of the chain gang like a Greek chorus to supply information that Albee found difficult to dramatize. Thus he could perhaps even have avoided the on-stage fight which many critics found less credible in the flesh than it had been in McCullers' mythic narrative.

As it is, the play remains only a partial success. Unfortunately, his next attempt at adaptation proved even less successful. In fact, Malcolm, adapted from James Purdy's novel of the same name, is probably the only one of Albee's works about which there was and is practically universal critical agreement. Rutenberg notes that even Albee himself publicly apologized for the production which closed after just seven performances, losing $100,000. 23

Some six months later Albee attempted to justify the failure by implying it was partially due to the inadequacies of the audience:

Every writer's got to pay some attention, I suppose, to what his critics say because theirs is a reflection of what the audience feels about his work. And a playwright, especially a playwright whose work deals very directly with an audience, perhaps he should pay some attention to the nature of the audience response—not necessarily to learn anything about his craft, but as often as not merely to find out about the temper of the time, what is being tolerated, what is being permitted. 24

22 Hayman, Edward Albee, p. 75.
23 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 179.
24 Interview with Flanagan, Writers at Work, third series, pp. 324-325.
Purdy's *Malcolm*, an absurd novel, is a rambling epic which achieves its overall effect from an accumulation of encounters, each of which seems to prepare Malcolm, a lost fifteen-year-old, to learn from his experiences with the next group of characters he meets. What Malcolm needs to learn, of course, is age-old, "How to live?"

Unfortunately, Albee found it necessary to cut even more from Purdy's much longer *Malcolm* than he had from McCullers' *Ballad*. Albee defended his decisions on what to cut on the basis of the limits of the stage:

... you can do in a novel many things that you can't do in a play. In a play you've got to simplify just a little bit, because an audience is capable of following just so many strands—and remembering so many things. Because they also have to watch when they're at a play, as well as listen and pay attention. Those are very difficult things for audiences to do. When you're reading a book you can go back for one thing; you can read at leisure. You read much more slowly than you hear in a play.

But his attempted defense does not really withstand close examination. Bigsby, normally very sympathetic to Albee's work, calls *Malcolm* "a pretentious and even a careless piece of work." In support of his judgment he adds:

In a very real sense, Purdy's novel has a greater internal logic than has Albee's play, for in adapting it for the stage he has been all too ready to sacrifice coherence to convenience, until, at times, the surreal is in danger of becoming the frankly mystifying. Thus when Malcolm is offered his first address by Professor Cox, he is horrified and throws the visiting card away. In the novel there is some logic in this action, since the boy is disgusted to find that the address is that of an

25 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, pp. 180-183, adroitly identifies the major omissions and changes.

26 Ibid., p. 253.

undertaker. Albee, however, while omitting the figure of the undertaker entirely, curiously retains the boy's reaction, merely transferring it to Kermit and Laureen Raphaelson. His disgusted reaction now makes no apparent sense. Indeed in the novel the boy had responded favourably to this further address, even commenting on the beauty of the names. Similarly, in the course of his encounter with the undertaker, in Purdy's version, Malcolm is told to go away and return in twenty years. His dismayed shout, "It's NOT twenty years", shortly before his death thus makes some kind of sense. Albee, however, chooses to retain this despairing cry, while omitting the original incident which gives it its meaning. Thus Purdy's oblique approach becomes even more opaque when transferred to the stage. 28

Gilbert Debusscher speculates that the bench on which Malcolm sits triggered Albee's interest in the story, since he had already used a bench as an effective symbol in The Zoo Story. 29 Rutenberg notices that Albee's preoccupation with orphans (as demonstrated in The Zoo Story, The American Dream, and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? as well as Albee's own life) may have drawn him to the tale. It may be however that the three controlling ego states demonstrated in the three couples Malcolm meets on his adventures is what stimulated Albee's sense of psychological realism, or surrealism.

Malcolm himself may be seen as a Natural Child, a prince, who somehow has escaped the almost universal conviction of self-not-OKness. As such he is, of course, mythical; definitionally practically impossible. The play begins with the premise of a character which is psychologically shaky though it may appeal to the Natural Child in every member of the audience.

28 Ibid.

Malcolm hesitates to condemn his father for disappearing without discussing plans for when Malcolm is grown up (and his mother is never mentioned). He has been able to conceive no life script for himself, but he tells Cox "(A fact) I suppose, though . . . that if someone would tell me what to do, I would do it." Cox also does not tell Malcolm exactly what to do, but he does manipulate him into acquaintances who limit his choices considerably. Unfortunately for a boy with his unique opportunity, Malcolm is a follower rather than a leader, who waits passively for his father, Cox, or Melba to show him how to live.

In act one, Cox sends Malcolm to three addresses of people who represent possible life styles for Malcolm to emulate. Each of the couples Cox sends Malcolm to are governed primarily by only one of their three ego states. Cox promises Malcolm as he sends him to the first address:

You'll rather enjoy Kermit and Laureen, I think . . . they're children--like yourself.

MALCOLM

(Disappointed) Oh? Yes?

COX


Kermit and Laureen do indeed prove extremely childish. They bicker and play a nasty variation of "Mine Is Better" that might more accurately be called "Yours is Worse." The only part of their own and each other's personalities that they seem in touch with are their

30 Edward Albee, Malcolm (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 6. All further quotations from Malcolm in this chapter refer to this edition and page numbers will appear as necessary following each quote in parentheses.
sexual drives.

Malcolm confirms to Kermit that he has no direction for his life, for his father has only picked out suits for him up to the age of eighteen and then abandoned him. Kermit's Childish insistence that he is extraordinarily old provokes Malcolm to wonder aloud if Kermit might not be afraid of dying, but childlike again, Kermit assures Malcolm that "on my one hundred and forty-fifth birthday the idea suddenly hit me that there wasn't any death" (23). This encourages Malcolm to avoid the possibility that his father might be dead, that he might be on his own. Laureen finally sends Malcolm off: "You come back and see us, Malcolm, some other time. (Beginning to stroke KERMIT) We wanna be alone for a little now. You'll understand when you're married" (24).

In the entre-scene Cox surprises Malcolm by mentioning his own wife and assures Malcolm, "Everybody is married, Malcolm . . . everybody that counts" (27). The idea is thus planted that Malcolm too, if he wants to "count," must incorporate marriage into his life script.

The next couple Malcolm is sent to, the Girards, live for appearances, or for Society: they are distorted Parents, as perhaps viewed by a very young child. For example, the powerful Girard Girard acquires millions with magical ease, and Madame Girard drinks alcohol, something forbidden to children in America. Madame Girard contrasts sharply to Laureen Raphaelson. Whereas Laureen had proposed to Kermit and promised to support him in the bargain, Madame Girard remembers the night her husband proposed to her:
MADAME GIRARD
When I gave you your victory, Girard Girard? The night I surrendered myself to your blandishments and agreed to become your wife?

GIRARD GIRARD
That very night.

MADAME GIRARD
I recall it. I gave up . . . everything, my life, in return for but one thing, which I now cherish:—my name—Madame Girard.

Madame Girard plays a game of constantly threatening divorce, cherishing an illusion of being in control which Girard Girard tolerantly fosters. But Malcolm cuts through the pretense by suggesting, "(Rather loud and self-assertive) Perhaps Mr. Girard may want a divorce first! (The YOUNG MEN laugh, GIRARD GIRARD smiles quietly) (32).

Malcolm clearly does not know the rules of the game. Malcolm unveils her illusion that the mansion is hers, and Madame Girard retaliates in kind:

MADAME GIRARD
(An announcement) I . . . do not think your father exists. (Takes a great gulp) I have never thought he did. (MALCOLM swallows, stares at her open-mouthed) And what is more . . . (Takes another drink) . . . nobody thinks he exists . . . or ever did exist. [33]

Girard Girard solicitously plies his wife with champagne to prevent her from becoming too lucid. Like Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and Claire in A Delicate Balance, Madame Girard finds that alcohol helps suppress her intelligence and make her role somewhat more bearable: "A lot might help a little" (34) she tells her husband. Suddenly, through her alcoholic haze, Madame Girard sees Malcolm's beauty, and she proclaims her recognition: "Royalty! Real Royalty! A prince has come among us! A true prince!" (36).
Malcolm then goes back to Kermit, who announces that Laureen has left him because both of them had decided to yield the point about Kermit's age at the same moment. Malcolm offers sympathetic understanding, comparing Kermit's loss of his wife to his own father's absence, to which Kermit retorts with childish selfishness, "(Ouivering with rage) SHIT ON YOUR FATHER!" (39). Like a young child himself, Malcolm is only momentarily put off, and forgives Kermit just as quickly as he had overlooked Madame Girard's attack on his father. For a moment, he even accepts everyone else's judgment about his father's mysterious absence, but corrects himself quickly: "the dead . . . the disappeared" (39). Perhaps seeking for the only strokes readily available, Malcolm offers friendship in the face of Kermit's preposterous lie about his age: "I . . . I like you, Kermit. I like you very much," to which Kermit responds again narcissistically, "Yes? Well, come and see me soon, Malcolm. I'm really very lonely now" (40).

Malcolm next encounters a Streetwalker, whom he takes to be Laureen. In fact, she's played by the same actress so the mistake is entirely understandable. This strongly suggests that the Child ego state, which presumably controls the professional whore, looks much alike in whichever form it is found. Unlike the others Malcolm has met, the Streetwalker is willing to accept Malcolm's illusions about his family, and encourages him to believe that his father is "Not dead . . . gone away" (43). Though this seems to be kindness at first, she uses the ruse to get rid of Malcolm, sending him home to Daddy.

Back in his hotel room, Malcolm finds Girard Girard waiting to
invite Malcolm to their chateau for the summer. At first, Malcolm resists. Though he has been complaining of being left alone, he hesitates to go "where people may demand me at all hours . . ." (47). He experiences the conflict between his desire for stimulation and his need for security and safety. He does not want to leave the bench or Kermit, "(Slow and very serious) My very best friend in the world, I think: one person whom I could never leave" (47-48). Never daunted, the authoritarian Girard Girard invites Kermit to come along, sight unseen. The Girard's marriage has been barren, and he asks Malcolm to be their son. Malcolm corrects him, "Be like your son, sir."

Girard Girard wistfully observes, "Between simile and metaphor lies all the sadness in the world, Malcolm" (48). After he leaves, Kermit and Cox enter from opposite sides of the stage. Malcolm announces the proposed trip to Kermit, but Cox warns, "I wouldn't count on that, buddy, if I were you". (49). Here as elsewhere throughout the play, Cox's motivation is psychologically obscure.

Back in Kermit's sitting room Cox very quickly convinces the timid Kermit, "You're very special, a very special person; you're fragile, Kermit, and your eyes aren't strong; you couldn't stand the grandeur. . . . You'd be blinded by the splendor, Kermit" (52). So when Malcolm arrives with the Girards, Kermit refuses to open the door for them or go with them. Madame Girard is so overcome with "awe and job" at Kermit's recognition of the splendor of their presence that she allows herself to be disuaded, "(Bravura cheerfulness) We have tried and failed. (Puts her hand out) Lead me, Girard" (57). This
scene is very reminiscent of Mommy leaving Grandma in the sandbox, of course. But Girard is not the milktoast Daddy is. Thwarted, the punishing Parent of Girard Girard takes out his revenge for Malcolm's refusal on Madame Girard, by refusing to condone her drinking, though he has previously encouraged her indulgence. Left alone, Malcolm pleads unavailingly to Kermit behind the closed door, "I hope you've got plans for me. I've given up everything for you! (But MALCOLM is alone. Frightened little boy) What's to become of me?" (58). Malcolm, given no script by his father, is still unable to devise one for himself.

Cox now informs Malcolm that he is difficult to educate, but gives him another address, the only card he has left, with the warning to be cautious of them.

This leads Malcolm to Eloisa Brace's studio. She and Jerome the Burglar are governed by a pure, emotionless and amoral Adult ego state. She paints and he writes, both for profit. Her Adult control is clearly shown by her manner: she is neither happy nor sad to see Malcolm, neither afraid nor protective. Eloisa is a matter-of-fact data gathering and processing computer, a caricature of a manipulative human being. She immediately sees the possibility for profit in painting Malcolm's portrait. Jerome enters and takes charge of Malcolm, announcing that he is an ex-con, a burglar, and coercing Malcolm to drink up. Jerome shows Malcolm the book he wrote about prison life, with the homosexually suggestive title They Could Have Me Back. He leers and tries to make a pass at Malcolm, but Malcolm simply passes out.
After the portrait is completed, Cox and Eloisa dicker Adult to Adult to settle his commission at fifteen percent of the sale. Cox leaves as Madame Girard enters to negotiate the purchase of the painting, but in the midst of their bargaining Girard enters and announces that he is divorcing Madame Girard. She is stunned at his violation of the rules of their game. She reasons, "Certainly, sir, you will let me determine the relationship between what I wish and what I say I wish" (78). To complete her humiliation he declares he will replace her with Laureen Raphaelson and threatens to take back her name—outward sign of her respectability, deriving, of course, from her husband's power. She claims, "You may not have everything!" He responds, "Is that a rule, Madame?" reminding her that it is and always has been only he who had the power to make rules. Through all their exchanges Malcolm is an ignored observer, helplessly crying, "I feel that thing, father . . . Loss. Loss . . . father?" (80). Malcolm still lacks a leader to structure his time for him. The only emotion the Braces show is slight embarrassment as they notify Malcolm that not only has his portrait been sold, he too has been purchased, and humiliatingly, for only about a third of the price the picture of him had brought. Though saddened, Malcolm takes the news passively and his last words, which end act one, are "WHAT'S TO BECOME OF ME NOW!!??" (86).

In visiting each of the three couples, Malcolm has been drawn to the male, looking for a replacement for his father, someone who will tell him what to do. In each case he is let down. Kermit is narcissistically interested in only his own troubles; Jerome is will-
ing to peddle Malcolm even though he displays a mild homosexual interest in the boy; and Girard Girard gets too busy with another financial deal to pick up Malcolm at the botanical gardens at the appointed time. Malcolm thus falls into the hands of Gus.

As the second act opens, Gus accosts Malcolm. Gus has been sent by Melba to find a performer for her script. His specific attributes are unimportant; he only need be a contemporary, i.e., a member of the lost generation looking for direction. Malcolm is ideal for the part, as Melba agrees.

Unlike the one-dimensional characters, each governed by a single dominant ego state that Malcolm encountered in act one, Melba is complex. She is, however, in all three of her ego states, similar to the characters of act one in that she manifests immature aspects of each ego state. Her Parent takes care of Malcolm and directs him, but she does not worry about nourishing him properly. Her Adult earns their living by singing songs which exploit her audience's appetite for sex and sensation rather than music. Her Child enjoys the satisfactions of the flesh with him but she does not really like him. In a parody of male aggressiveness she persuades Malcolm to marry her, directing Gus to "mature him up a little" (100).

Malcolm voices his bewilderment, admitting to Gus that he has never "been joined to a woman the way nature meant" (103), but perhaps remembering Cox's claim that everybody that counts is married, he offers no resistance to Melba's plans.

Gus then brings Malcolm to a brothel. Malcolm thinks the proprietor, Miles, is Mr. Cox (he is played by the same actor),
mistaking again the function (of facilitator or panderer) for the individual. Rosita (played by the actress who plays Laureen) shows neither particular enthusiasm nor distaste for her job. When they return in scene four, however, she now claims, "You've made an old woman very happy" (109), and gives him a locket with "a real, little tiny American flag all rolled up inside" (110). This is another of Albee's richly ironic symbols: the flag is unfurled, and miniature; it is to be carried in a locket by a young man who looks like the American Dream, but who lacks direction, and whose only apparent talent is centered in his crotch.

The next entre-scene consists solely of a monologue by Madame Girard, who promenades, followed by Kermit, as she summarizes the history of the marriage and faces the fact that the portrait is not a satisfactory substitute for the real Malcolm. She pleads with Kermit to help her get Malcolm back, but Kermit no longer seems intimidated by her "splendor" and he walks off, leaving her more powerless than ever.

We next see Melba and Malcolm in bed enjoying marriage. Melba is finally persuaded to take her hands off Malcolm, whom she treats like a doll:

MELBA

(Gets up off the bed, stretches, shows off a little for HELIODORO [the Cuban valet]), O.K. Momma got to go to work anyway. But you stay right there, sweetheart; you just lie there an' read a funny-book, or somethin', so Momma know where you are when she want you.

MALCOLM

(So smitten) I'll . . . be right here where you want me, Melba. [115]

Melba has achieved an ironic parody of the ideal marriage; as
the whole personality, she takes the husband's role of making decisions and earning their keep, while the immature Malcolm is only required to be ready to amuse her at her convenience, like a child, or like a wife. Her will be done! In order to keep him acquiescent, she further dulls his senses with liquor, just as Girard Girard had placated Madame Girard. Gloom and weariness color Malcolm's exchanges with Heliodoro as the scene ends.

The next entre-scene is a promenade by Eloisa and Jerome, followed by Girard Girard, who has at long last come to check up on the non-delivery of his goods. The Adult logical rationalization capacities of the Braces far surpass Girard Girard's reasoning powers, and he is left, as Madame Girard had been, helpless.

Malcolm and Melba are next seen out at a nightclub. Melba laces their drinks with aphrodisiacs. Though she admits she did not marry Malcolm for his mind, she begins to find her toy's stupidity really annoying and addresses him condescendingly as "kiddie" (123). Suddenly Malcolm thinks he sees his father and runs after him.

Malcolm confronts the Man in the washroom, but the Man shows no recognition. Malcolm is again bewildered. Just as the Man "seizes MALCOLM and throws him hard" (126), an attendant (played by the actor who plays Cox) enters to help break up the fracas. He assures Malcolm that the Man, who quickly "turns on his heel, walks into blackness" (126), could not have been his father: "He's nobody's father" (127). Malcolm is at last willing to agree that Madame Girard may have been right in her logical absurdity: "Maybe he never existed at all" (128).
Opening a new scene, Madame Girard walks on with Heliodoro. Inexplicably, considering her previous behavior, she seems to have matured miraculously; Albee's stage direction for her speech reads, "All camp is gone from here to the end of the play" (129). Again, psychological realism seems to be lacking. They discuss the Doctor, presumably sent for to dress the cut Malcolm received at the hands of the Man he thought was his father. Heliodoro ushers Madame Girard into the solarium and Melba joins them. Though Madame Girard has only revealed herself up to this point as a flat character, she now appeals to Melba: "Have pity on us human beings, please" (131). Whether she regards Melba as more or less than human is not really clear, but she continues to badger Melba for information about Malcolm. Just as it seems the women will come to blows, the Doctor enters and announces that Malcolm is dying. Madame Girard protests, "(Hoping to make it true) This man doesn't know what he's talking about. People like Malcolm do not die. There isn't room for it" (133). In the script she had prepared for her would-be son, she had not planned for his death.

The Doctor hesitates to reveal what is killing Malcolm, but finally admits, "(Reticent) The . . . young man . . . is dying of a combination of acute alcoholism and, uh, sexual hyperaesthesia"; he adds, "the combination of the two . . . well, one would be enough, but . . ." (133). Melba reconciles herself to the implications of the Doctor's words, and as the scene ends, reaches for Heliodoro's hand. She is "preoccupied, a little sad, but calm" (134).
In the final scene, Malcolm lies dying in bed. Madame Girard is first to enter to him. Even now, he looks to the men who have let him down, calling with his dying breath for Kermit, Mr. Girard, Mr. Cox, and his father. Madame Girard waits for further word, but suddenly realizes he is finished. She cries for her lost prince. The others begin to come onstage, grouping around the bed. Kermit and Laureen express only unbelief, like typical children who cannot really comprehend death. Eloisa and Jerome, totally dispassionate and objective, are impressed only by the swiftness of the death. Cox defensively disclaims any blame for the results of his leadership, vaguely explaining that Malcolm just "didn't have the stuff, that's all," adding, "God knows, I tried" (136). Madame Girard agrees that they all tried; Melba complains only of feeling cold. Girard Girard confirms, "He . . . he passed through so quickly; none of us could grasp hold" (137). Again Laureen, Eloisa, Jerome, and Kermit agree that they "tried" (though they don't say what), and Cox repeats, "He didn't have the stuff, that's all" (137) though he doesn't specify what "stuff" he believes would have saved Malcolm.

Madame Girard protests, "None of you . . . ever cared" (137), but in childish defiance she plans an ostentatious funeral for him that undermines any inclination the audience might have to be persuaded that she has really matured. Girard Girard and Laureen coax her to "Let it go" (138) and Eloisa, Jerome, Laureen, and Kermit assure her

31 Berne, Games People Play, pp. 105-108. The person playing "Look How Hard I've Tried" always makes sure he appears blameless for the failure he makes inevitable.
that they cared—some. Cox repeats his judgment that Malcolm did not have the stuff and the play ends as Madame Girard invites anyone who "cares" to see the portrait:

It's . . . not much. But . . . it will have to do. That's all that's left. Just that. Nothing more. Nothing more. Just that.

(As the lights fade on MADAME GIRARD and the dead MALCOLM, they rise on the golden bench, high on a platform, above and behind. The bench is suffused in a golden light for a few moments, then all fades to blackness) [138]

As many critics were quick to point out, it is hard for the audience to care sincerely what happens to Malcolm at the end. As a symbol of the wasted potential of America he is weak. He apparently was born rich, comparable to America's potential resources. He is perhaps fortunate to have been deserted by his father, though he does not realize it. He is left in the enviable position of being completely free to decide his own future. Malcolm's independence corresponds somewhat to the hopeful condition of the United States in its early years. His initial fear of deciding his own fate is not unsympathetic, considering his tender years. But he never grows any more self-reliant. Cox's motivation is enigmatic; but for whatever reason, he decides to help Malcolm fill the void left by the missing father. Malcolm visits three possible models to emulate—couples dominated by their Child, Parent, and Adult ego states. None of these alternatives seems attractive to the audience, but Malcolm is surprisingly willing to accept each in turn. Cox has warned that innocence has the look of stupidity, but the audience must begin to suspect that what everyone takes to be Malcolm's innocence probably really is stupidity.
Malcolm's preference for the Child-Child friendship with Kermit over the Parent-Child relationship offered by the Girards foreshadows his quick submission to Melba's pitch, also Child-Child. Even Melba comes to be annoyed by Malcolm's denseness, though she herself insures his mental fogginess by keeping him in an alcoholic stupor. Though the conception of Malcolm as a scriptless adolescent has magically exciting potential for all its psychological impossibility, one can hardly help cynically speculating that Malcolm's picture, the dream of what he might become, really might be worth three times as much as the real Malcolm. The boy with all the advantages and freedom to plan his own future, in the absence of desirable models, chooses to be satisfied by exercising the most childish part of his own personality. His passivity and narcissism lead directly to his death.

As a human being, Malcolm inspires more scorn than pity; as a symbol of America, only despair. And as Rutenberg points out, even the ambiguity which Purdy had managed to suggest about the finality of Malcolm's "death" is absent from Albee's version. If the play is designed to parody sex roles and implicit marriage contracts, it has some brilliantly ironic juxtapositions. But a play needs more than just funny moments. In spite of Albee's claim of awareness of the pitfalls of adaptation, it seems inescapable that in his first two attempts he inadvertently did lessen and coarsen the material, and in the second, beyond redemption. Some of the individual scenes of Malcolm do show a remarkable understanding of human psychology and role playing, but the total effect does not produce a dramatically satisfying play.
CHAPTER VI

VAST CONFUSION:

TINY ALICE

We return now to the play Albee wrote between his first two adaptations, Tiny Alice. It enjoyed a modest run, despite mixed reviews, which ranged from John Chapman's scathing condemnation (he called it a "why-is-it?" rather than a "who-done-it?" to Richard Watts's bewildered but admiring tribute: "beautifully written . . . [with] a steady theatrical fascination." Of all of Albee's highly controversial plays, Tiny Alice is probably entitled to the distinction of generating the most critical dispute. Even those who find the play baffling are usually intrigued by it, and those who like the play feel called upon to admit certain difficulties.

Some critics have explained the play as an expressionistic


dream or revery of Brother Julian, or as a "fantasy of the subconscous." But Robert Brustein finds it "a frozen portent without an animating event." Gilbert Debusscher expounds on the theatricality of the work, as does Richard Davidson, who claims, "In [Tiny Alice] perhaps more profundity is attempted than in any of Mr. Albee's other plays; less is actually realized—at least on the printed page. Mr. Albee's success rests on his superior reinforcement of the verbal with the visual." He concludes: "Contrary to what Mr. Albee has said in his preface, it would seem that 'Tiny Alice is less opaque in' viewing 'than it would be in any single' reading."

On the other hand, C. W. E. Bigsby agrees with Albee's own estimation of the play as "a work which unquestionably remains more


7 Gilbert Debusscher, Edward Albee: Tradition and Renewal (Brussels: Center for American Studies, 1969), p. 79.


9 Ibid., p. 60.
effective in print than on the stage," and calls this "an incredible confession for a dramatist to make." Bigsby goes on to explain:

... in choosing to write for the theatre he has presumably accepted the challenge of communicating directly to an audience, and in this he has patently failed. He is, it appears, clearly not prepared to make any concessions to the audience—not even those made necessary by the nature of drama. His failure in Tiny Alice, moreover, makes one doubt what is clearly one of the play's central premises. For the assumption that the model is more "real" than the castle itself has a further implication. It implies that art itself is more valid than an inauthentic life founded on nothing more secure than fear and illusion. In the rarefied atmosphere of Tiny Alice, one is far from convinced.

This explanation, of course, presumes that Albee is somehow for the forces that he portrays in Miss Alice, Lawyer, and Butler, and against Julian. In any case, Bigsby is inclined to excuse what he regards as well-intentioned mistakes like Tiny Alice (and Malcolm) on the basis of their healthy influence on experimentation in theater. Richard Amacher agrees, and lauds Albee's courage in "attempting progressively more difficult problems in the theater, ones demanding increasingly greater skill."

As with all of Albee's work, much of the criticism centers on the characterization. Ruby Cohn sees Julian as an extension of Albee's earlier characterization of Jerry of The Zoo Story, in that both are

11 Ibid., p. 69. 12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 266.
apocalyptic, though Julian is obedient, whereas Jerry was rebellious.\textsuperscript{15} Mary Campbell finds Julian "personally a thoroughly admirable kind of man, courageous and good, sensitive and scrupulous, both spiritually and intellectually."\textsuperscript{16} Debusscher claims, "Tiny Alice may be the first truly modern tragedy, in which man's fatal flaw is nothing other than his humanity."\textsuperscript{17} But Anne Paolucci finds Julian not nearly so attractive:

His faith is suspect, as the years in the asylum have made clear. In his withdrawal, he has not grasped the perversion implicit in his ideals . . . his desire for glory and sanctification is empty and . . . religious sacrifice is an illusion. His humility is the excuse for pride, his faith is the silence of doubt. The conviction of serving a higher purpose turns out to be a cancer of the will and eventually chokes the life out of him.\textsuperscript{18}

Also typical of the response to all of Albee's work, some critics find Albee's view of the world shown in Tiny Alice unnecessarily depressing. Albee defends the play against those critics who dislike the subject:

If the work of art is good enough, it must not be criticized for its theme. I don't think it can be argued . . . You may dislike the intention enormously but your judgment of the artistic merit of the work must be judged by how well it succeeds in its intention.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{16} Mary Elizabeth Campbell, "The Tempters in Albee's Tiny Alice," \textit{Modern Drama}, XII (May, 1970), 22.

\textsuperscript{17} Debusscher, \textit{Edward Albee}, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{18} Anne Paolucci, \textit{From Tension to Tonic: The Plays of Edward Albee} (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), pp. 95-96.

But audiences and readers often have difficulty in determining just what Albee's purpose is. Cohn blames some of the trouble on Albee's use of "the disjunctive technique of Absurdism and the terminology of Christianity," with which "Albee drapes a veil of knowing over his mystery." 20 William Willeford attempts to account for the confusion concerning the central purpose of the play by listing some of what he perceives to be its separate purposes:

Tiny Alice is about man as the victim of the fairly undefined "system" that we have in mind when we speak of "beating the system," an arrangement of things that should, we feel, at least not work against us if it does not work for us but that is instead full of malevolent purpose. It is about subtleties of the interplay between reality and illusion and about the value of faith and the symbol. It is about the isolation of the individual, the tyranny of women and hence the impossibility of a meeting of the sexes, and about the power of alcohol. It is about the human need for illusion and about absurdity as a fact of existence.

Willeford pursues the sexual enigma of Tiny Alice:

The God of the play is . . . hermaphroditic in a curious way (the Christian father God being fused with Alice the erotic temptress), and the play explores an erotic twilight realm between homo- and heterosexuality. Though the sexual problems that motivate the playwright in this exploration may not be those of every member of the audience, they have important general implications. These implications may be seen in our attitudes towards the mystery of maleness and femaleness.

Ronald Hayman identifies a number of instances where Albee has seemingly deliberately added to the confusion of the audience by planting false clues, a blatant one being at the beginning of scene three in act one where, "The Lawyer is alone with Miss Alice . . . 'and he is


22 Ibid., p. 141.
speaking to her in a more formal manner than he would ever use with her except in a charade put on for Julian's benefit; but this charade is put on because the audience cannot yet be shown what their real relationship is like.\textsuperscript{23}

Alice Mandanis suggests that, provocative as \textit{Tiny Alice} is, "It is a play which invites its audience to play games like 'Guess the Source' or 'Find the Complex'. Though titillating this is confusing and once the curtain is down . . . one may wonder if the play returns us to a theatrical tradition unaffected by its presence."\textsuperscript{24}

Let us now see what help if any we can derive from applying principles of TA to \textit{Tiny Alice}. Brother Julian, by universal critical consensus, is the protagonist of this drama, in spite of the title of the play. He seems to have devised a life script for himself that envisions his death as a Christian martyr. Berne points out that the human race can be divided into the "Life Crowd" and the "Death Crowd":

These are the basic illusions on which all scripts are based; that either Santa Claus will come eventually bringing gifts for the winners, or Death will come eventually and solve all the problems for the losers. Thus the first question to ask about illusions is: "Are you waiting for Santa Claus, or Death?"\textsuperscript{25}

It is not immediately apparent, however, whether the fate of Christian martyr falls into one camp or the other, for the doctrine of resurrection promises the faithful that in dying for Christ they earn immortality.


\textsuperscript{24} Alice Mandanis, "Symbol and Substance in \textit{Tiny Alice}," \textit{Modern Drama}, XII. (May, 1969), 92.

Julian certainly embodies the Christian virtues of the sermon on the mount. He is modest, self-effacing, and wishes only to serve. Though he is apparently an educated man, he does not seek ordination (an assured place in the order of the saved), but is content to serve as a lay brother, submitting to the vow of celibacy without the satisfactions of the priesthood. Berne advises that before dealing his final blow, it is not unusual for Death to "bestow a permanent disability, a cessation of sexual desire, or premature old age, each of which relieves the person of some of his duties." Unsympathetically viewed, Julian's most outstanding qualities may be called passivity, docility, and withdrawal. He is not sure whether to believe that the Cardinal or the Lawyer is responsible for his being chosen for his mission as go-between, but he knows it was not his own idea. In their first meeting the Lawyer patronizes Julian, taunting him about the unusualness of the Cardinal's selecting a lay brother as his private secretary: "He [Cardinal] really is Santa Claus; we know." Julian's confusion as to who is directing his life continues, though the audience, who has seen the first scene, knows that the Cardinal, or Santa Claus, did not bestow this honor on Julian. Julian tries to detach himself from the question of who is directing his fate: "I will not . . . I will not concern myself with

26 The Roman Catholic Julian ironically echoes the Protestant John Milton who comforted himself, being afflicted with blindness, "They also serve, who only stand and wait."


28 Edward Albee, Tiny Alice (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 39. All quotations in this chapter from Tiny Alice refer to this edition; page numbers will appear following each in parentheses as needed.
... all this" (40). But Lawyer derides him:

You're quite right: bow your head, stop up your ears and do what you're told.

JULIAN

Obedience is not a fault.

LAWYER

Nor always a virtue. See Facism. [41]

Berne notes that obedience to Parental precepts is based on the same principle, whether the authority is the Bible or Mein Kampf. 29 He further claims:

Parents everywhere are the same in regard to illusions. If the child believes they are magicians, it is partly because they believe it themselves. There is no actual or conceivable parent who has not somehow conveyed to his offspring: "If you do what I tell you, everything will come out all right." To the child this means: "If I do what they tell me, I'll be protected by magic, and all my best dreams will come true." He believes this so firmly that it is almost impossible to shake his faith. If he doesn't make it, it is not because the magic is gone, but because he has broken the rules. And if he defies or abandons the parental directives, it does not mean that he has lost his belief in his illusions. It may only mean that he cannot stand the requirements any longer, or doesn't think he will ever meet them. 30

Thus, when Julian finds himself seduced through his own compliant passivity, he violates his vow of chastity but he only appears to have given up his mission. He tells Cardinal: "... though not losing God's light, joining it with ... my new. (He is like a bubbling little boy) I can't tell you, the ... radiance, humming, and the witchcraft, I think it must be, the ecstasy of this light, as God's exactly; the transport the same, the lifting, the ... the sense of service, and the EXPANSION ... " (140). He seems perfectly

29 Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello?, p. 152.

30 Ibid., pp. 151-152.
oblivious of the sacrilegious equation he has made between God and witchcraft. He is pleased to think that the Church and Cardinal sanction his new method of service.

Lawyer, as he starts to leave the set after his initial exchange with Julian, tells him that if Miss Alice cares to see him today, "I will have you brought up" (42). This not only subtly suggests to the audience that Lawyer and his forces will soon attempt to act as new Parents to Julian, bringing him up; it also implies that Miss Alice is on a higher level than Julian. And it provides an unanswered question for Julian to pursue with Butler after Lawyer leaves. Butler supplies the information Julian requests and directly, since Julian now "owes one" to Butler, Butler requests an accounting for the missing six years which Julian declined to explain to Lawyer. In Butler's debt psychologically, Julian is unable to refuse.

In his confession to Butler, Julian claims, "I lost my faith. (Pause) In God" (43). But in his explanation to Miss Alice he asserts, "my faith in God left me" (56), feigning passivity to the point of personifying his faith. When Miss Alice comments that an asylum is "an odd place to go to look for one's faith" (56), Julian insists emphatically on his passivity: "I did not go there to look for my faith, but because it had left me" (56).

Berne makes a useful distinction between illusions and delusions:

The delusions are things that he treats as though they were his own ideas, based on observation and judgment, whereas in reality they are ideas imposed on him by his parents, which are so ingrown that he thinks they are part of his Real Self. The illusions, similarly, are ideas from his Child that he accepts as
Adult and rational and tries to justify as such. Delusions and illusions may be called contaminations. Julian's idea of God can be seen as both delusion and illusion. He claims, "Man's God and mine are not . . . close friends" (58), but though he can articulate the qualities that others attribute to God which are repugnant to him, he does not seem able to explain what he believes God's true nature is. It seems not unlikely that this inability in a self-admittedly articulate man may arise from the probability that Julian's faith originated in his parents, as indeed most religious faith does. (This is not to deny that some Adult conversions occur; but in fact most people profess at least the denomination of their family). His religious delusions are augmented by religious illusions, i.e., the equation of Christian martyrdom with sensual pleasure.

Julian's illusions about the pleasure of religious agony range from having (or imagining) sex with the virgin to being stabbed by the trident fork of a gladiator or being eaten by a long-fanged lion (or dreaming of it). Of course, his Adult knows that the woman is really forty years old, married, and rather plain. And his childhood reveries were self-induced trances, not unwelcome nightmares. His Adult has protected him, keeping safe control while he enjoyed his illusions.

But in the end, his delusions and illusions converge, merge, and obliterate all Adult control, so that Julian fulfills the prediction of Lawyer:

31 Ibid., p. 155.
Give me any person . . . a martyr, if you wish . . . a saint . . . He'll take what he gets for . . . what he wishes it to be. AH, it is what I have always wanted, he'll say, looking terror and betrayal straight in the eye. Why not: face the inevitable and call it what you have always wanted. How to come out on top, going under. [148]

There are a few clues as to how Julian developed his script.

His grandfather was a vintner, brewer of wines to suppress the true Adult and foster the Child's illusions. The grandfather, parent of the parent, is of course doubly potent, nearly omnipotent. Lawyer mocks Cardinal and the uses the Church makes of alcoholic spirits: "When Christ told Peter--so legends tell--that he would found his church upon that rock, He must have had in mind an island in a sea of wine. How firm a foundation in the vintage years . . . " (149). His grandfather's influence is revealed in a reminiscence Julian relates in his dying soliloquy:

I died once, when I was little . . . almost, running, fell past jagged iron, noticed . . . only when I . . . tried to get up, that my leg, left, was torn . . . the whole thigh and calf . . . down. Such . . . searing . . . pain? Sweet smell of blood, screaming at the sight of it, so far . . . away from the house, and in the field, all hot . . . and yellow, white in the sun. COME BACK TO ME. Sunday, and my parents off . . . somewhere, only my grandfather, and he . . . OFF: SOMEWHERE: mousing with the dog. All the way down . . . bone, flesh, meat, moving. Help me, Grandfather! "Ere I die, ere life ebbs." (Laughs softly) Oh, Christ. (Little boy) Grandfather? Mousing? Come to me: Julian bleeds, leg torn, from short pants to shoe, bone, meat open to the sun; come to him. (Looks at the model, above and behind him) Ahhhh. Will no one come? (Looks at the ceiling) High; high walls . . . summit. (Eyes on his leg) Belly . . . not leg. Come, grandfather! Not leg, belly! Double-button. Pinpoint, searing . . . pain? "If you . . . if you die." Are you sleeping, not mousing? Sleeping on the sun-porch? Hammocking? Yes. "If I die before you wake, will the Lord deign your soul take?" Grandfather? (Cry of pain, then) Oh . . . GOD! "I come to thee, in agony." (Cry to the void) HELP . . . ME! (Pause) No help. Stitch it up like a wineskin!
Hold the wine in. Stitch it up. (Sweet reminiscence) And every day, put him in the sun, quarter over, for the whole stitched leg . . . to bake, in the healing sun. Green? Yes, a little, but that's the medicine. And keep him out of the fields, chuckle, chuckle. And every day, swinging in the sun, baking; good. Aching all the while, but good. The cat comes, sniffs it, won't stay. Finally . . . stays; lies in the bend, doubling it, purring, breathing, soaking in the sun, as the leg throbs, aches, heals. [186-187]

The French and English slang for sexual orgasm, dying and coming, are contrasted, then merged, both finally "aching all the while, but good," until at last the cat finds him fit company, recalling Lawyer's personification of the model as a cat at the end of scene, two, act two.

There are other, perhaps no less significant clues that Julian is playing a game of martyr. When, for instance, Miss Alice first asks him, "Have you slept with many women?" a simple no would have been a completely accurate answer, whether his one "experience" was actual or hallucination. One is definitely not many. But he wants to tell, to confess, so he carefully signals that he is willing passively to be drawn out on the subject. Miss Alice's "tiny laugh" indicates her recognition of the ploy. Basically he has not changed much by the last act when Cardinal inquires whether he has confessed. Julian replies, "(Blushing, but childishly pleased) I . . . I have, Father; I have . . . confessed, and finally, to sins more real than imagined, but . . . they are not sins, are they, in God's name, done in God's name, Father?" (143). The naughty Child still wants to confess and be forgiven for his weakness. The only difference is that now he's sure that what he wants to confess has actually been accomplished.
Julian's "mental illness" took the form of a disintegration of his ego. He expresses it, "Aaaaahhh, I would think I am going from myself again. How very, very sad . . . everything. Loss, great loss" (60). With the departure (or suppression) of his Adult he loses the faculty of hearing (one of his data gathering systems) and the ability to distinguish reality from imagination. In his final soliloquy he seems at first to experience a re-integration of his ego as he switches rapidly among Parental judgments, Adult evaluations, and Child-like reminiscences and pleas. He speaks in the detached voice of the nurturant Parent as he attempts to pray for himself in the third person as if he has left himself again: "Alice? . . . God? SOMEBODY? Come to Julian as he . . . ebbs" (188); this gradually shifts to the objective Adult as he argues, "Come, comfort him, warm him. He has not been a willful man . . . Oh, willful in his . . . cry to serve, but gentle, would not cause pain, but bear it, would bear it . . . has even. Not much, I suppose. One man's share is not . . . another's burden" (188).

And we see the same quality of denying active participation that Julian had earlier expressed as his faith abandoning him ("How long wilt thou forget me, 0 Lord? Forever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" [189]), now become an accusation. Ironically, the use of archaic English is a clue that Julian is still playing games, even as he lies dying, though he seems to be earnestly praying. Seventeenth-century English is certainly not his natural idiom; his adapted Child is attempting to please the authority of the King James translation of the Bible. Finally, as the theatrical sounds "become enormous"
his Adult loses any control and Julian's submissive Child accepts his role as martyr. He opens his arms in a semblance of a crucifixion to embrace both God and Alice; his martyr's script is complete.

The other three main characters may seem more difficult to analyze than Julian. In a magical, expressionistic way; they are three in one, the unholy trinity; i.e., Lawyer is the Parent, Butler the Adult, and Miss Alice is the Child of a mystical entity, Tiny Alice, who resides in the model. Tiny Alice may be viewed as a mythic, dark side of the Christian God. A mere shadow of God, she is only very rich and more powerful than most men, whereas He is omnipotent; she is crafty and devious, whereas He is omniscient and infinitely wise; she is long-lived (Lawyer speculates "on the chance it runs out before we do" [178]) but God is eternal.

The Christian God, moreover, reveals through his surrogate, the Son (the Word become Flesh), a plan of salvation whereby a human can choose to become godlike and achieve eternal salvation; Tiny Alice, the one-in-three entity, is like the hyena, living off the wounded and the dead. And whereas the Christian God is democratic (the doctrine of free will), creative and ordered; Tiny Alice seems to be selective, destructive, and irrational. Whereas the Christian God values each individual (see the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Matthew 18:12-14), Tiny Alice is indifferent to human life. At the end of act one Lawyer tells Miss Alice, "I can't think of anything standing in the way that can't be destroyed. (Pause) Can you?"; and Miss Alice responds, "(Rather sadly) No. Nothing" (68).

Lawyer expresses a strong confidence in Julian's ability to
metamorphose his faith in the Christian God into acceptance of Tiny Alice, claiming, "He can make it" (108).

BUTLER

I hope he can.

LAWYER

If not? (Shrugs) Out with him.

BUTLER (Pause)

You cannot tell the Cardinal . . . that.

LAWYER (Weary)

The benefits to the Church.

BUTLER

Not simply that.

LAWYER

And a man's soul. If it be saved . . . what matter how? [108]

Ironically, Lawyer implies that he believes Julian's soul will be "saved" just as surely by Tiny Alice as it would be by the Christian God. While this may be confusing to an audience searching for allegorical keys to unknowable mysteries, it is in keeping with Albee's custom of dramatically presenting ambiguities without solutions.

Lawyer, obviously, believes just as strongly in his deity, Tiny Alice, as Julian does in his own Christian God.

Tiny Alice, one-in-three, is a consistent whole personality. The three persons who comprise Tiny Alice are also psychologically sound, though each is dominated by a single part of his or her ego. Lawyer, by his profession, is a representative of the consensus of society's rules of government. As a Parentally controlled person, his chief satisfaction seems to derive from gaining equal authority and finally superseding his own Parents. He reminds Cardinal, "I have fine instructors behind me . . . yourself amongst them" (145).

In the first scene of act one, Lawyer and Cardinal vie for supremacy, each reminding the other of his unsavory past. Lawyer's greatest
triumph comes when he catches Cardinal in a small grammatical slip. But this only dimly foreshadows the magnitude of his complete mastery in act three when Cardinal accepts instruction from Lawyer. To Cardinal's incredulity, Lawyer simply remarks, "I haven't time to lie to you" (146). Lawyer calmly informs Cardinal that it may be necessary to shoot Julian, which information saddens Cardinal, but he makes no move to prevent the murder other than an ineffectual prayer which is more an empty habit than the plea of an obedient child who expects protection from a loving parent. Cardinal, in fact, actively pleads with Julian to accept his fate, and at Lawyer's command again slips into the personal pronoun:

LAWYER
(Snaps for the CARDINAL again)
Buddy . . .
CARDINAL
We . . . (Harder tone) I order you. [168]

Lawyer's smiling response, of course, may be due as much to his full triumph over Cardinal as his hope that Julian will now willingly submit, making further unpleasantness unnecessary.

Miss Alice provides a clue to the genesis of Lawyer's passion for power: "Every monster was a man first, Julian; every dictator was a colonel who vowed to retire once the revolution was done; it's so easy to postpone elections, little brother" (120). Having "fallen away from the Church" (13), perhaps for noble reasons at first, Lawyer first embraced "the arms of reason" (13), but now serves Tiny Alice slavishly.

Lawyer also admits that he is subject to the childish human
passion of jealousy of Miss Alice. However, he keeps his sexual de-
sires under control of his Parent, the dominant part of his personality. In fact, when Lawyer admits the human weakness of jealousy, Butler consoles him kindly, but then reminds him that such emotions are not part of his role:

BUTLER (Too offhand, maybe)
I've noticed, you've let your feelings loose lately; too much: possessiveness, jealousy.

LAWYER
I'm sorry.

BUTLER
You used to be so good.

LAWYER
I'm SORRY!

BUTLER
It's all right; just watch it.

LAWYER
Attrition: the toll time takes.

BUTLER
I watch you carefully--you, too--and it's the oddest thing: you're a cruel person straight through; it's not cover; you're hard and cold, saved by dedication; just that.

LAWYER (Soft sarcasm)
Thank you.

BUTLER
You're welcome, but what's happened is you're acting like the man you wish you were.

LAWYER
Yes?

BUTLER
Feeling things you can't feel. Why don't you mourn for what you are? There's lament enough there.

LAWYER (A sad discovery)
I've never liked you.

BUTLER (A little sad, too)
I don't mind. We get along. The three of us. [99-100]

As an abstraction, the punishing Parent, Lawyer is good. He does his job well. As the dispassionate Adult, Butler is equally good, doing the mundane work for the trio: gathering information and processing data as necessary; speculating on probabilities like a good computer.
In scene three of act one, Lawyer attempts an inside joke about the difficulty of obtaining good servants which goes over Julian's head. Lawyer curtly cuts Julian off, "He [Butler] is very good" (47). After Lawyer leaves Miss Alice reveals that Butler had been her lover "at one time" (55), a suggestion perhaps that Butler is very limited in his sexual experience like Julian. When in act three Julian asks Butler directly if he has ever been married, "BUTLER gives a noncommittal laugh as answer" (135). Though it comes almost too late to be convincing, we see that Butler, who throughout the play seems to be an unemotional probability computer, has at least a vestigial Child ego state. Only near the end of the play does Butler admit that he has any feeling towards Miss Alice:

BUTLER
I love you . . . not her. Or . . . quite differently.
MISS ALICE
Shhh . . .
BUTLER
For ages, I look at the sheets, listen to the pillowcases, when they're brought down, sidle into the laundry room . . . [181]

His chief payoffs throughout the drama, appropriate to his dominant Adult ego state, come from intellectual exercises wherein he can demonstrate his Adult prowess. In act one, scene two, he begins an intellectual game with Julian, introducing the absurdity of the model within the model "and within and within." When Julian sees the logical trap and laughs with him, Butler deliberately misleads Julian about the difficulty of cleaning the model so he can lecture on the logic of sealing such a model to make it dust free. Julian is bewildered by such games. Butler tries to make a joke about
Julian's lay service, but Julian is now "put off and confused" (29). Butler then deliberately confuses Julian even more about his name and though Butler implies Julian has been making tiresome jokes, it is really Butler who belabors the coincidence. Butler establishes a rapport with Julian, however; perhaps partly because they both claim to exist only to serve and partly because Julian seems willing to let Butler appear to be the superior mental power in their initial intellectual games.

In any case, Butler offers to keep Julian company when Julian finally accepts Lawyer's offer of a beverage: "Port perhaps. Removed people take port, I've noticed" (32). But it is not surprising that Butler soon concludes, "I don't like port" (40), for alcohol suppresses Adult control. Butler's appreciation of Julian's concern for the deterioration of the wine cellar is primarily objective: "... he's helpful. Wines, plants ... do you know, he told me some astonishing things about ferns" (80). It is really the waste that upsets Butler's calculating personality more than the loss of the particular wines. The wine he mentions by name that he's "especially fond of" (80), the Mouton Rothschild, is one of the world's most expensive.

In act three Butler seems to feel the need of more alcohol, however, as he comments pouring for the wedding toast, "There's never as much in a champagne bottle as I expect there to be; I never learn. Or, perhaps the glasses are larger than they seem" (152). Cardinal too seems to regret that his drink is not sufficient to prevent him from noticing what is happening before his eyes: "Well. This champagne glass seems smaller than one would have guessed; it has emptied
itself ... on one toast" (157).

Butler immensely enjoys play-acting with Lawyer in scene two, act two. He can take any role and project what that person would probably say and do. Lawyer openly asks for Butler's advice on how to handle Cardinal: "What will I tell him? Tell me" (102). In a sense, Butler stands behind all the scenes directing the action. But the grand plot does not seem to originate with him. In fact, as Davidson points out, it is hard to determine who the real leader is in this play.32 Julian planned his life script to die as a martyr, but he passively waits for someone else to put the plan into action. Tiny Alice apparently would have selected Cardinal to be the victim, but Lawyer personally could not stand to have him around. Brother Julian is only inadvertently his choice by default. Miss Alice did not seem to be consulted in the matter either, for she speculates on what would have happened, "had some lesser man than you come, some bishop, all dried and salted, clacketing phrases from memory, or ... one of those insinuating super-salesmen your church uses, had one of them come ... who knows? Perhaps the whole deal would have gone out the window" (122). Lawyer tells Julian that all of them are "agents, every one of us" (160). Agents, presumably for Tiny Alice, the unity that is larger than the sum or her parts, though each of them has his or her own interests in Julian's seduction.

Miss Alice, the person governed by her Child ego state, gets paid off in Childish indulgences, mostly of the flesh. She enjoys luxurious surroundings and passes her time riding, picnicking, idly

32 Davidson, "Edward Albee's Tiny Alice," p. 58.
chatting, and quoting poetry with Julian. Her only outlet for work is through Tiny Alice; her job is to seduce Julian. She works at "the oldest profession in the world," as it is almost universally called. For all its antiquity, it has never received veneration or dignity, being regarded as a sort of necessary evil best ignored when possible and legally punished when it threatens to achieve financial independence.

Miss Alice plays a silly joke on Julian at the beginning of scene three, act one, posing as a withered crone. She is, of course, not really young either, but "youngish" (14), as Lawyer tells Cardinal, so perhaps she hopes the contrast will make her seem younger when she sheds her wig and mask. Rutenberg comments on the need for a surrogate for a deity to appear old. Tiny Alice, however, seems to be a goddess born of our times, or at least very recently. The wedding dress of her surrogate, Miss Alice, is two hundred years old, an antique by human standards, but practically brand new in the measurement of eternal verities. (Lawyer calls the gown fragile, presumably because of its age, but for a new-born goddess youth may be her weakness.)

Since not-OKness is practically the universal position of children, it is not surprising that Miss Alice admits she feels insecure in the possession of her wealth and feels the need of a chair as a symbol of her possession in each room in the "establishment" (53-54). She takes particular pleasure in the image of Julian as a "little bird,  

33 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 125.
pecking away in the library," and she is "cheerful," but not contrite as she asks Julian's forgiveness: "the oddest things cheer me up" (67). For once she feels superior to a man. As a woman, she is a direct representative of Tiny Alice, the other god and the other sex. Often in history thought of as a possession of man, an afterthought, even sub-human, the woman takes malicious pleasure in regarding Julian as belonging to a lower order in biology. As a woman she feels, at best, left out of the order of things. When Julian compliments her on her attractiveness, she smiles and comments, "It may be I am . . . noticeable, but almost never identified" (59). She says she has few friends (by choice she claims) and keeps no women companions in her castle. Isolation from other members of her own sex makes achievement of power through coalition impossible.

As a woman, Miss Alice knows her place. Though she ineffectively attempts to rebel, she customarily does what she is told, even when it is distasteful to her personally, as being mistress to Lawyer appears to be. When she rebels, she rebels in kind, following the example of her male companions. Aiming to hurt Lawyer as he has hurt her, she accuses him of being dead: "Does that hurt? Does something finally, beautifully hurt? (Self-mocking laugh) Have I finally gotten . . . into you?" (76).

34 Cohn, Dialogue in American Drama, pp. 153-154, has noted how well Albee has integrated bird imagery throughout the play.

35 Albee, who may have chosen to use the Roman Catholic Church organization for other reasons, obviously enjoyed the rich punning on cardinal, ordinal, ordained, ordered, etc., to which it so easily lends itself.
Parentally, Lawyer reminds Miss Alice she ought not enjoy "spreading her legs for the clergy" (77), and warns her: "(Hard and very serious) Don't you dare mess this thing up. You behave the way I've told you; you PLAY-ACT. You do your part; STRAIGHT" (77). Butler breaks in on their tiff and refuses to take sides. In a defiant self-determination to glory in the necessary and unavoidable worthy of Camus's Sisyphus, Miss Alice declares that since both Lawyer and Butler want her to seduce Julian she will enjoy her work as much as she can, if only to spite them. Miss Alice is not merely passively in the power of Butler and Lawyer against her will. She exercises her own power when she can, and makes it clear to Lawyer that certain forms must be observed. Since they need her for their scheme, her wishes are important too. When she calmly informs Lawyer, "You forget your place" (88), he yields in order not to be sent away.

The heat of their fight seems to ignite the chapel, both in the model and in the castle. Rutenberg suggests that the blaze might instead be interpreted as a symbol of Julian's fiery religious devotion, since he has just come from the chapel. Julian's faith has been so tepid, however, that it seems unlikely to be hot enough to destroy even a minor deity like Tiny Alice. But since the goddess Tiny Alice is comprised of her devotees, a fight between them could destroy her.

Butler, the Adult, wastes no time in rushing to act, "Come on! Let's get to it! (Begins to run out of the room) Are you coming?

36 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 128.
Julian!" (90). Lawyer, the authority figure, hangs back until he issues a final brutal warning to Miss Alice.

While they are all gone, Miss Alice "alternates between a kind of incantation-prayer and a natural tone" (91). In her prayer, she begins by using the imperative "let" suggesting that she does share in the power of Tiny Alice. In her natural tone, she seems to be recalling how she came to her inferior position: "Who was the boy when I was little hurt my wrist? I don't remember" (91). But the lesson is learned; she knows that a girl is not as free as a boy, who can punish her if she misbehaves. Then she reverses momentarily: in her prayer she is defensive, "Oh God, I have watched my step. I have ... trod ... so carefully" (92); and in her natural voice she invokes the imperative: "Let it all come down--let the whole place ... go" (92). But she quickly takes it back: "I don't mean that. I don't remember his name ... or his face; merely the hurt ... and that continues, the hurt the same, the name and face changing, but it doesn't matter. Let them save it" (92). Willing now to accept her limited place, she shifts back to the imperative; both in her prayer and her natural tone, she asks for the "resonance" to be saved, even increased. Julian experienced deafness when he lost his faith; the resonance must be increased if they are to reach him.

At last she shifts again, both in her natural tone and in her prayer, to the defensive: "(Natural; a little-girl tone) I have tried very hard to be careful, to obey, to withhold my ... nature? I have tried so hard to be good, but I'm ... such a stranger ... here.
I have tried to obey what I have not understood, understanding that I must obey. Don't destroy! I have tried! TRIED" (92). Contrasting the natural idiom of her prayer to Tiny Alice with Julian's dying soliloquy using seventeenth century archaisms, the audience might well conclude that Miss Alice is the more genuinely and sincerely devoted, though the object of her worship is frighteningly alien.

In this passage Miss Alice has suggested the origin for her acceptance of the not-OK position. At an early age she learned that girls must accept pain from and submit to boys. But when Julian wonders if her father is responsible for having the replica put up, Miss Alice answers, "(A private laugh) No, we must not . . . well, should we say that? That my father put it up? No. Let us not say that" (85). It almost seems that she will complete her first phrase with the word "blame," and then she seems tempted to make the easy explanation--finally she phrases her answer neutrally, assigning neither credit nor blame. Before Julian can pursue the question of the origin of the model further, Butler distracts him with the semantic problem of deciding which dimension is the model and which the replica.

While we are looking for origins of the psychological quirks of the characters, we might examine some of the clues to the origin of the castle and the model. Though the present location of the castle is unspecified, Lawyer definitely states that they are not in England, though Butler reminds him and Miss Alice agrees that it was shipped from England and reconstructed stone by stone. They are speaking
English, with the American idiom; the audience might rightly assume their location is somewhere in the United States. Miss Alice's wedding dress is two hundred years old. All the clues together point to the castle as a product of the great Age of Reason in eighteenth century England. The cellar is now rotting and the wine going to waste; the chapel is too small, full of spider's webs, not resonant, and has the wrong angles, but Julian still sees possibilities for reclaiming them both, especially if an expert is brought in to do the job. Lawyer snidely suggests that the Church is better at producing wine (to befuddle) than at really solving problems. Tension is achieved by implying that both the Church and the castle are suffering from some decay and could benefit from expert repairs.

The climax of the play falls right in the middle of act three, when Julian learns that the others, now including the man he regards as his spiritual leader, want him to accept Tiny Alice in lieu of Miss Alice. He joins their toast, more in imitation than understanding: "to the clear plan of that which we call chance, to what we see as accident till our humility returns to us when we are faced with mysteries" (157). But when they make it clear that he is expected to remain with Tiny Alice in the model, he protests, "THERE IS NO ONE THERE!" (164). He becomes "quite frightened" and at last attempts to control his destiny actively, "I ... choose ... not" (168). But they all assure him it is too late for choice. They implore him to accept the inevitable.

Julian tries to reason that he has accepted God, but he is left
in an age-old trap of logic: if God is all-powerful and has created all there is, Tiny Alice and the model must be part of His works and mysteries. Accepting God means accepting whatever happens. When Julian persists in resisting his fate, claiming he will go back to the asylum, Lawyer shoots him. Miss Alice calmly reaffirms her faith in the power of Tiny Alice: "He [Julian] would have stayed" (170). She understands the phrase "Thy will be done" in her own way.

Cardinal, too proud to the end to "fetch and carry" (173), walks out, and this reminds Lawyer of his English teacher of long ago who had claimed Lawyer's poetry "had all the grace of a walking crow" (175). The audience is reminded that Lawyer and Cardinal are more alike than either would care to admit. The black crow (associated with death) and the red Cardinal both walk because they have not the power to fly. Butler notes, "Crows walk around a lot only when they're sick" (176). Though the joke was originally on himself, this seems to amuse Lawyer, if only because misery loves company. Cardinal, for all his worldly glory, is no better than Lawyer, and perhaps worse, for Lawyer has a car waiting and will not be walking for long.

Miss Alice tells Julian, "I must go away from you now; it is not that I wish to" (179), again affirming her helpless, inferior position. But she suggests that she is more poignantly aware of the pathetic position she holds: "I dreaded once, when I was in my teens, that I would grow old, look back, over the précipice, and discover that I had not lived my life (Short abrupt laugh) Oh Lord!" (180). Rather than have no say-so over her own destiny, she consciously chooses
to yield; thus in acquiescence she affirms her not-OKness, satisfying her existential position.

Finally Julian confronts his pain, both physical and mental, and finds that they are indistinguishable. Then each takes her or his leave and Julian rants until he dies, having formed a new trinity with his Christian God, Tiny Alice, and himself. He concludes that if the abstract is real, the rest must be false, and there is no Lawyer present now to remind him that he need not accept the trap of the either-or proposition. He dies with his delusion that he has earned salvation, thus fulfilling his life script.

The Children in the audience may keep their illusions believing that, abandoned by Cardinal, he has died a Christian martyr. The Parents watching may judge that he has died a meaningless death as a sacrifice to an absurd delusion of Lawyer, Butler, and Miss Alice. But the Adults may decide that there might be other explanations to the mysteries of life and death worth searching for. Again, Albee avoids the trap of attempting to settle our spiritual problems with glib solutions. One can be stimulated, however, to seek his or her own answers by recognizing the questions.
CHAPTER VII

THE DOMESTIC SCENE:

A DELICATE BALANCE AND

EVERYTHING IN THE GARDEN

In Tiny Alice Albee raised, among others such implicit questions as: Do (should) we really prize passivity? Is aggressiveness a desirable human trait? Are we faced with an either—or question? Or may there be other ways of relating to our fellow humans besides dominance and submission? The question of human oppression of other humans had been raised in The Death of Bessie Smith and it was at least incipient in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Albee more explicitly treated the responsibility of the oppressed in Malcolm, where the eponymous boy was so spineless it was difficult for many to care if he lived or died. In each case, the majority of critics usually interpreted Albee's work to be implying that the natural order of things, man dominating woman especially, had been upset and should be restored. In A Delicate Balance Albee returns to the question of humanity's independence of action, our rights and responsibilities to determine our own fate, but with even more complexity of characterization than
he had previously attempted. He worked with two protagonists, one of each sex, Agnes and Tobias, perhaps in an attempt to eliminate the simple sexist interpretations. I would agree with Michael Rutenberg's estimation of *A Delicate Balance* as Albee's "most under-rated play,"¹ but for quite different reasons from those he suggests.

Though Albee won a Pulitzer Prize for this work, scholars are sharply divided on the play's merits, largely, I believe, because they differ on the main point of the play. One critic claims,"*A Delicate Balance*, which reveals the delicate balance of sanity behind the delicate balance of family relationships—a substantial theme—is written self-consciously in a watery Eliotese without Eliot's command of rhythm and stress, and if it displays a greater control of flamboyant tone, it at the same time sinks into mere domesticity, Chekhov without flesh and blood."²

Another critic finds Albee imitative with a poor effect:

It would be pleasant to think that these obvious pieces of pastiche were part of a deliberate pattern, like those in *The Waste Land*. But Eliot not only integrates his literary allusions into the statement of the poem, he makes points with them that could not have been made without them. Albee's borrowings are not only lazier and more haphazard, they are no help in building up to the climax of Tobias's crucial speech in which he tells Harry he does not want him but invites him, notwithstanding, to stay. This is a point at which the playwright badly needs the style of the language to support the statement that is being made—not by the character but by the play. But in spite of Tobias's ambivalence, which could have been exploited

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more ironically, the writing is repetitive and shallow—a styleless succession of simple statements. In his stage directions Albee describes the speech as an aria and he notates it very meticulously, telling the actor where to shout and where to speak softly, where to laugh and where to make "great breathing sounds." He also makes the four women appear half way through the speech, all with coffee cups in their hands, to stand watching, like a silent chorus. But the actual sentences Albee gives Tobias to speak are feebly written and not nearly substantial enough to provide a dramatic development of the sort that is needed at this juncture. Though none of the points have been made to Harry before, they have all been made to the audience.3

But responding to the same aria, another critic finds Tobias's speech very effective:

Tobias has succeeded where people seldom succeed, in stating what he feels and in communicating it, because others have felt it too. But his very success is the picture of our failure: even when we communicate we are alone, we do not get out of ourselves.4

On the other hand, Ruby Cohn believes that A Delicate Balance is something less than Albee's best: "... the pale language serves to pale dawn's light. ... Written in a minor key, A Delicate Balance lacks the lethal dialogue that has become Albee's trademark."5 Anne Paolucci, too, accepts the play as second-rate Albee, damning it with faint praise:

As a total experience, it is as impressive as any of the earlier plays, although it is only fair to note that the psychopathic sparring of George and Martha, the obsessive concern of Jerry


for Peter, the superhuman efforts of Brother Julian to grasp comfort and love are, on the surface, more satisfying dramatically.  

She concludes that the conflicts of the play, "though probable enough, seem to fall short of a soul-shattering crisis."  

As with Tiny Alice, some have simply been mystified by the interactions portrayed: "The characters . . . in A Delicate Balance constantly confess their shortcomings and ask each other for forgiveness, but little is accomplished by these actions."  

In his introduction to a misogynistic interpretation, Rutenberg calls the theme of the play "man's responsibility to man," although he cites Albee's own non-sexist statement that the play concerns, "the nature of responsibility, that of family and friends--about responsibility as against selfishness, self-protectiveness, as against Christian responsibility." In addition to the subtly broader implications than Rutenberg's paraphrase suggests, what he and many other critics seem to have missed is that Albee opposes not good and evil, but good and better, or perhaps badness and worse. Szasz speaks of a "general human proclivity--namely, the need for objects and the

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7 Ibid.


9 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 137.

10 Ibid.
simultaneous need for aloneness and individuality. Oscillating attitudes of submission to and rebellion against people and rules may be best viewed as manifestations of this fundamental human problem."\textsuperscript{11} The overt dilemma of the play is to decide whose claim on Agnes and Tobias is the stronger, sister and grownup child, or lifelong friends? Hidden behind this is the question of determining the difference between "us" and "them."

One critic finds this conflict primarily a matter of cognitive dissonance, that is, "while Agnes and Tobias have honorable beliefs about the duties and responsibilities of friendship, they find they are unable to act in accord with these opinions when put to the test."\textsuperscript{12} But there might be little if any dissonance between ideal and action if Claire and Julia were not opposed to the arrival of Harry and Edna. Both Agnes and Tobias give every indication that they would put up with the imposition—perhaps indefinitely—if it did not disrupt the household. There is no question of financial strain; the house is large enough for each to have his or her own room if Claire and Julia were gone, and servants do the chores. As Richard Amacher notes, it is Julia who precipitates the crisis at the end of act two.\textsuperscript{13} But Julia's arrival just at this moment only hastens the confrontation, for Claire's


drinking would no doubt have presented a sufficient problem to bring the same results within a relatively short time.

Though Agnes wishes they could try living alone, she and Tobias need more than each other to help them avoid facing the vacuity of their lives. They avoid intimacy by filling their house with others with whom they can play games and pull switches. The benefit to all, as Claire notes, is that each has someone to love and be loved by without the burden of direct reciprocity, which would ordinarily lead to intimacy. But when two additional people try to move in seeking shelter from their fears, the delicate balance is upset. It is time for a decision to be made. Berne claims:

... the essence of drama is decision. For example, No Exit is a drama not because some people are in a room together but because someone opens the door and says, "Do you want to get out?" and they decide, "No." Drama depends upon decision and authenticity: characters taking the consequences of their actions.14

The reason this moment of decision has been overlooked or underestimated, I believe, is that it is based upon an earlier decision that occurred some years before the action at the opening of the play: a decision not to decide—that both Agnes and Tobias have made.15 In this passivity they are very like Julian and Malcolm. Albee confirms his intention:


15 Ironically, Paolucci claims that it is not Agnes's decision to make, accepting the traditional male chauvinist view which Agnes uses herself to rationalize her lack of decision (From Tension to Tonic, p. 110).
as I recall, the basic premise of *A Delicate Balance* was the perpetuation of the illusion that freedom of choice remains after a certain time. The point of the play was that we lose... we develop a kind of arthritis of the mind, of the morality, and change becomes impossible finally, as one of the characters does say in the play: "Everything becomes too late, finally." That was the basic point of the play, not whether or not we live up to our responsibilities of friendship. Thus Albee faces his protagonists with a problem which requires choice in order to show that they have chosen long before not to decide, and this prior decision becomes impossible to reverse. Their passivity becomes a force which has just as tangible consequences as overt action.

The injunction behind the scripts of each of the four in the family is apparently, "Don't think!" This is quite likely behind Edna's and Harry's actions as well. They are all intelligent people, but if they allowed themselves to think, they might have to face some unpleasant facts about themselves and each other. As Claire says, they are bound together by love, but error, as Tobias suggests, is what makes it possible to continue living with one another. The major method of implementing their life scripts is alcohol consumption, which helps in time structuring as well as in deadening their perceptions. The family game is *Alcohol*, and Claire is most usually regarded as "It."

Claude Steiner does not regard Alcoholism as an incurable disease as Alcoholics Anonymous does, but rather as a life course or an adaptive strategy based on a prematurely made decision which results

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in self-destructive behavior. Steiner believes his view offers more hope because the decision can be reversed, sometimes "spontaneously" (i.e., without benefit of formal therapy), more often with the aid of a therapist who refuses to play the game. Or it can also be delayed by a counterscript that makes it seem the script has been thrown away. Steiner considers the non-drinking Alcoholic to be in the counterscript phase, and therefore does not find much permanent hope in Alcoholics Anonymous, except as a delaying tactic. This is consistent with the views of Szasz, who claims: "... society as a whole, or people generally tolerate uncertainty poorly and insist that 'misbehavior' be classified either as 'sinful' or 'sick.'" 18 Alcoholics Anonymous, of course, takes the latter view as the more humane, but Claire rejects their label because it implies that she drinks involuntarily. She nevertheless accepts the premise that the others are "sick" and cannot help themselves; she therefore concludes that she is not like them: perhaps she even feels superior. She rejects the notion that she is one of those who suffer from a progressive, degenerative, and incurable disease; but she admits she had enjoyed playing the game at their meetings (fortified by three martinis) by admitting her weakness and being congratulated for her courage: "It hooked me—the applause, the stage presence... that beginning; no school tot had more gold stars for never missing class.


18 Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness, p. 43.
I went; oh God, I did." But she found, like Jerry in The Zoo Story, that strokes from not-OK people, those she used as Patsies, did not have the potency she craved.

Overhearing Claire's admission of being a willful drunk, Agnes Parentally judges her: "(Scathingly but softly) If you are not an alcoholic, you are beyond forgiveness" (29). The implication is clear that the label is an acceptable excuse for otherwise offensive behavior. Ironically, Agnes defines the family problem quite pragmatically: "If we change for the worse with drink, we are an alcoholic. It is as simple as that" (29). By this definition, the audience may determine that Claire is certainly not the only Alcoholic in the family. Though Claire is normally "It" they are quite flexible about shifting positions in order to keep the game going. Berne explains:

The fact that people who play a certain game can potentially play any of the roles in that game explains the success of rescue organizations. Such organizations may be very successful at curing individuals of drinking, but do not cure them of playing the game of "Alcoholic." What happens seems to be that the member switches to the role of rescuer in that particular game, instead of playing the one who is "it." It is known that if there arises a scarcity of people to rescue, those who have been "cured" are likely to relapse, which in the language of game analysis means that they switch back to their original roles of "it" in the alcoholic game. Ex-alcoholics make better rescuers than non-drinkers because they know the rules of the game better and are more experienced in applying them.


Originally, Claire's drinking may have been a response to parental rejection. Agnes apparently behaved more decorously, more "ladylike," as a girl. Also, there is a hint that Claire felt rejected by her parents for not being a boy when she jokes about her name: "(A twang in her voice) Maw used to say: 'Claire, girl' . . . she had an uncle named Claire, so she always called me Claire-girl--" (85). Agnes accuses her of lying, and Agnes is probably literally right since Claire does not challenge Agnes, but the second daughter may well have felt her gender was a disappointment to at least one of her parents. Agnes refers to "my poor parents, in their separate heavens" (56), a hint that their ideas on child raising might have been quite disparate, and hence produced different scripts for each of their daughters.

Steiner identifies three stages, or degrees of hardness, of the game of Alcoholic. He explains the basic rules of the game thus:

In all three games the Alcoholic puts himself in a position of being obviously disapproved of, allowing those who disapprove to appear virtuous and blameless when the situation, closely examined, shows that they are not only not virtuous and blameless, but foolish and full of blame. Thus, "I'm no good, you're O.K. (ha, ha)" really means "You're not O.K.," but stated in such a way that everyone concerned will be utterly confused. 21

There are five possible roles in the game: "the Alcoholic--It, the Persecutor, the Rescuer, the Patsy, and the Connection." 22 Claire plays and apparently has played since girlhood the first degree game of Drunk and Proud with her sister Agnes.

Drunk and Proud usually involves only the Alcoholic and a player

21 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 72.
22 Ibid.
who alternates between Persecutor and Patsy. Its aim is "getting persecuting parents so angry that they show their impotence and foolishness." It is related to Schlemiel, for it can make a social mess and be forgiven by the Patsy. If the other player rejects the apology, however, he or she is unmasked as not-OK, but "merciless and bitchy." This is exactly the way Claire plays the game with her older sister Agnes, who has taken over the responsibilities of her parents in providing a place in her home for the grownup younger sister to comply with the dying wish of her father. Berne reminds us that:

Beyond their social function in structuring time satisfactorily, some games are urgently necessary for the maintenance of mental health in certain individuals. These people's psychic stability is so precarious, and their positions are so tenuously maintained, that to deprive them of their games may plunge them into irreversible despair and even psychosis.

Agnes's position of "only a woman"—not-OK—is difficult for her to maintain. But as Agnes shows in the opening moments of the play, she does not expect things to change; Claire will not give up drinking and Agnes will not go insane. The balance has stabilized over a lifetime. There is an affirmation of their psychologically symbiotic relationship when Claire reassures her sister, "Very well, then, Agnes, you

23 Patsy in Steiner's usage is slightly different from Berne's meaning: "[someone] there to be conned into preventing the switch, or speeding it up" (What Do You Say After You Say Hello? [New York: Grove Press, 1972], p. 188). As Steiner uses the term, it corresponds more closely to the idea of Victim in the Karpman Drama Triangle.

24 Steiner, Games Alcohols Play, p. 72.

25 Ibid., p. 73.

win. I shall be an alcoholic" (30); that is, she agrees to accept the label that legitimizes the behavior that perpetuates their game. She assures Agnes and Tobias when Agnes breaks the news that Julia is coming home, "(Cheerful but firm) Well, I'm not going" (31). Julia could fill her place as "It" playing Drunk and Proud with Tobias, should Claire leave.

The main reason Claire will not leave, however, is that she is simultaneously playing a harder game--one Steiner calls "Lush"--with Tobias. Typically played by females, Lush often grows out of an original response to rejection by the father and continues with the spouse:

[Lush] is played in response to sexual deprivation. . . . It is usually played with a partner who is unable, or for whom it is difficult to give strokes. As a consequence, the Alcoholic's continued drinking is to the partner's advantage since, as long as the drinking continues, his own emotional deficiency will not be exposed.27

The twist is that Claire loves Tobias, her sister's husband, thus virtually guaranteeing failure to receive direct strokes.

Typically, the Lush drinks at home and the game in its full-blown variety has room for all the players, although the principal partner generally switches back and forth from Persecutor to Rescuer to alleviate his guilt. In this case, however, Tobias need not persecute Claire (Agnes does this job for him in her own game), and he can play the sympathetic Rescuer with self-righteousness. The taboos against incest also protect him from feeling guilty over rejecting

27 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, p. 77.
Claire's blatant advances, which flatter him without imposing an obligation to respond in kind.

Tobias and Claire apparently did overcome their inhibitions for a single sexual union, but they both agree now to pretend it never happened. Still when Claire drinks she cannot resist the excuse to make a mess. Under the pretense of examining the basis of Tobias's friendship with Harry, she reminds him of the girl they shared years before. When she presses him about the name of that girl, he claims, "(A little sad) I don't remember." Not drunk enough not to care, she responds with a shrug, "No matter, she's gone" (21). She later claims, "We submerge our truths and have our sunsets on untroubled waters" (93).

Tobias enjoys best the peripheral role of Connection, with its apparent detachment from the fracas. He can sit back, uninvolved, and vicariously thrill to the intense mutually dependent relationship of the women in his household. But Julia's homecoming makes him uncomfortable because Julia makes him take a principal part. She plays the same game with her father that Claire plays with Agnes, and Tobias knows he'll be cast in the role of Persecutor, like it or not. Whereas we must infer Claire's rejection by her father, we are shown Tobias's ongoing withdrawal from Julia. Even before she appears, Tobias resists Agnes's suggestion that he talk to Julia: "If I saw some point to it, I might--if I saw some reason, chance. If I thought I might . . . break through to her and say, 'Julia . . . , but then what would I say? 'Julia . . .' Then, nothing" (33). But this leads Tobias suddenly to
recall "the cat I had" (34). He tells the story of a pet he had kept before his marriage. He had ignored it, but still enjoyed knowing that the cat liked him. But he was shocked to discover one day that his indifference had produced a like coolness in the animal. Finally when he decided he could never regain her affection, he'd hated her enough to have her killed. Both Agnes and Claire try to assure him he was blameless:

AGNES
(After a pause)
Well, what else could you have done? There was nothing to be done; there was no . . . meeting between you.

TOBIAS
I might have tried longer. I might have gone on, as long as cats live, the same way. I might have worn a hair shirt, locked myself in the house with her, done penance. For something. For what. God knows.

CLAIRE
You probably did the right thing. Distasteful alternatives; the less . . . ugly choice.

TOBIAS
Was it?
(A silence from them all) [36-37]

Here, as elsewhere in the play, the sisters inadvertently reveal that they have a great deal more in common than they would like to admit. Claire does not realize, for instance, that she echoes Agnes's distaste for the stickiness of anisette. And when Claire reveals that Agnes was not entirely chaste prior to meeting Tobias, she uses the obfuscating euphemism: "got her pudenda scuffed" (85). Neither of them wishes to confront a messy situation directly.

As Agnes hears a car pulling up in the drive, Tobias quotes Agnes's earlier line "'If we do not love someone . . . never have loved someone . . .''" (37). He has tried to confess indirectly that he knows
he has killed something spiritually in his daughter by neglecting her, but the women protect him from his own recognition.

The story of the cat also foreshadows the outcome of the play. Edna and Harry come to Agnes and Tobias like Children seeking protection from their Parents. But they are really playing the same game as Julia. They know, realistically, that their arrival is an imposition. Though Agnes had reassured them they were welcome, she also made it evident they were not expected: "We're glad you're here; we're glad you came to surprise us!" (42). Yet Edna later claims, "... we come where we are wanted; where we know we are expected, not only where we want; we come where the table has been laid for us in such an event ... where the bed is turned down ... and warmed ... and has been ready should we need it" (116). Psychologically, Tobias and Agnes do have a place (all warmed up by Julia and Claire) in their household for people like Harry and Edna to fill—but it is already filled by players who do not wish to give up their roles.

When this resistance becomes evident, Harry and Edna even try to take over Agnes's and Tobias's roles, but Julia rejects their stroking openly, refusing to allow Harry to mix a drink (play Connection) or permit Edna to give godmotherly advice (play Rescuer or Persecutor). Claire is more devious, subtly daring Harry to try to succeed where he failed years before; she coyly asks, "What would ya like, Harry? A chorus of 'Take me to the greenhouse, lay me down ...'?" (106). And when Julia asks what Harry and Edna want, Claire replies in a telling pun: "Succor" (91). They do indeed want to sucker Tobias and Agnes into playing their game.
Finally Harry openly admits that he and Edna are probably (ha, ha) weaker than Tobias and Agnes:

We . . . we like you and . . . and Agnes, and . . . well Claire, and Julia, too, I guess I mean . . . I like you, and you like me, I think, and . . . you're our best friends, but . . . I told Edna upstairs, I said: Edna, what if they'd come to us? And she didn't say anything. And I said: Edna, if they'd come to us like this, and even though we don't have . . . Julia, and all of that, I . . . Edna, I wouldn't take them in.

(Brief silence)

I wouldn't take them in, Edna; they don't . . . they don't have any right. And she said: yes, I know; they wouldn't have the right.

(Brief silence)

Toby, I wouldn't let you stay.

(Shy, embarrassed)

You . . . you don't want us, do you, Toby? You don't want us here. [159]

The challenge works according to the rules of the game, and Tobias's aria unmasks the indecision and ambivalence in Tobias's forty-year friendship:

(Soft) And you don't have to ask. I like you, Harry, yes, I really do, I don't like Edna, but that's not half the point, I like you fine; I find my liking you has limits . . . (Loud) BUT THOSE ARE MY LIMITS! NOT YOURS! (Soft) The fact I like you well enough, but not enough . . . that best friend in the world should be something else--more--well, that's my poverty. So, bring your wife, and bring your terror, bring your plague. [161]

His final plea to Harry is foredoomed to failure by its very vulnerability. So thoroughly unmasked is Tobias that it seems that they could never again pretend that he is strong enough to offer protection and Rescue Harry and Edna from their fears. But we must not forget that these characters have demonstrated a prodigious capacity throughout the play to lie to themselves as well as each other, and we may suspect that a short time will find them playing their familiar games in full vigor again. As Agnes observes, "Time happens" (164). It is
too late for them to change now.

At the heart of the play is a mystery which few critics seem to have noticed, but one which is important, perhaps central to the decision Agnes and Tobias have made to withdraw from the world into their own private realm. I refer, of course, to the fate of their son, Teddy, died at some unspecified time in his childhood of an unnamed cause. The lost boy, whose name sounds like a lovable gift from Santa Claus, can be all things to all people in this household. Having died young, he has the magical potential of George and Martha's beanbag. Teddy is the "Rickshaw,"28 or unobtainable object that would have prevented or solved all their problems. He was younger than Julia (again, exactly how much younger is left indefinite), and she had resented his arrival, feeling displaced by the new baby. But after he died she had felt guilty, which is not unusual for a sibling who has had ambivalent feelings, and she had tried with little success to gain solace from her father. His coldness caused him to fall in her eyes from "a marvel—saint, sage, daddy, everything" to "very nice but ineffectual, essential, but not-really-thought-of, gray . . . non-eminence" and finally to "sea monster, ram. Nasty, violent, absolutely human man!" (63-64).

Julia's childish misunderstanding of her responsibility is quite understandable, but oddly, Tobias seems also to feel guilt concerning the death, or at least he does not deny Agnes's accusation

28 Berne, Games People Play, p. 161. This game allows for displacement of blame: "If only they had (rickshaws) (duckbill platypuses) (girls who spoke ancient Egyptian) around this town, I never would have gotten into this mess."
"that you are racked with guilt--stupidly!--and I must suffer for it" (139). This guilt is very probably connected with Tobias's brief affair with his sister-in-law, which occurred the spring before the summer of Teddy's death. When Claire reminds him that she had moved out then, Tobias asks: "When will it all . . . just go in the past . . . forget itself?" Claire answers, "When all the defeats are done, admitted, when memory takes over and corrects fact . . . makes it tolerable. When Agnes lies on her deathbed" (22). Though irrational, it is not uncommon for one to feel that misfortune directly results from wrongdoing; the idea, in fact, is built into our Christian heritage: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). At one point Agnes asks, "Do we dislike happiness? We manufacture such a portion of our own despair . . . such busy folk," to which Tobias replies, "We are a highly moral land: we assume we have done great wrongs. We find things" (126).

Though Agnes and Claire share many traits in common, there are important differences between them. Agnes recognizes that Claire wants to die and is taking her whole life to do it. Agnes would like to live, would even welcome Tobias back to her bed and hates the thought of growing old. Whereas Claire's script is hamartic, Agnes appears to have a banal script,29 one which excuses her from the ultimate responsibility for her actions. She justifies her position by

29 Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play, pp. 55-56, notes "Banal scripts are those often adopted by large groups of people who are treated as sub-groups--such as women or blacks; these scripts are usually based on parental injunctions which are not as severe as those involved in hamartic scripts."
citing the supreme Christian authority:

There are many things a woman does: she bears the children—if there is that blessing. Blessing? Yes, I suppose, even with the sadness. She runs the house, for what that's worth: makes sure there's food, and not just anything, and decent linen; looks well; assumes whatever duties are demanded—if she is in love; or loves; and plans.

TOBIAS

(Mumbled; a little embarrassed)
I know, I know . . .

AGNES

And plans. Right to the end of it; expects to be alone one day, abandoned by a heart attack or the cancer, prepares for that. And prepares earlier, for the children to become adult strangers instead of growing ones, for that loss, and for the body chemistry, the end of what the Bible tells us is our usefulness. The reins we hold! It's a team of twenty horses, and we sit there, and we watch the road and check the leather . . . if our . . . man is so disposed. But there are things we do not do.

TOBIAS

(Slightly edgy challenge)
Yes?

AGNES

Yes.

(Harder)
We don't decide the route. [130-131]

Tobias recognizes this evasion for exactly what it is, but for the moment he is flattered by the implicit compliment that he is morally stronger. This is especially effective since he knows he has been unfaithful to Agnes. He again tries to insist that the women, like witches stirring a cauldron "really rule the game . . ."; to which Agnes patiently replies, "That is an illusion you have" (136). Tobias insists the decision is "just as much your choice as mine," but Agnes is adamant:

Each time Julia comes, each clockwork time . . . do you send her back? Do you tell her, "Julia, go home to your husband, try it again'? Do you? No, you let it . . . slip. It's your decision, sir. [136]

Agnes has been trying to nudge her daughter into the same banal script
of motherhood, but not too surprisingly Julia has chosen to follow her aunt's hamartic model instead. Though Agnes says she wants Julia to accept motherhood so Agnes can become a grandmother--thus Agnes could continue her own role as nurturing grandparent--Agnes overtly admits she feels being a daughter is "simpler than being a mother" and refers to her own "poor mother" (156). Thus she makes motherhood sound somewhat less than desirable as a career.

In her argument with Tobias about who should decide what to do about Harry and Edna, she pushes her advantage to the limit when she accuses Tobias of having unilaterally made one of the most important decisions of their marriage: to give up sexual relations rather than risk conceiving another child who might die--or be another girl. Tobias claims he was trying to spare her the unpleasantness of contraception by withdrawing before orgasm.

AGNES

(Laughs in spite of herself)
Oh, that was thoughtful of you! Like a pair of adolescents in a rented room, or in the family car. Doubtless you hated it as much as I. [138] 30

Tobias is tricked by the embarrassment of this belated confrontation into accepting Agnes's logic that since he made that decision he must now decide what to do about their unwanted visitors. Actually, Agnes decided years before to accept passively Tobias's removal from her bedroom. This decision avoided a confrontation that she feared might totally destroy her marriage. As she had expressed to Harry, Edna,

30 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 160, misreads the word "it" in this line to refer to sexual intercourse when it obviously refers in context to interrupted relations.
and Claire, she feared a confrontation might reveal more than she wished to face:

AGNES

(Not explaining, and to none of them, really)
Ah, the things I doubted then: that I was loved—that I loved, for that matter!—that Teddy had ever lived at all—my mind, you see. That Julia would be with us long. I think... I think I thought Tobias was unfaithful to me then. Was he, Harry? [102]

All three give unsatisfactory assurances to her, but she closes the subject with "(An amen) And that will have to do" (102), for she really does not wish to know. Passivity, not deciding, is a firm decision which has consequences as tangible as action. As Tobias permits Agnes to persecute Claire for him, Agnes encourages Tobias to shoulder the burden of persecuting Harry and Edna.

Agnes has some moments when it seems she may discard her earlier decision. She wonders what it would be like to be born a man, but then laughingly claims:

There is a book out, I believe, a new one by one of the thirty million psychiatrists practicing in this land of ours, a book which opines that the sexes are reversing, or coming to resemble each other too much, at any rate. It is a book to be read and disbelieved, for it disturbs one's sense of well-being. If the book is right, and I suspect it is, then I would be no better off as a man... would I? [57]

Agnes's sense of well-being rests on her belief that the dissatisfactions of her marriage are beyond her control. The traditional marriage vow demands that a woman obey her husband: very well, she cannot be blamed for his mistakes. She can feel morally innocent. Her game is a variety of "Wooden Leg."31 But, in fact, the sex roles in this

31 Berne, Games People Play, pp. 159-162: she is not responsible for whatever happens, for what can you expect of a man with a wooden leg (a poor little old woman)?
household are differentiated mainly in the mind of Agnes. Tobias, though only around 60, has already retired from the world of business, and Agnes has servants to do the housework. Neither exercises his or her Adult towards economic gain or domestic comfort, so far as the audience can see. With Claire, Agnes plays a punishing Parent and Tobias acts as a nurturing one; these Parental roles are generally reversed toward Julia. All of them repress or suppress their natural sex urges but express rebellion against their fate from time to time during the play. Like his wife, Tobias has a banal script. They are non-winners, or "at leasters," "people who say 'Well, at least I didn't . . .' or 'At least, I have this much to be thankful for'".32 Early in act one, Agnes tallies their assets and liabilities as a family:

You have hope, only of growing even older than you are in the company of your steady wife, your alcoholic sister-in-law and occasional visits . . . from our melancholy Julia. (A little sad) That is what you have my dear Tobias. Will it do?

   TOBIAS

   (A little sad, too but warmth)
   It will do. 12

At the end, the order, or stasis, is maintained, and they can resume their not-quite-unsatisfactory lives, precariously balancing between winning and losing.

   In her final plea to Tobias to do something about their house-
   guests, Agnes insists that she is not asking Tobias to choose between

32 Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello?, p. 204. Berne also notes that "Socially, they are pleasant people, and in the com-
   munity, admirable."
family and friends, but between family and the plague Edna and Harry carry. This is doubly dishonest, as the audience should realize, for not only cannot Tobias throw out the "terror" without its carriers; the fear is already lurking in their own family, as should be evident from the first act. Agnes promises that she will think positive, healthy thoughts "--to ward off madness, should it come by . . . uninvited" (11), a tacit admission of fear. Claire suggests to Tobias that Harry is "No one to admit to that--now and then--you're suddenly frightened and you don't know why?" (21). Though Tobias denies her taunt, the idea is planted in the minds of the audience, for he shows himself to be something less than candid in his wish to forget the unpleasantness and guilt in his past.

But Claire really sees no more clearly than any of the others, despite her name. She would like Toby to kill Agnes, she says, presumably so Agnes will stop nagging her. Tobias humors her fantasy. She asks: "unless you kill Agnes . . . how shall I ever know whether I want to live?" (15). Deep inside she clings to the delusion that Tobias would marry her (or at least make love to her) if Agnes were out of the way. She can admit openly to her first degree games: "If we are to live here, on Tobias' charity, then we are subject to the will of his wife" (29). She frankly says she is trying to "shake 'em up a little" (67), by asking for a topless bathing suit. But she has a hard time facing the possibility that Tobias's coolness would survive Agnes's death. To Agnes's question, "Do you really want me dead, Claire?", Claire replies, "Wish, yes. Want? I don't know; probably,
though I might regret it if I had it” (33). She not only would miss her Drunk and Proud game partner, she might be forced to face an even more shattering rejection by Tobias. As it is, she can delude herself that Tobias would choose her if he were single.

Agnes, too, is similarly deluded in her opinion that she is "the only member of this . . . reasonably happy family blessed and burdened with the ability to view a situation objectively" (81) while she is in it. And Julia also likes to think she brings an outsider's view: "Among Doug's opinions, you might like to know, is that when you and your ilk are blown to pieces by a Chinese bomb, the world will be a better place" (89). Edna believes she is not only able but obliged to point out "when an environment is not all that it might be" (112). And Tobias likes to believe that his detachment is an admirable trait: "--it's rather . . . Godlike, if I may presume: to look at it all, see yourself, you, Julia . . . Look at it all . . . play it out again, watch" (127).

Exactly why Tobias chose to withdraw from life is not altogether clear, but he yearns for a golden age when he was young and at home and servants took care of his every want. Ironically, for someone who does not wish to command, he yearns for servants, who like Parents, would look after his needs without having to be asked.

Though Tobias tries to reject agnes's idea of what are male and female roles and persuade her to help make the decision which will affect all their lives, he has fostered the dichotomy of responsibility all along. When his daughter has hysterics, he asks his wife to pro-
vide nurturance and stroking rather than attempting to provide help directly himself. It is understandable that such stimulations as patting Julia's hand, combing her hair, a gentle massage, all might threaten Tobias's sexual control. But he cannot or will not even provide the symbolic stroking and support of listening to her or talking to her husband.

Each of them does, of course, have moments of partial insight into their problems, but these glimpses are too threatening to countenance frankly. Agnes, for instance, tells Tobias, "We see ourselves repeated by those we bring into it all, either by mirror or rejection, honor or fault" (82). Then in a moment of anger she dares Julia, "Well, why don't you run upstairs and claim your goddamn room back! Barricade yourself in there! Push a bureau in front of the door! Take Tobias' pistol while you're at it! Arm yourself!" (83). Not too surprisingly, a few moments later Julia follows her mother's directions, replete with embellishments of her own, and Agnes accepts it all calmly. Though Agnes claims--presumably honestly--she wants Julia to make her a grandmother so both of them can exercise their nurturant Parents, Agnes will settle for cultivating a new Drunk and Proud game partner, not winning her heart's desire, but not losing altogether either. Ironically, Julia too resembles her mother more than she thinks. She too would not take marijuana as her mother rejects the thought of a drug that might induce insanity and relieve her of her legal responsibilities. But Julia too tries to evade her moral responsibilities, such as the blame for selecting poor husbands: "Do I pick them?
I thought it was fifteen hundred and six, or so, where daughter went with whatever man her parents thought would hold the fief together best, or something" (65).

Agnes presents three possible choices to Tobias: 1) ask Edna and Harry to leave; 2) evict Claire and Julia, or 3) get rid of Agnes and "take out sainthood papers" (141). Tobias asks, "that's not all the choice I've got, is it?" (142), but he is unable to devise any other solution. She then abandons him to talk "man to man" with Harry. They of course have a drink to oil their conversation. Tobias tries to play "Why Don't You, Yes But" with Harry, but Harry forces Tobias to show his inadequacies. Tobias responds with a variation of "I'm Only Trying to Help You": "You've got the right to be here, you've earned it (Loud) AND BY GOD YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE IT" (162). Finally, after they leave, he plays "Look How Hard I've Tried." Just as Claire and Agnes had assured Tobias that he had done all he could for his cat, they rally to comfort him now, and the delicate balance is restored.

It is difficult to construe this ending as a hopeful one. How-

33 Berne, Games People Play, pp. 116-122, explains that in this game "It" presents himself as inadequate to meet the situation, shifting the burden of solution onto the "wise" parent. But its ulterior motive is to prove that the other person can not come up with any better answers than It has already tried.

34 Ibid., pp. 143-147. Berne explains that It's payoff comes in the form of bewilderment at the ingratitude of those who have not benefited from his "help."

35 Ibid., pp. 105-108. This is the same game played at the end of Malcolm and proves that you just can't win, no matter how hard you try.
ever, if the audience becomes aware that all the characters have pre-
served their respective illusions and delusions in preserving the
balance; if the reader and viewer see that choice cannot be delayed
too long or it is lost; if the audience recognizes that the characters
on stage are well-meaning people who act not too different from the
individuals in the audience—perhaps the play can be accepted as an
undesirable example of how to live and a challenge to those young
eough to change. In remarks reprinted for the occasion of the Ameri-
can Film Theater production of this play Albee claims that people mis-
takenly assume political theater is limited to something like the
agit-prop of the 1930's:

But when I write a play, I'm interested in changing the way
people look at themselves, and the way they look at life. I
have never written a play that was not in its essence political.
But we don't need an attack on the specific or the conscious.
We need an attack on the unconscious.
... when you've got a society that's so uptight that all it
cares about is self preservation, it's far more important to
write about that situation than to make specific attacks. . . .36

In *A Delicate Balance* Albee has certainly shown a family interested in
self preservation at any price. In *Everything in The Garden* he shows
a family suffering from quite different shortcomings. Whereas money
was no problem at all in *A Delicate Balance* other than to provide an
gcuse for Tobias to vent his temper at Julia, it is the all-consuming

36 Guy Flatley, "Mr. Albee: Thoughts on Theatre," *The American
Film Theater/Cinebill: Edward Albee's A Delicate Balance, Vol. 1,
no. 3* (October, 1973), pp. 12-13, reprinted from the *New York Times*,
1971.
problem of Giles Cooper's story.37

In adapting the story for America, Albee made few changes in the story itself or in the moral tone of the play. Originally, he apparently meant to make only slight changes and insisted, "I would just as soon have a small credit in the back of the program under 'house physician'."38 But he did alter the dialogue noticeably, especially in certain places,39 and apparently tried to answer some of his critics' objections to previous plays. For instance, one critic had complained that "The Eliot family of A Delicate Balance does not . . . adapt at all well to the new environment and constantly betrays its past. The well-appointed home in an American suburb remains an English country house . . ."40 Almost as if in direct response to this remark, Albee made a number of significant changes in order to transplant Cooper's play firmly to our continent. For instance, Albee changed the husband's name from Bernard to Richard, a much more common name in our country and one which also allows him to pun later on American sexual slang.

37 It is interesting to note that Cooper's own biggest reputation was as an adapter, especially the Maigret stories for BBC TV. See Giles Cooper, Six Plays for Radio, introduction by Donald McWhinnie (London: BBC Publications, 1966), p. 8.


39 According to Rutenberg (Edward Albee, pp. 185-186) these changes are minimal, but Cohn clearly makes her point that the changes he does make are significant (Dialogue in American Drama, p. 163). Harold Clurman takes a sensible moderate stance when he observes, "Praise or blame must be shared by both" Albee and Cooper ("Theatre," Nation, CCV [Dec. 18, 1967], 669).

Albee also changed the name of the madam from Mrs. Pimosz (primrose without the r's) to Mrs. Toothe (truth without the r?). This enriches her designation as a fairy godmother since the tooth fairy brings rewards to children simply for suffering the pain of losing a tooth, an experience they must undergo with or without the gift from the fairy.

But perhaps the most important change Albee made was to orchestrate his play with many pauses, italics, stage directions, and other clues to aid the reader in seeing the play with his or her own mind's eye. Albee has said, "plays can be read and as often as not you'll see as good a production of the play by reading it as you will by looking at it." This may certainly be true for Americans outside the New York area, and in this sense, Albee's version of the play provides the wherewithal to help the reader see and hear the scene the playwright envisions.

But it seems that so much is made of the comparison between the two versions that the debate over which is the better has all but obscured the merits of Albee's play. Rutenberg contrasts the two at length, generally to Albee's favor, and Clurman, one of the few who find Albee's version clearly superior, feels Cooper's play "was virtually over by the middle of the second act" and thinks Everything in the Garden is "the best of Albee's adaptations." The reviewer


42 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 191.

for *Time* praises it even more highly as "Albee's most satisfying
dramatic effort since *Virginia Woolf*."\(^{44}\)

On the other hand, Henry Hewes thinks Albee's play "less effec-
tive than the London original"\(^{45}\); John Simon calls the play a "para-
sitic paraphrase"\(^{46}\); and Jack Kroll calls it a "dramatic sermon on a
text by Cooper."\(^{47}\) Robert Brustein complains that "where Cooper makes
his points *sotto voce*, Albee yodels them in that tone of strident moral
purity he usually employs when discussing his attitudes towards South
African apartheid and Pulitzer prizes."\(^{48}\) None of the above explains
in detail the basis for his conclusion. Ronald Hayman also compares
the plays to Albee's detriment, and in considerable illustrative de-
tail, though his points are more often than not based on personal
preference or misreading. For instance, he claims:

> Albee also makes a bad error of judgment with Jenny's young son Roger. In Cooper's play he wants to be admitted into his parent's world and he is both funny and pathetic in the way he plays up to them, hoping to impress them. But Albee turns him into a sympathetic liberal, like the Intern in *The Death of Bessie Smith*. Cooper's world is constructed so that it condemns itself; in his new versions of the bachelor and the schoolboy, Albee is quite unnecessarily providing outspoken spokesmen to attack it.\(^{49}\)


\(^{49}\) Hayman, *Edward Albee*, p. 121.
In Albee's version also the son wants to be admitted into his parents' world—as children everywhere do. Having Roger express liberal clichés, however, allows Albee to add complexity to the dilemma facing Jenny and Richard. They have quite obviously been trying to instill a sense of social justice and tolerance of all people in their son, even when they themselves are hypocritical in their own practice (e.g., they belong to a club which has a "gentlemen's agreement"). This touch makes the plight of Jenny and Richard more poignantly sympathetic to the audience, for they do yearn towards higher standards of conduct than they achieve. Even while despising them for not being stronger, practically everyone in the audience can understand the pressures which cause Jenny and Richard to compromise. Of all the couples, only Jenny and Richard seem aware of their own deficiencies. The others' complacency makes Jenny's and Richard's corruption all the more heartbreaking. Jack, too, has a glimmering of awareness, but he is less sympathetic than Jenny and Richard because he is free of the financial pressure which drives them.

In spite of the mixed reviews it received, not too surprisingly the play was a commercial success, for it concerns sex for sale in the suburbs. Reviewers and critics have seldom totally agreed on the theme or implications of an Albee play, but with this new adaptation, they even disagree on the socio-economic class being depicted. One

claims, "the play is about a lower middle class suburban family," 51 another asserts that "Albee's wheeler dealers have successfully invaded the so-called upper class," 52 and yet a third sees the setting as a "typical middle-class suburban home." 53 Judging by the education required for Richard's occupation as a research chemist and salary presumed to match, their $40,000 residence (in 1968), their membership in a club, private schooling of their son, and other such clues, I believe they are middle-income aspiring to upper-middle-outgo. In other words, like a great many of their contemporaries and perhaps a majority of the usual play-going audience, their tastes are educated to appreciate niceties slightly beyond their economic means to enjoy.

One reviewer, generally praising the play, nevertheless expressed reservations that "while the play is firmly based on the facts of life, as recurrently reported in the newspapers, it is not consistently plausible." 54 Another defends it against this charge, explaining, "To fault this manifest fable for being improbable is as silly as faulting Aesop's The Fox and the Crow because animals talk." 55 It is this very mythic quality that provides a clue once again that TA can help illuminate Albee's work.

53 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 187.
As in *A Delicate Balance*, Albee makes the couple and their union function as protagonist. The principal antagonist is not Mrs. Toothe or the other couples or even Jack or Roger: it is simply money. Richard and Jenny want to do right but they also want the finer things that American ingenuity and industry can provide. If possible, they would like something for nothing along with something for something. Albee demonstrates this in their saving cigarette coupons. Of course, this is very like the principle Berne calls "trading stamps." If they acquire enough of these extra bonuses in the course of their normal activities they can trade them in for a desired premium. The trouble is, they do not like the brand that offers coupons, so the "free bonus" costs them some of their enjoyment in smoking.

Though both express the same values, Jenny and Richard bicker over money priorities. There just does not seem to be enough to afford all they want. Jenny will not give up her garden, which represents the beauty of life for her, and Richard assures her he wants her to keep it, though they cannot quite manage a greenhouse and a power mower. They daydream together about "someday" when they will be able to buy all they dream of:

JENNY
(Nice)
You can have **everything**.
RICHARD
(Sighs)
That will be nice.
They just can not quite figure out how other couples they know who are not rich either seem to manage to make their budget stretch further.

Both Jenny and Richard cling to childish illusions and yet both also come up with practical solutions to their woes. There are really only two possible answers, of course: spend less or earn more. Richard implies they would be better off if they took the first option, gave up the club and competing with the neighbors. This is certainly one course of action that could alleviate their problems. But Jenny reminds her husband that they both enjoy luxuries and she believes it would be better for her to go to work to help earn some extra cash. But Richard says, "You may not get a job!" (18). Obviously, he expects his wife to submit to his will. He claims that he does not want Jenny to work because she is supposed to run the house and look after Roger (although their son goes to boarding school most of the year).

As the argument develops, it becomes clear that being able to support a wife who does not have to work is Richard's status symbol, comparable to Jenny's yen for a greenhouse. He angers Jenny by implying that she has no salable skills and anything she could earn would be insignificant. Sadly, this is practically true in America where few women are educated for professional and executive positions and even those who

56 Edward Albee, Everything in the Garden (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 14. All further references are from this edition and page numbers will be indicated in the text in parentheses directly following each quotation as necessary.
are so prepared to work are usually paid less than their male co-
workers.

Seeing that he has hurt her feelings, Richard lightly attempts
to make love to her, biting her on the neck, to comfort her as to her
value. This ploy subtly foreshadows Jenny's later recognition of what
the world will pay her to do. We have seen already that Jenny likes
to collect coupons, and here she collects psychological trading stamps.
Berne explains:

The . . . Child is full of suppressed anger, and he waits until
someone does something to justify his expressing it. Justifica-
tion means that his Adult goes along with his Child in saying
to his Parent: "No one can reasonably blame me for getting
angry under such conditions."
. . . Psychological trading stamps follow the same pattern as
commercial ones.
They are usually obtained as a by-product of legitimate
transactions. Marital arguments, for example, usually start
over some actual problem, which is the "groceries." While the
Adult is carrying on its business, the Child is eagerly waiting
to pick up bonuses.57

Jenny is now entitled to collect hurt stamps, and even though she loves
Richard, she refuses to be placated by his sexual advances; only the
arrival of Jack smooths over their spat.

When Mrs. Toothe arrives (Richard has gone for vodka and cigar-
ettes), Jack jokes about her being Jenny's fairygodmother. In TA
terminology, the Fairy Godmother is the productive counterpart of the
destructive Witch Mother, the Child ego state of the mother which in
turn forms the offspring's Child ego state. In a productive script,
the Fairy Godmother directs the life course.58

57 Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello?, p. 141.
58 Ibid., p. 449.
Though she has been trying to get something for nothing, Jenny's first reaction to Mrs. Toothe's present of $1,000 comes from her Adult: "People can't just give people money. I want to work" (40). She cautions Mrs. Toothe that "money isn't everything" (41). But Mrs. Toothe counters that in effect money is practically everything since everything they want and need to live costs money.

At first insulted when she divines the nature of Mrs. Toothe's job offer, Jenny is confused by Mrs. Toothe's reminder that one of her respectable friends recommended Jenny and deflected from calling the police by the threat of scandal. Mrs. Toothe leaves her card as Richard returns; Jenny is transfixed for a moment as Mrs. Toothe departs:

JENNY looks after MRS. TOOTHE for a long moment, not moving. Then she looks down at the table whereon sit the bundle of money and MRS. TOOTHE'S card. She picks up the card, reads it, moving her lips, then, with a grimace, rips the card in half and, as if she were carrying feces, takes it over to a wastebasket and drops it in. She comes back to the table, stares at the money, picks it up, looks at it with detached fascination; doesn't know quite what to do with it; finally, rather firmly, puts in in desk drawer, locks drawer, keeps key, starts toward french doors, looks back at locked drawer, goes, stands at french window looking out. [46-47]

Coincidentally, Richard asks if Mrs. Toothe is Jenny's fairygodmother also. Jenny is strangely evasive. Finally Richard persists, and Jenny invents the story that Mrs. Toothe had offered her a job at the hospital.

RICHARD

Free? Or pay?

JENNY

(Pause, casual)

Pay.

RICHARD

No!
JENNY
(Pause, softly)

All right.

Though his previous objections to her working were based on how much she is needed at home, the question of whether she would have enough time and energy to devote to other-than-household or mothering duties never arises. It is clear now to Jenny and to the audience that if she were going to do charity work, Richard's prestige would not be undermined. Jenny's resentment at Richard's arrogance yields a bookful of hurt stamps ready to cash in. She is in a double bind, because Richard pretends she aspires to more luxuries than he does, not openly admitting that his keeping her from working costs more than her greenhouse would.

Richard again begins complaining that everyone else, even the socially inferior Grady, lives better than they do: "Guy who owns a crummy little liquor store can have two cars? And we have to get by with . . ." (51). Jenny is thus once again insulted by the implication that she cannot earn a significant salary and reminded that Richard yearns for material comforts as much as (or perhaps more than) she does. She suddenly (but not unexplainably as Hayman believes\(^\text{59}\)) suggests that they splurge on dinner at an expensive French restaurant. Instead of arousing Richard's suspicions, Jenny's offer brings praise: "You clever girl" (53) and even stronger stroking approval, "You very clever girl" (54). Jenny's response is psychologically predictable:

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\(^\text{59}\) Hayman, Edward Albee, p. 120.
JENNY sees he is out of sight; goes slowly to the desk, unlocks the drawer, takes out the bundle of money, strips off several bills, puts them on the table, hesitates a moment, as to reconsider, then puts the rest of the money back in the drawer, locks it again, keeps the key. Stands for a moment; looks at the wastebasket, lifts it onto the table, takes the two halves of MRS. TOOTHE's card out, fits them together, looks at the card. RICHARD pokes his head inside; JENNY doesn't flinch or try to hide the card, knowing that RICHARD either can't see it or won't ask what it is [54].

The scene ends with Richard's affirmation that he would like to be able to afford the greenhouse for Jenny. Essentially their values do not differ. Neither would give priority to his or her own indulgence; both enjoy the finer (i.e., more expensive) things in life.

And Richard is just as willing to accept the unexpected gift as Jenny, without looking his gift horse in the mouth.

The second scene takes place six months later. Richard is paying bills and grumbling and Roger is expected home from school. Richard declares that they will be unable to send Roger to camp this year as they customarily do each summer. Jenny agrees that it would be nice to get to know her own child again and suggests he can help Richard in the garden. Richard sarcastically suggests getting him a magazine route since Jenny is "so keen for everybody to be working around here . . ." (59). Jenny protests, "He's just a child!" to which Richard makes lewd remarks about the probability of his son's sexual activity:

He's probably going steady already--got some local girl up at school--probably skips out at night, shacked up . . .

JENNY

(Protesting, embarrassed)

Richard!

RICHARD

Kids grow up early nowadays.
JENNY
Roger is fourteen years old!

RICHARD
Well, if everything's functioning properly, there's no reason why he can't be getting laid, is there? Besides he's fifteen.

Not only does this passage reveal Richard's expectation that his son will engage in pre-marital sex, it also serves to underscore his double standard when he expresses his horror at his wife's extramarital sexual activities and lets the audience see that he is really playing a game with Roger when he later chastises his son for being sexually wise.

To underscore the point, Richard tries to tell Jenny about a girl he knew who seemed ever-so-staid but who was really extraordinarily promiscuous. The basis for comparison (so far as he knows) is slim, and incredibly, he tries to compliment Jenny by calling her "prim" (62). As "modern" and tolerant as he seems to be about his son's probable sexual activity, he still regards his wife's (presumed) Victorian old-fashionedness as an asset.

Finally, their talking about sex arouses them both: "She tickles more, he grabs her, they wrestle, giggling, a little on the sofa, playing, ending in a kiss, then another, which prolongs, is far more serious" (63). The audience is reminded that the two do love one another, but the interlude is brief and Richard once again begins complaining about expenses.

Just then a messenger arrives with a package addressed to Richard containing $4,900. Closely paralleling Jenny's reaction to Mrs. Toothe's $1,000 gift in the previous scene, Richard glumly says,
"Too bad we can't keep it" (70). Instinctively, his Adult guesses a mistake has been made somehow because one does not just get something for nothing, but Jenny is able with amazing speed to persuade him that someone wants him to have it and without further speculation as to what strings may be attached, Richard is willing to begin spending the money.

Jack pops in to let the audience know that he has bequeathed his entire fortune of three-and-a-half million dollars to the couple as he promised to do earlier. In an aside which reveals the limits of Jack's knowledge, he assures the audience that he did not send the money and, implicitly, that he does not know where it came from. By now, of course, the audience does.

Without further question, they begin to plan a party financed by the windfall to celebrate their good fortune. Jenny goes off to phone invitations to three couples and Jack, alone with Richard, plants the idea that the unexpected income can be tax free. Jack, we see, is no more nor less principled than the poorer couples with whom he associates. Not only does he dissipate his money, time, and talents on drinking, gambling, and painting portraits to flatter wealthy women, the audience may feel that if he had to work for an honest living he might be every bit as corrupt as the others portrayed in this play. This is important, for Albee soon has Jack pontificating on the uses and value of money. The thrust of his reasoning is that there is something strange about our economic value system when a mere work of art by Picasso is worth an equivalent of cows that could produce thirteen and a half million quarts of milk a year. Like Polonius's lecture to
Laertes on the proper principles by which one should live, Jack's observations on money are ironically both valuable and worthless. Richard finally reminds Jack almost apologetically, "Money is money, you know" (87), and Jack agrees before he leaves.

No sooner has Jack left, however, when Richard begins to find money all over the house. That he never found it before this moment is perhaps the most implausible aspect of the play, but it may be a good way of dramatizing the trait Richard displayed earlier: he would rather not question good fortune too closely, pretending that the coupons cost him nothing and accepting Jenny's unwonted "savings." Suddenly, however, he is unable to avoid seeing what is and has been all around him for some time.

Confronted, Jenny immediately admits she earned the money. Again Richard insults her wage-earning capacity with his disbelief:

I told you I didn't want you to take a job. No! You couldn't have earned this at a job. There's too much! There's thousands of dollars here, and . . .

JENNY

Six months!

RICHARD

(Laughs ruefully and half hysterically)
No, look, darling; look. Tell me. Did . . . did someone leave it to you? Did someone die and you haven't told me?

JENNY

Nobody died. I earned it. (Slight pause) In the afternoons.

RICHARD

Look; sweetheart: even if you worked full-time you couldn't have earned this kind of money. Come on now; tell me.

JENNY

(Miffed and playing for time)
Oh? Really? I guess not if all I'm supposed to be good for is a domestic or something. [93-94]

One critic explains Jenny's position in terms of cognitive dissonance:
Dissonance is stimulated in Jenny not only because she is partially assuming her husband's function as provider for the family against his wishes but also because of the nature of the job—working as a prostitute for a few afternoons a week. The decision she makes is between having enough money to compete with her suburban neighbors by committing an immoral act or staying home and fulfilling her moral role as wife and mother while doing without certain luxuries. When she chooses to work, her beliefs and her actions are in conflict, creating cognitive dissonance. While this does explain the way her Adult has to arbitrate between Parental morals and Childish desires for creature comforts, it does not account for her wanting recognition for the "good job" she's done in earning money. Hence she must play a game, letting herself from this point on be coaxed into revealing the manner in which she earned the small fortune.

Before he gets it straight, Richard asks if she's working for an abortionist. Ironically, Jenny self-righteously exclaims from her Parent ego state, "You're disgusting" (96). Her greedy Child has convinced her Adult that what she does harms no one and is strictly a business proposition. She asks, "You don't think I do it for pleasure, do you?" (97). Her Adult thus appeases her Parent by arguing that it is O.K. to work as a prostitute as long as her Child takes no pleasure in her work. Richard insists, "I like being told the truth!" (97), but when Jenny does tell him all, he does not like it one bit, naturally.

If Richard were not the person we have seen him to be thus far, he might have reacted to his wife's confession quite differently. Prose-
titution is a shabby and humiliating occupation not just because of social sanctions, but also because the prostitute not only sells the use of her body (as a man doing menial labor also does and suffers low prestige), but she must pretend as if she were providing the genuine stroking of intimacy, and she must be clever enough to convince her customers to forget momentarily that they must pay for her favors. Her feelings must be suppressed and she must be prepared to service anyone who can meet her price, anyone that someone else (Mrs. Toothe) determines to be suitable clientele. Even the "high class" prostitute constantly risks beating, venereal disease, pregnancy, and/or public humiliation and arrest. Yet Richard does not express concern for Jenny's well-being. In fact, he slaps her.

JENNY
(Savs nothing, really, maybe a kind of growl-cry as she slaps him back, just as hard as he hit her)

(Cold, after a moment's pause)
RICHARD
Get out. Pack up and get out of here.

JENNY
(Equally cold)
Where!

RICHARD
Anywhere! Or I will. No, by God, I won't! I won't! It's my house, I paid for it. I stay here. [101]

Richard's logic, which underlies his declaration, is that since he earned the dollars for the mortgage through his job as a research chemist, he and he alone "paid for" the house and is entitled to demand she leave. Jenny's contribution as unpaid housekeeper is obviously valued nil in Richard's economic system. All his previous assurances of her worth to him are thus unmasked. Jenny, however, does not seem disturbed by Richard's attitude, for of course, she under-
stood it all along. When Richard sputters, "Men kill their wives for this sort of thing" (103), she responds with a giggle, of all things!

Just then Roger arrives home by taxi and Richard vents his spleen on the driver. While Richard is out of the room, Roger notices the money strewn around and asks, "Can I have a bunch?" Jenny's response is "(Sudden anger) No! Now let it alone!" (105). Apparently she feels as possessive of the money she earns as Richard feels about his salary. The point is underscored: those who earn a wage have the power to dispose of their money as they choose.

When Richard returns there ensues a small spat during which Richard displaces his anger by turns on the taxi driver, and then on Roger for using a vulgar term, standing on the furniture, getting mediocre grades, and not setting the clock properly. The audience hears a double meaning as Richard says to his son, "No! Too far! That's tooo . . . DON'T TURN IT BACK (Disgust, takes the clock, none too gently from ROGER) Here; give me the goddamn clock. NEVER TURN IT BACK! Don't ever turn a clock back!" (110). Richard cannot now avoid knowing what he has learned; time cannot be reversed.

After Roger exits, Jenny proceeds with plans for the party quite casually as Richard repeatedly calls her "Whore!" Her calm Adult attitude finally subdues Richard and he begins to help her make the liquor list, but his Child is still engaged and he breaks down in tears. His curtain line is extremely effective:

RICHARD

... and ... and ... sc, sc, sc, scotch, and ... bourbon, and ... (Full crying now) ... and gin, and ... gin, and ... gin, and ... (The word gin takes a long time now, a long,
broken word with gasps for breath and the attempt to control the tears) . . . g--i--i--i--n, and . . .

(Final word, very long, broken, a long howl)
G--i--i--i--i--n--n--n--n--n--n.

(Curtain falls slowly as the word continues)

Not said jubilantly, but with anguish, the usual cry of triumph for the popular card game ironically signals that Richard is "winning" over his Parental objections to his wife's source of income. Albee is often accused of being overly conservative or even reactionary, but Berne and Harris both agree that the Parent is necessary and a valuable part of the personality. Whenever one part of the ego is completely suppressed, the person will have difficulty functioning. We will see that the suppression of Richard's Parent causes his relations with his son to deteriorate badly. There are also many Adult objections to his wife's prostitution, as mentioned before, that Richard probably ought to consider, but his Adult is not able to gain control.

The second act (same setting an hour later) opens with Richard blankly staring individuals in the audience in the eye. The question of course is what each would do in Richard's position. Jenny proceeds with casual preparations for the imminent arrival of their guests. As Richard continues to display his anger Jenny offers to leave immediately. Oddly, Richard now reminds her they have company expected shortly, so she must stay until after they go in order to preserve appearances. Richard disgustedly accuses Jenny of being "hopelessly immoral" (132). She protests that her job is no worse than any of their closest men friends or even than Richard's own work with germ gas. Richard feels betrayed:
RICHARD
I told you that in ... I told you not to say a word about anything I told you ...

JENNY
You told me in confidence? Well, I'm telling you back in confidence! You all stink, you're all killers and whores. [125]

Desperate for a reply to this perfect game of "Corner," Richard suggests that she should have married Jack since she knows so much about money. Jenny throws back a remark to the effect that she would not need to have turned to prostitution if she had married a better provider, again cornering Richard.

Roger enters and the company soon arrives. They live up to all their "advance billing" in playing "Mine is Better" and displaying vicious prejudices against the predictable out-groups, and they candidly discuss and joke about their semi-legitimate schemes to bilk the unsuspecting. Through all their patter Roger tries to blend in and be accepted but when Gilbert calls the delicatessen owner Balustein a "damn smart little kike" (138), Roger rejoins, "We don't use words like that around here. (Everybody looks at him, not quite sure of what he means) At least, not in the family" (139). Roger's Parent, formed by the attitudes of Richard and Jenny, is parroting a cliché he has heard over and over. In spite of Richard's earlier request to Roger that he "grow up right" (129), Roger is bound to learn by example that hypocrisy is common, social tolerance a veneer. That he has

61 Berne, Games People Play, pp. 92-95, explains that in this game "It" brings up an unmentionable subject in order to maneuver out of a difficult position herself by obscuring the issue. This is the same game Richard plays with Roger by urging him to be helpful and then criticizing him for breaking the glass. This "double bind" or Dilemma Type of Corner is doubly vicious because the son can never win.
not discovered this before can be explained by his absence at school and camp most of the year. Roger also learns that the advances toward equal opportunity in education for blacks are "getting to be a problem" (142) rather than a solution.

Into this scene of civilized viciousness comes Mrs. Toothe. Roger is sent off on an errand to the club. Though Jenny is at first embarrassed, it soon unfolds that the other women are also supplementing their family's income by working for Mrs. Toothe. After a few nervous giggles, they settle down to discussing Mrs. Toothe's problems with the police. Suddenly Richard finds that his worst fears are realized in that he is exposed to his friends as a cuckold. But the other men bear the attitude of pimps; they have learned to cope with their wives' jobs in a very practical way.

The women are relegated to the garden at Mrs. Toothe's suggestion that this is "something to be talked about amongst us men" (161). She includes herself with the men, of course, for she is one of those who merely reap the profit from the wives' degradation. She does not have to undergo the humiliation of the sham intimacy that the women who work for her must endure.

With the women gone, the men discuss the problem in terms of what they stand to lose financially. Among other things, Chuck grimly worries about giving up his "nearly-paid-for Aston-Martin" (164). The car has been used before by Albee in The Death of Bessie Smith as an ironic symbol of masculine independence. Gilbert confides to the others, "And just between us, I don't mind admitting Louise and I get
along much better these days." Perry agrees, "So do Cyn and I. Most
of our arguments were over money," and Chuck simply confirms, "Yes"
(164). As undignified as their work is, the women now command more
respect as co-breadwinners than they had as chaste but economically
unproductive housewives.

Quickly settling arrangements to continue business nearer to
home, they agree to forget the subject and forgo any further discus-
sion. Mrs. Toothe gives Richard two final comforts: "We do nobody
any harm" (169) and "There's very little chance your wife will ever
take a lover behind your back" (170). These last arguments appear to
placate the remnants of Richard's wrath and the play might end there,
as at least one critic suggests it should have. 62 Both Jenny and
Richard, the protagonists, have been corrupted. But Richard is not
totally resigned to his fate and he still feels superior to the others
as his continued sarcasm reveals. It takes the murder to make him
recognize his own culpability.

Roger now returns with Jack, who brings the news that a couple
of their presumed friends have been expelled from the club for being
Jewish. The women are incredulous. Jack teases the matrons, "For
God's sake, you'd think she was a common prostitute, or something"
(175). Clearly Jack feels that this would be as low as a woman could
sink, and the irony is not lost to his audience on or off the stage.
The women now have a grudge against Jack which will help them justify
their complicity later in his murder.

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Roger tries to enter the grownup conversation again but is sent out, ostensibly for using the gaucherie "circumcised" in mixed company, but more likely to save Richard further embarrassment as his son spouts liberal clichés. Richard again "corners" Roger and the boy finally yields, realizing he is playing a losing hand. Jack increases the tension by observing "How savage you all are today. Savage ... and strange. All embarrassed, and snapping. Have I caught you at something?" (179).

In conciliation Jack attempts to kiss Jenny in an open and friendly manner which makes Richard enraged. Again, Jack's suspicions are aroused at the overreaction.

Mrs. Toothe reenters; Jack first recognizes her only as Jenny's "fairygodmother," but then—an unprepared surprise which somehow works because it fits Jack's character perhaps—suddenly recalls having known her in London. He claims, "I do remember you, dear lady. By God, if I were sober, I doubt I would. (laughs greatly) Oh yes! Do I remember you!" (182). Jack, we can be sure, was one of Madame Toothe's clients himself, but like so many men, he clearly feels no degradation in "purchasing love"—he projects all his scorn onto the sellers, ignoring the necessary reciprocity of such transactions.

Vulnerable now to further exposure, the group cooperates in smothering Jack and burying him in the garden to avoid detection of the murder. Both Jenny and Richard voice objections to the coverup but allow themselves to be persuaded they have no choice.

Ironically, Albee seems to have responded to many critics who have claimed his moral tone is often too boldly displayed by downplay-
ing the protagonists' role, as the following interview shows:

RUTENBERG: Why did you decide to have Madame Toothe make the decision to stop Jack from leaving and also bury him after the murder? Cooper, as you remember, had Jenny come up with the idea. . . . The reason I mentioned it is that if Richard and Jenny are the protagonists, and not Mrs. Toothe, then it would seem they should make the decision.

ALBEE: Acquiescence to any form of moral structure is as active, it seems to me, as presenting the alternatives to such a decision. 63

Fittingly, the body is deposited in a trench Richard had dug "looking for the cesspool line" (190). The assembly then resume an appallingly normal conversation and quickly make their exits. When the stage is bare, Jack "comes in from the garden, his clothes dirty, sod in his hair" (197) to assure the audience that he holds no grudges, and even feels badly for Richard and Jenny's sake. The couple also reenter and begin cleaning up after the party. They assure each other they love one another and resume their mundane tasks. Jack reminds the audience that they won't be able to inherit his fortune immediately, since he has disappeared: "With all they're doing, in seven years their lives can be ruined. They have so much to live with. (To RICHARD and JENNY) You've got to be strong! You've got to hold on!" (200). Though they seem to have already lost all decency and principles, Jack implies that they still have hope in their love for one another.

The play ends with Jenny's comment that the appearance of Mrs. Toothe's new house must be kept up to avoid suspicion. She observes that if the garden is let go "you know there's something wrong in the house" (201). Unfortunately, as the audience realizes, the proposition

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63 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, p. 250.
is not convertible: just because the garden is kept up, there's no assurance that everything in the house is all right.

Jack has the curtain line to the audience: "Well... I think they'll make it" (201). But we must remember that Jack is a drunken, gambling wastrel. If he were not already wealthy, he would no doubt be as callous as the other men portrayed in the play. The comic tone is thus preserved, but nervously. Commenting on this play, Brustein has noted "Albee's desire to undermine the audience and be applauded for it,"64 which Brustein obviously does not mean as a compliment, but which sums up the ambivalent, uneasy satisfaction the audience is apt to feel at the curtain. The characters are too familiar and too sympathetic for comfort, yet like the end of The American Dream, everyone seems to get what he or she deserves. We may not like to look in the mirror, but we are convinced the reflection is assurate.

64 Brustein, "Albee at the Crossroads," p. 27.
CHAPTER VIII

THE MEDIUM MOCKS THE MESSAGE,
AN EXPERIMENT IN FORM:

BOX/MAO/MAO

In spite of Albee’s protestation that either can be coherent if performed alone, Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung will be discussed here together, since they are published in the inter-meshed form. Frankly presented by the author as an experiment, in all fairness Box/Mao/Box should be judged as such. The production received mixed reviews in New York and audiences were neither as enthusiastic as they had been for Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? nor as antagonistic as they had been toward Malcolm. Many things undoubtedly contributed to this ambiguous reception. No doubt some veteran theater-goers had seen "too much" Albee and were disappointed that his mastery of the well-made realistic play, which he had demonstrated in The Zoo Story, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, and A Delicate Balance, was totally absent. Others, perhaps not having had enough experience with Albee’s concerns to follow even minimally the all-important monologue of Box were understandably frustrated and found the performance boring.

A typical comment buried in a generally favorable review claims
that Albee "fails to make dramatic what is essentially a still life."¹

On the other hand, this lack of physical action is seen by another reviewer as a deliberate expression of Albee's purpose:

... why does Albee justapose the Marxist tautologies of Mao and the super-solipsistic soliloquies of the long-winded lady? Albee is thus saying that we have arrived at a state of cultural entropy—that condition of physics in which there is an even distribution of forces and all action dies in a tepid bath of stillled atoms. Everything is equal to everything else—the revolutionary ardor of the East, the self-regarding ego of the West—all have lost their dynamism and so all utterances, including the highest of all utterances, art, eventuate into emptiness, an emptiness which may prove to be the most mortally combustible of atmospheres.²

This reading is consistent with Albee's charming self-mockery, but it fails to account for the entire effect of the play. Words may be insufficient, but they are nevertheless the most important thing in the play. In view of the wordiness of this play, the most fruitful examination of it may prove to be one that can deal comprehensively with the concerns of the modern Cambridge school of philosophy (especially that of Ludwig Wittgenstein) and its emphasis on linguistic analysis. Unfortunately, this is, of course, outside the scope of this dissertation.

In the stage directions Albee carefully makes clear his experimental intentions in his general comments:

... careful attention must be paid to what I have written about the characters: to whom they speak; to whom they may and may not react; how they speak; how they move or do not.

¹ Henry Hewes, Saturday Review, LI (March 23, 1968), 34.
² Jack Kroll, Newsweek, LXXI (March 18, 1968), 109.
Alterations from the patterns I have set may be interesting, but I fear they will destroy the attempt of the experiment: musical structure--form and counterpoint.  

As Richard Amacher notes, Albee's interest in the relationship of music to art is longstanding:

"I always find a great association between plays and musical composition," he says; "composer friends of mine have told me that my work is very strongly related to musical form as they understand it." 

In an interview March 17, 1965, he expressed the hope that all his plays worked musically:

Now I said that play structure and musical form seem to me to be similar, but that is something that I intuit, rather than anything that I could show by graph. But a play, though it does exist physically on the stage, and can be read, is enormously aural. And the structure of a play is apprehended, in the mind, by the ear, very much the way that a musical composition is. I don't know if I can be more explicit than that. But quite often when I read a play of my own, I do notice that there's a counterpoint here, or the themes are returning the way they will in a sonata allegro form. When I'm writing my own play, I don't set out consciously to imitate musical structure--it's just that when my plays are going well, when I'm writing them and the writing seems to be going well, they seem to me very much to relate to musical form.

And he expressed almost the same idea in an interview with William

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3 Edward Albee, Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: Two Inter-Related Plays (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 15. All further references to this play and the introduction will be cited from this edition in my text with page numbers in parentheses immediately following the quotation as necessary.


Flanagan a little over a year later. But eventually the idea of deliberately arranging voices in the hope of creating musical orchestration of their separate concerns resulted in Box/Mao/Box.

In his introduction to the play, Albee makes a plea for an open-minded acceptance, asking that the audience or reader "be willing to approach the dramatic experience without a preconception of what the nature of the dramatic experience should be" (ix), a caution that new conventions will be introduced and old ones abused or ignored.

He makes this demand of the audience even more explicit, explaining the dual obligations of the playwright (as he sees them) to attempt change in the condition of man and in the nature of the art form by which he chooses to express himself:

... since art must move, or wither—the playwright must try to alter the forms within which his precursors have had to work. And I believe that an audience has an obligation to be interested in and sympathetic to these aims... to be willing to experience a work on its own terms.

In Box/Mao/Box Albee is then deliberately attempting to create a new dramatic form.

The most startling stage convention which is broken concerns the lack of dialogue. There are only five characters: one never appears; one never speaks. Those who do speak do not converse. And since they do not talk to each other, game playing is difficult to infer. Walter Kerr notes that "Four voices turn corners; they never meet."
Furthermore, he challenges Albee's contention that he is applying a musical form to dramatic structure, finding instead that the effect is "closer to the discontinuous techniques of so much current film."\(^8\)

A similar but less highly critical bewilderment is expressed by Brendan Gill, who admits that he really cannot account for having enjoyed the play. He claims that the characters "may or may not exist in the same place and the same time. Nothing that anyone else says has the slightest effect on anyone else."\(^9\) Anyone else, that is, except the audience, apparently.

Another reviewer, who generally panned the performance for "abusing the patience and good nature of paying audiences . . . by making the stage action a minimal appendage to a mudslide of meaningless chatter," claims that "Albee's high point comes when, with Chairman Mao's utterances providing a counterpoint, a lady gives the audience a detailed description of her late husband's genitals . . . . the description is [not] enough to make an evening in the theatre."\(^10\) While he recognizes the musical device, he objects to the subject matter, which he either cannot clearly determine or finds distasteful.

For the most part, the general audience shared the reviewers' confusion.

Having time for cooler reflection, scholars generally praise the experimental aspects of the play, but again there is no clear consensus as to the most outstanding merits of the play. Ronald Hayman observes

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8 Ibid.
9 Brendan Gill, The New Yorker, XLIV (Oct. 12, 1968), 104.
10 Anthony West, Vogue, CLII (Nov. 15, 1968), 92.
that Albee was probably influenced by Samuel Beckett and feels the play combines "the movement of our civilization towards a holocaust and the inability of the individual mind to contemplate anything of it beyond a personal sense of loss"—a summation with which I basically agree. Hayman concludes:

But what is most interesting of all is the idea Albee uses in Quotations of making a play by letting three characters interrupt each other's monologues while giving them only a thematic—not a narrative—inter-relationship. Certainly there should be a future in this.12

Michael Rutenberg finds in the play a continuation of Albee's concern with social revolution, especially in forcing the audience to recognize Mao and his government as a fact of life.13 Anne Paolucci, on the other hand, is enchanted with Albee's experiment with the musical form of a Bach partita and feels "the statements about art are the most provocative in the play."14

Ruby Cohn observes that Albee is explicitly concerned with death in this play (as in all of his plays) but she gives little attention to the distinction between death and dying that so preoccupies the Long-Winded Lady. Furthermore, Cohn concludes that the audience will be most interested in the novelty of the words of the Long-Winded Lady.


12 Ibid., p. 129.

13 Rutenberg, Edward Albee, pp. 208-209.

since "three of the four voices recite familiar material." While it is true that the audience has just heard the Voice from the Box when it hears the Long-Winded Lady for the first time, it does not necessarily follow that all the lines were understood well enough to be classified as "familiar." The assumption that Mao's Red Guard's Handbook is widely read may be suspect also, and beyond dispute a number of reviewers and critics obviously did not recognize Will Carleton's once popular work.

The problem is, I believe, that too much of the play depends on the ear of the audience. Several readings of the play reveal a density of conceptualization, a quality attractive in poetry, but one which would probably be confusing to the average listener on first hearing. Almost certainly if he or she were not already familiar with Albee's habitual concerns, the performance would be frustrating. And frustration can lead, as Harold Clurman predicts it will for many, to boredom.

In his stage directions Albee cautions: "Primarily the characters must seem interested in what they themselves are doing and saying"


16 Rutenberg twice misnames him Will (or William) Carpenter (Edward Albee, pp. 209, 225); Hewes (Saturday Review, p. 34) makes the same mistake. Jack Kroll confuses Carleton with Edgar Guest (Newsweek, p. 109); and Gerald Weales (The Commonweal, LXXXIX [Oct. 25, 1968], p. 120) calls the poem "a marvelous exercise in 1930's poetic pop-schmaltz."

Thus, each character is faced with the separate challenge of structuring his or her own time and the way they do so reveals their personalities almost as certainly as gameplaying would, though it lacks the excitement watching games provides. The insistence on the characters' preoccupation with themselves and their own utterances establishes also the symbolic isolation of each from the others. Although they share the same stage and world, dialogue is impossible, even between the Long-Winded Lady and her companion, from whom she does not demand a response.

But Albee does not depart altogether from accepted realistic stage techniques. For instance, he insists that the actor playing Mao bear as strong as possible a resemblance to Mao Tse-Tung, using makeup or a face mask to support the illusion, and Albee specifies the limits of his actions precisely:

Mao speaks rather like a teacher. He does not raise his voice: he is not given to histrionics. His tone is always reasonable, sometimes a little sad. Occasionally a half-smile will appear. He may wander about the set a little, but for the most part, he should keep his place by the railing. Mao always speaks to the audience. He is aware of the other characters, but he must never look at them or suggest in any way that anything they say is affecting his words. [13]

Mao is then a professional, realistic political orator-teacher. Though presumably he has a private life, we only see him in his public role, dominated by his Parent ego state. He appears to be free to move around, but he is most comfortable at his rostrum. The audience can expect a speech, which may seem extemporaneous, but which will be firmly based on tenets established and codified before this occasion.

Why would Albee choose Mao to be the Parent? First, of course,
he is ironically associated in the minds of Americans with revolution, violent change, whereas the Parent is the transmitter of cultural values and conserver of the status quo. But also, Albee may be trying to make a universal statement about the nature of and importance of societal values. In an anecdote prepared for the introduction to a reprinting of three plays by Noel Coward, Albee explains how his perspective had enlarged:

Quite a few years ago—just before the Second World War, or maybe not—a poll was taken to find out who was the most famous person in the world. I have no idea how this was done about, if it was, and with what degree of thoroughness, but the results were published—unless I dreamed it all, though I don't think I did—and the most famous person in the world was found to be Charlie Chaplin. I remember being surprised, having thought it would have been Christ, perhaps, or Hitler. But then I thought about it, and realized that in spite of their considerable impact on what we choose to call our civilization, both Christ and Hitler (and I don't enjoy having the two of them in the same sentence any more than you do) had, in a worldwide context, a relatively localized influence. I realized that if the poll were on the level there would have been millions of people, in Asia and Africa, for example, whose brush with either the Christ or the Antichrist would have been minimal, and that these millions of people might much more likely have seen the funny man with the cane and the big shoes.18

Using Mao, then, as Parent, allows Albee to remind the audience that there are other societal value systems than ours and the Western World's, and the fact that the Chinese Marxists also opposed Hitler's Fascism did not mean that they sided with the Western Allies.

The Old Woman, on the other hand, appears primarily in her Child ego state. As she eats she reveals the immediate vitality and zest for living of her Natural Child. As she recites, however, she

she speaks only as an Adapted Child, words prepared for her by a man (Carleton, with assistance in arrangement from Albee). The Old Woman's position is in some ways much like Mao's; she also faces a nearly impossible paradox: how to suggest awareness of the other characters while her speech remains unaffected by their remarks. While psychologically surrealistic rather than realistic, this state is symbolic of the position of the lower class in America, aware of the other strata of society but unable to force interaction. She has only slightly more freedom than Mao in that she is permitted to look at the other characters:

She is aware of everybody, but speaks only to the audience. Her reading of her poem can have some emotion to it, though never too much. It should be made clear, though, that while the subject of her speeches is dear to her heart, a close matter, she is reciting a poem. She may look at the other characters from time to time, but what she says must never seem to come from what any of the others has said. She might nod in agreement with Mao now and again, or shake her head over the plight of the Long-Winded Lady. She should stay in one place, up on something. [14]

Albee thereby shows the representative of the American lower class in her place, ironically elevated as woman's place is supposed to be, but bound by the opiate of the twentieth century masses, the nineteenth century sentimental art form. Even with her beans and the rest of her lunch to support a naturalistic setting for her, she varies as much from the traditional theater conventions as Mao; whereas he seems primarily to be making a speech or lecturing rather than engaging in recreating an action, her lines resemble that quaint old American entertainment, the recital for a captive audience of sympathetic relatives, proud and eager to approve. Sometimes she is distracted momentarily and has to go back and repeat certain lines, a fairly common
occurrence in children's amateur recitals, but an unforgiveable breech of poise in the legitimate theater.

In contrast to Mao and the Old Woman, the Long-Winded Lady seems to speak naturally and freely. Though she is in touch with her Child, she is primarily governed by her Adult, as a well-integrated personality should be. But she seems to be groping to find her Parent, embodied in the Minister. It may be difficult for the audience to decide whether being free of her Parent is an asset or a liability, but she seems to feel that she needs to reach her Parent to complete her own personality. Albee directs:

She should, I think, stay pretty much to her deck chair. She never speaks to the audience. Sometimes she is clearly speaking to the Minister; more often she is speaking both for his benefit and her own. She can withdraw entirely into self from time to time. She uses the Minister as a sounding board. [13-14]

In effect, she is a character in a realistic setting. True, she has been taken out of the drawing room, but she and the Minister attempt to preserve the stage convention that the audience is watching a "slice of life," an illusion that is shattered continually for the audience by the other two visible characters who are insisting on their own contrary conventions. The chief burden of preserving this illusion rests on the Long-Winded Lady. The Minister, her companion, helps her only passively, as perhaps befits the representative of formal religion in the twentieth century. He keeps to his deck chair also and never speaks:

He must try to pay close attention to the Long-Winded Lady, though—nod, shake his head, cluck, put an arm tentatively out, etc. He must also keep busy with his pipe and pouch and matches. He should doze off from time to time. He must never make the
Thus, his symbolic concern with the decadent ritual instead of individual humanity is given plausible expression in the realistic setting in which he participates. He and his companion are oblivious of the others around them as the upper middle class tends to be in the socially isolated suburbs.

Finally, the disembodied Voice of the Box represents perhaps the least visually realistic character in the play, but paradoxically, the most well-integrated personality:

We should take special note that the Voice is not coming from within the Box; it comes from the area the audience considers its own. The Voice is the first to speak, and in spite of the non-realistic situation, she invites audience identification with her homey American sincerity, her obvious goodwill, and her genuine anguish over the deterioration of the quality of life. She speaks in all three ego states, shifting appropriately with her Adult in control.

In a general way the Voice engages in much the same kind of speculations about her environment and her own relationship to it that the Long-Winded Lady will later attempt through specific associations. The Voice's appreciation of the well shined shoe: "Not only where you

19 Rotenberg, Edward Albee, p. 205, discusses this point at length.
might expect they'd shine the bottoms if they did . . . but even the instep" (4), creates a subtle basic melody which is heard in counter-point in the Long-Winded Lady's recollection of the crullers, which were not really crullers, not even doughnuts, but the centers: " . . . they were so good! You find them here and about still. Some, but not often" (33). The Long-Winded Lady is not only echoing the same lament for the well-done job which is so rarely to be found anymore, her reminiscent digression is itself an example of her own attempt at complete honesty in her well-done confession.

And both the Voice's admiration of the fastidiously shined shoe and the Long-Winded Lady's meticulous concern with non-essential details, demonstrate how easy it is to be led astray by irrelevancies. And yet those very details will, as they do in the naturalistic drama, operate as a pattern which tells as much about the speaker as the seemingly more important ones. This art of confession is one of the crafts that the Voice says have come up " . . . if not to replace, then . . . occupy" (9) the vacuum which Nature abhors, left by the degenerating arts of former days.

Despite their apparent individual differences, all of the other three speakers also harken backward to writers and artists of former days. Mao rests his authority on Karl Marx; the Old Woman recites a poem that first appeared in 1873; and the Long-Winded Lady mentions reading Trollope, James (presumably Henry, but perhaps William?), and Hardy. The husband of the Long-Winded Lady apparently tried to go back to still another century for guidance, looking to the Age of Reason for the meaning of life and death when he began to fear dying
more than death. He rejected the Enlightenment, however, claiming, "Bishop Berkeley will be wrong." His wife adds, "No one understood, which is hardly surprising" (47). Indeed it isn't, for Berkeley's philosophy, like that of so many others, is complex and has been misread so regularly that it is difficult to infer with any reasonable certainty what point (or misinterpretation of a point) of Berkeley's her husband had in his mind at that moment. (In fact, as we have already noted briefly, the questions this play raises seem much more Wittgensteinian than Berkeleyan, though none of the characters seems conscious of the way their language defines them.) In context, however, it seems that the husband could have meant that he did not believe Berkeley's idea that a mind (or soul) could exist beyond the death of its body.

The Voice of the Box, on the other hand, looks to the future, to a time when a great tragedy has occurred involving great loss of life. The exact nature of the disaster is not made clear, but she obviously does feel a personal sense of shame and guilt for it. The audience can


readily identify with the Voice, not just because of its mid-American comfortableness, but also because of its source from the back or sides of the audience. The Voice sets up a number of melodies similar to the one mentioned previously treating lost artistry. For instance, she speaks of "System as conclusion, in the sense of method as an end" (5), an idea which the Long-Winded Lady plays upon in her concern for the subtle differences she finds between death and dying, as well as the relationship between the state and the process.

Both the Voice and the Long-Winded Lady engage in endless digressions from the points they start to make. Such "diversions" from the main plot are a recognizable earmark of Albee's plays. But in Box/Mao/Box it is difficult to identify which are the digressions and which is the main plot, for each episode is given nearly equal time. Moreover, in his earlier plays the audience knew that the speaker revealed only those details which he wished his listener (on stage) to know. In this play, on the other hand, both the Voice and the Long-Winded Lady speak mainly for their own benefit. Their digressions, therefore, seem to be not so much a reflection of what they wish to tell someone else in their own justification--like Jerry's dog story or Tobias's cat story--as attempts to integrate the experiences of their separate ego states into a coherent whole. The Voice representing Middle America seems to have suffered deeply for her self-awareness.

Her personality, as it is revealed by the relationships she recognizes in the are of her Box, seems mature, intelligent, subtle,
optimistic with restraint, pragmatic. Her sly sexual double-entendres about the limits of her Box are never too insistent nor offensive. She worries about babies: spilt milk is worth crying over. She is vulnerable to art that can hurt because it isn't beautiful, art that reminds her of loss: "And not of what can . . . but what has" (7)---has been lost, that is. She is stronger than Agnes and Tobias in that she does not evade responsibility for herself entirely, but perhaps still not strong enough to cope with the twentieth century, or the near future. She implies that she would have contributed to preventing the impending holocaust of "seven hundred million babies dead," unlike those who "said no instead of hanging on" (5), though she understands their reactions. But she pleads ignorance: "If only they had told us! Clearly! When it was clear that we were not only corrupt--for there is nothing that is not, or little--but corrupt to the selfishness, to the corruption that we should die to keep it . . . go under rather than . . ." (5). In context, "they" may be the artists and/or craftsmen whose responsibilities are being abandoned.

Though she claims that "progress is merely a direction, movement" (5), when she is hurt too deeply she must retreat to the contemplation of the Box, and from its comforting illusion of safety and order she can peer out at things beyond her sight. She continues:

Yes, when art hurts . . .

(Three-second silence)

Box.

(Two-second silence)

And room enough to move around, except like a fly. That would be very good!

(Rue)

Yes, but so would so much. [7]
She has learned, then, how far it is safe to go, and in return for keeping her sanctuary, she must acknowledge the limits it permits. Here is her explanation of the adjustment one must make so that art becomes merely avoidance of pain rather than pursuit of pleasure:

Here is the thing about tension and the tonic—the important thing.

(Pause)
The release of tension is the return to consonance; no matter how far traveled, one comes back, not circular, not to the starting point, but a . . . setting down again, and the beauty of art is order—not what is familiar, necessarily, but order . . . on its own terms.[7]

The billion birds, as a billion of anything might be, are overwhelming save for their direction and order, a thought which sends her scuttling back to the Box for comfort: "And six sides to bounce it all off of" (7). Its solid craftsmanship allows her to make another brave start:

When the beauty of it reminds us of loss. Instead of the attainable. When it tells us what we cannot have . . . well, then . . . it no longer relates . . . does it. That is the thing about music. That is why we cannot listen any more.

(Pause)
Because we cry.

(Three-second silence) And if he says, or she . . . why are you doing that?, and your only honest response is: art hurts . . .

(Little laugh)

Well.[7-8]

She again notices the birds and recognizes that their order is not her order:

It is not a matter of garden, or straight lines, or even . . . morality. It's only when you get in some distant key; that when you say, the tonic! the tonic! and they say, what is that? It's then. [8]

A desperate state! But Albee holds out hope. The birds reappear to her, but this time she sees "one below them, moving fast in the opposite way!" (8). That "one" may be a bird also, or it may not. She
grows very sad as she apparently sights the birds again: "Look; more of them; a black net . . . skimming. (Pause) And just one . . . mov-
ing beneath . . . in the opposite way" (10). Again we may be reminded of Wittgenstein's network of language and the difficulty of slipping "under the net." 22

The Voice recognizes that she does not have to have direct experi-
ence with things in order to understand them, not the birds, nor the fog, nor the resolution of a chord. In fact, this perception is in-
voluntary: her Box is impregnable against all but "the memory of what we have not known . . . Nothing can seep here except the memory of what I'll not prove. (Two-second silence) Well, we give up something for something" (9). Perhaps it is safety we sacrifice for knowledge, or vice versa. Finally she is not able to ignore the black net al-
though she clutches the image of the one moving beneath in the opposite way before retreating sadly through the (spilled) milk to her Box, well-made, as a Box-Play should be. The box setting can insulate quite a bit—enough perhaps—if it is snugly made. In order to avoid spilling milk, however, we must give up something—unknown possibili-
ties; and perhaps we will never know the destiny of the one beneath the mindless order, moving fast in the opposite way. The Voice will probably never find out, and neither will the audience unless they can risk leaving the Box.

If the play ended at this point, without Mao, it would be diffi-
cult enough to understand. Those who have followed Albee's themes

22 The correspondences and/or discrepancies of Albee's thought to Iris Murdoch's might provide a thesis for a separate investigation.
through his other works would have little advantage. Even Rutenberg cannot warp the Voice into Mommy in any one of her disguises.\textsuperscript{23} The disembodied feminity projects neither youth nor overt sensuality and yet invites romantic identification, especially through her concern for the one beneath moving fast in the opposite way. The fact that Albee has chosen to make the Voice feminine may suggest to a male chauvinist that an alternate response of more masculine courage is possible, but this remains an undramatized alternative in this play.

Moreover, Mao complicates matters considerably. A whole new basic melody is introduced. Mao's quotations glorifying the collective seem to have little to do with art. Though he begins with a fable, its purpose is to instruct rather than entertain. The main comparison to Box is that each of the speaking characters in this section is exploring the limits of his or her own box, moving around or rocking their chairs idly and generally making themselves comfortable.

The three speaking characters in this section do not by any means represent an exhaustive list of types, merely a sampling, each distinct enough from the others to create a musical chord. The contrast between them which at first may seem so great is not so large in fact. Mao has not the hesitancy of the Voice; his assurance is, however, deceptive. He dares not depart from his doctrine which boxes him in. He fools himself with his own rhetoric in defense of China:

Apart from their other characteristics, the outstanding thing about China's six hundred million people is that they are "poor and blank." This may seem a bad thing, but in reality it is a good thing. Poverty gives rise to the desire for change. On a

\textsuperscript{23} But Rutenberg does force the Long-Winded Lady into the "Mom" mold (Edward Albee, p. 222).
blank sheet of paper free from any mark, the freshest and most beautiful characters can be written, the freshest and most beautiful pictures can be painted. \[19\]

The analogy is weak from the start, for poverty is only relative to the concept of wealth and no animate beings are blank in the sense of a sheet of paper. Moreover, if human beings were blank in this passive sense, there could be no desire and the concepts of change, action, and revolution would be totally without meaning.

Of them all, Mao seems most complacent--he has an answer for every question. Ironically, he only wishes to replace one form of tyranny with another. He can only conceive of substituting dominance for submission. He will not permit a democratic tolerance of others' wishes. In one sense this is a proper function for the Parent--to provide value judgments where insufficient data are available to help the Adult make a reasonable choice. But in this play the character of Mao lacks the capacity to let his Adult operate when it can and should, and he seems devoid of the spontaneity and pleasure of the Child.

This, of course, is due in large part to Albee's selections from the Red Guard's Handbook, which are carefully chosen to show only the dogmatism of Mao.

Is Albee then mocking Mao? Certainly no more than he mocks the other characters. Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is a form that Mao understands. That rhetoric, like the partita, hurts because it reminds us of loss, and the loss is the disappearance of significant subject matter, even while form is being perfected. Mass media and scientific methods are making rhetoric a craft of perfection; anything can be sold if the correct techniques are used. An example of Mao's mastery of
his art in his overwhelming double-talk and circular proof, designed to bring the simple-minded to acquiesce through sheer fatigue, is shown in this passage:

I hold that it is bad as far as we are concerned if a person, a political party, an army or a school is not attacked by the enemy, for in that case it would definitely mean that we have sunk to the level of the enemy. [43]

The Long-Winded Lady interjects, "That is the last I have in mind," before Mao continues:

It is good if we are attacked by the enemy, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves. 43

The next lines of the Long-Winded Lady become intertwined again with Mao's train of thought:

And the only desperate conflict is between what we long to remember and what we need to forget. No, that is not what I meant at all, or . . . well, yes it may be: it may be on the nose. [43]

Shades of J. Alfred Prufrock! This passage is only one of the many examples of the words of one character reflecting humorously on the lines of the previous speaker. For example, the Old Woman asks a rhetorical question: "What is the use of heapin' on me a pauper's shame? Am I lazy or crazy? Am I blind or lame?" Chairman Mao, referring back to his previous utterance on imperialism in China, inadvertently seems to be answering her: "All this we must take fully into account" (25). And the Long-Winded Lady seems to take the Old Woman's question about blindness literally: "But just imagine what it must have been like . . . to be one of the . . . watchers!" And she recalls when she herself was an onlooker at an accident: "Oh, I remember the time the taxi went berserk and killed those people."
Chairman Mao seems to respond: "Riding roughshod everywhere, U. S. imperialism has made itself the enemy of the people of the world and has increasingly isolated itself" (25-26).

A great proportion of the fun is generated by the Old Woman. Mao claims to speak for the lower classes, the proletariat, but it becomes evident that the Old Woman is as far from real understanding of Mao as she is from full sympathy for the Long-Winded Lady. True, she is earthier than either of the other speakers in this section, and her zest for her humble lunch is one of her most innocently attractive virtues. But she clings to the art of the masses, the blind escape through cheap and pretty sentiment. And yet, her self-delusion is no more harmful than the others'. Dialogue between these characters would be a comforting illusion, but they only seem to speak the same language. Each clings to her or his own personal box as a frame of reference.

When all is considered, the Long-Winded Lady is probably mocked by Albee most, if only because her potential for independent thought promises so much more. When she fails to reach beyond herself, she gives both pleasure and pain: it is satisfying to watch her Proustian pursuit of the memory of the irrelevant detail and yet frustrating to know that this multiplication of details will always succeed in shielding her from recognizing the truly significant events in her life. Whether the duck is warm or cold, the kinds of pickles, how the lemon slices are notched and the temperature of the potato salad: these particulars have as strong a hold on her mind as her husband's
awareness of death and dying. And after her own fall, she takes inventory of her loss simply in terms of material possessions: "I lost my cashmere sweater . . . and one shoe" (66).

She is poignantly aware that both death and dying must be faced. Her husband and her "uncle" (her sister's "savior") want to confront only one or the other, process or stasis; whereas she has learned through experience that both are a part of life:

Besides, his dying is all over; all gone, but his death stays. He said death was not a concern, but he meant his own, and for him. No, well, he was right: he only had his dying. I have both.

(Sad chuckle)
Oh, what a treasurehouse! I can exclude his dying; I can not think about it, except the times I want it back--the times I want, for myself, something less general than . . . tristesse. Though that is usually enough. [51-52]

She doesn't need to resort to doggerel to evoke the same sentimental lump that Will Carleton's work was designed to produce. All she needs to do is block out the memory of the hideous process of dying and cling to the fact of her husband's absence from her life. This produces a feeling of general melancholy which is easier to tolerate than sharp pain.

The Long-Winded Lady's antagonistic relationship with her daughter provides yet another digression. The genesis of her daughter's rebellion is unclear, but it may be that she is simply trying to get her mother to react as a Parent and provide some guidelines, just as the Long-Winded Lady is trying to get the Minister to respond.

Though the Long-Winded Lady seems to lack a well-developed Parent in her ego structure, she does have some other appealing qualities.
She seems to be capable of sensible, even humorous insight into her own and others' human foibles:

Pushed! Good gracious, no! I had been reading. What were you reading—which struck me as beside the point and rather touching. Trollope, I said, which wasn't true, for that had been the day before, but I said it anyway.

(Some wonder)

They didn't know who Trollope was. Well there's a life for you!

The Long-Winded Lady's anti-sentimental mixture of vanity and altruism, seriousness and lightness, contrasts with the selfless but comic Christian piousness of the Old Woman's penultimate lines (actually the last lines of Carlton's poem):

Over the hill to the poor-house—my child'rn dear, good-by!
Many a night I've watched you when only God was nigh;
And God'll judge between us; but I will al'ays pray
That you shall never suffer the half I do today. [68]

The Voice from the Box interjects a comment which may be about birds, or—like the underworld argot which disguises ideas by rhyming—it may be about words: "Look; more of them; a black net ... skimming.
(Pause) And just one ... moving beneath ... in the opposite way"

(68).

Albee gives the last line in Mao to the Long-Winded Lady, who is denying that she could have deliberately jumped overboard, and it is to be delivered with "a sad little half-laugh": "Good heavens, no; I have nothing to die for" (70). It is, perhaps, this continuance of life robbed of any clear meaning or purpose which strikes us as absurd when we are trying to think most seriously. In an article entitled "Which Theatre is the Absurd One?" Albee identifies himself with "the movement" and explains its goals as he understands them:
The Theatre of the Absurd is an absorption-in-art of certain existentialist and post-existentialist concepts having to do, in the main, with man's attempts to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense—which makes no sense because the moral, religious, political and social structures man has erected to 'illusion' himself have collapsed.24

Albee's concerns do not seem to have changed in Box/Mao/Box. The Long-Winded Lady sails on an endless sea of words, searching for her own Parent—and lacking it, unable to provide guidance for her daughter.

The reprise of Box distills the impressions of the first section to an essence. The Voice can turn nowhere else but to the Box for security, which she dares not give up. The Box may be her body, or it may be her coffin, or it may be her entire universe. The one moving beneath in the opposite way, escaped under the (black) net which enforces order on the flock, is the last sight she sees before her hesitant retreat, increasing the tension between the risk one must take to seek out a new order and the security of the confinement of narrow limits. The Voice is aware of her own vulnerability; we recall her tacit admission that she occupies her Box without true ownership:

"The Pope warned us; he said so. There are no possessions, he said; so long as there are some with nothing we have no right to anything"

(6).

Metaphorically, it is easy to equate the Box and its false sense of security with the conventional box stage. The chaotic order of the net of birds—or words—emerges from the speeches of all of

the characters. If the speeches of two of them are not artistic "creations"—in the sense that Albee did not invent the entire order of Carleton's or Mao's words altogether—so much the better in demonstrating a craft—rearrangement—that has "come up" to fill the void left by the vanished arts. And these two "borrowings" are balanced and reflected against the Voice and the Long-Winded Lady, whose words also echo and mock each other.

If it is nearly impossible to follow exactly what the Long-Winded Lady and the Voice are talking about all the time, yet patterns of coherence begin to emerge and a feeling of closure much like a musical resolution of a chord is at last achieved. As an experiment, Box/Mao/Box represents a conscious effort to combine an essentially non-verbal form with a verbal one. In spite of its lack of physical action, it surely could not have been intended as a closet drama any more than a score of a symphony would be meant to be read rather than performed. In order to keep the delicate musical balance Albee says he hoped to achieve, the play's impact in the dimension of time should be cumulative, and not any more regressive than Albee's own repetitions require. Insofar as this attempt depends on an extremely careful listener and ignores the visual aspect of the theater to a great degree, the play lacks substance in a dimension which Aristotle spruned as least important in his Poetics, but which (at least) American audiences cherish: the visual spectacle.25

25 It is interesting that Anne Paolucci, From Tension to Tonic, p. 125, finds the box "visual symbolism at its best"; it is nevertheless undeniably static.
As music, an intellectual concept, adds certain qualities to Albee's drama, it also seems to have caused him to lose sight of too much of the physical aspect of the theater. To the degree that the play fails, I believe that this loss of physical action is in part responsible. Intensifying the loss is the lack of psychological interaction or gameplaying, which Albee has shown he can portray with mastery. "We give up something for something," Albee's Voice claims. Certainly the play has done so. The question remains: must it always be so--could and should the experiment be tried again? The possibility of success shown in this play indicates that another attempt might be well worthwhile.
CHAPTER IX

A WARNING TO WOMEN: ALL OVER

Albee's most recent play to date, All Over, met a chilly reception when it opened in New York in March 1971; reviews ranged from faint praise to outright disgust. Those openly hostile spared no words. The reviewer for Time found it "mostly ... deadly dull."¹ Newsweek's reviewer thought the dialogue "a stilted, priggish, pedantic, self-conscious neo-Victorian lingo never heard on land or sea,"² adding, "Albee's biting bitchiness has evaporated, leaving only a null refinement, a donnish travesty of religious resignation and metaphysical insight, speaking in stiff, waxy aspidistras of language."³

Martin Gottfried found it "unbelievably boring," and thought the Mistress's role "seemed conceived for a homosexual,"⁴ though he did not explain why. Another reviewer judged the overall effect "windy and


³ Ibid.

pretentious." Yet another dismissed it as a "soap opera," and one found the play "disappointing" because too much information is withheld.7

Many were not so harsh, giving the play mixed praise and criticism. For instance, one found it "Albee's best," but sadly lacking in dramatic or emotional impact.8 And yet another reviewer regretfully panned it: "There are three fine soliloquies; there's an excellent cast, but All Over is the least satisfying Albee play I've seen."9 In still another mixed review, Henry Hewes thought the ending disappointing and all the characters other than the Wife and the Mistress too shallow.10 Richard Watts claimed, "Edward Albee's latest play maintains his status as a superior writer for the stage, but it is certainly no blockbuster," and expressed his frustration at not learning more about "what kind of man the father actually was."11


Melloan also half-heartedly defended the play (even though he found it not so good as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*) on the basis "of what it does deliver." He warned:

Much could be read into the play. It could be regarded as another Freudian attack on mother, who has, after all, lost a husband and a lover and helped destroy two children. If so, Miss Tandy [who played the Wife] and the play's distinguished director, Sir John Gielgud, have botched the effort. Miss Tandy, with her flashes of temper and emotion, does not come forth as a cold, love-destroying woman. The play is not quite that simple, anyway . . .

Perhaps what Mr. Albee is saying is that it partly is the love of self that makes another's death painful. Or, it may be that not loving or respecting oneself makes another's death unbearable. Rather than supposing Albee botched his intentions, we might conclude the play is about something other than most reviewers assumed. Though all the characters are identified only by their relationship to the dying man, it is certainly not primarily about him, for instance. And we should be aware that he, like the Wife, lost a spouse and "helped destroy two children," a perspective ignored or minimized by many critics.

Again in this play Albee seems to be in part directly answering previous criticism. For instance, John Lahr, speaking of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, had attacked Albee's poetic talents:

Albee's language exhibits little sense of rhythm or poetic control. Its "prosiness" indicates that he has not moved far from "naturalism" as his supporters claim. This special dimension of drama (a poet's insight), the sense of music that accompanies


13 Ibid.
meaning, never probes existential questions in his plays with the grace or complex hardheadedness of Pinter or Beckett.\textsuperscript{14}

Almost as if he were deliberately answering Lahr's objections, Albee has given every character in \textit{All Over} at least one lengthy speech of undeniable poetic density and control. In fact, one of the most frequently heard complaints against the play concerns the dialogue, which Catharine Hughes recognizes as "intentionally heightened," but "not what Albee does best."\textsuperscript{15} Harold Clurman, however, strongly disagrees:

\begin{quote}
It is a stylized play; its characters do not speak "naturally." The language is that of an artist who sees things through the peculiar spectrum of his brooding spirit. His is a frozen fire. No one else in our theatre writes in this particular way. That makes Albee truly original.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Clurman feels that the play was less well received than it should have been due to poor staging in a theater too large, making it hard to catch each important line. Moreover, Clurman is one of the very few who find anything funny in the play. He says, "A strange wit flickers over the dark background."\textsuperscript{17} Certainly the ironic ambiguity which marks nearly all of Albee's work reaches a new high in this play. Here, more than ever before in his work, the reviewer reveals more of his or her own prejudices than Albee's in attempting to say what Albee means rather than what he does with his characters.


\textsuperscript{15} Catharine Hughes, "Albee's Deathwatch," \textit{America}, CXXIV (June 5, 1971), 595.


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
Another critic had complained about the "fussily elegant" tone of *A Delicate Balance* and claimed, "Albee's rich people, I was interested--since Albee is rich--to learn, never swear." 18 Boldly risking offending the general audience as well as the Pulitzer Prize Committee again, Albee uses the most shocking language in the most off-hand manner in *All Over*. The staid Wife of the famous man explains as if to a small child: "No, my dear; fucking--as it is called in public by everyone these days--is not what got at her." 19 Tongue-in-cheek, Albee seems to be chiding those who confuse elegance and prudishness.

Since the play is so recent, few booklength studies have treated it. Anne Paolucci finds the characters in *All Over* "less interesting in themselves" than those in *A Delicate Balance*, and believes the play "falls short of perfection as we have come to define it in Albee's art," though she regards it as "provocative theater" for its "subdued skirting of psychological realities." 20 But she devotes little space to close analysis of the play.

Ronald Hayman treats the play at greater length and criticises it for underemphasizing the passivity of the characters, for underexplaining the genesis of the Wife's hostility toward her children, for the non-integration of the Doctor and the Nurse to the plot, and

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for what he regards as the entertaining but irrelevant indulgence in
the Best Friend's story about seeing his former wife. Still Hayman
deems All Over "a more honest piece of writing" than Tiny Alice and
"more original" than A Delicate Balance, and he believes the play af­
foards hope that Albee will yet provide some interesting theater."22

Albee himself has tried to shed some light on this play, but his
explanation of what happens in All Over may not be altogether clear:

Serious theater is meant to change people, to change their per­
ception of themselves. And there is a change that takes place
in my play, All Over. At the end, when (the wife of the dying
man) says, "All we've done is think about ourselves." And she
says it quite regretfully, doesn't she? You see, I write plays
about how people waste their lives. The people in this play
have not lived their lives; that's what they're screaming and
crying about.23

How is it, one might well ask, if all they have done is think about
themselves, that they have not lived their own lives?

In All Over, there are certainly a number of other infuriating
questions raised without many hints to their answers. As so many of
the reviewers indicated, the identity of the dying man is kept tanta­
lizingly obscure. The audience is told that he is famous enough for a
ubiquitous but mostly unseen throng of reporters and oglers to be
clamoring for coverage of his demise. Is he a famous actor? a noted
statesman? perhaps an internationally known author, who has led a
life something like Maurice Maeterlinck? Almost certainly he is not

21 Ronald Hayman, Edward Albee (New York: Frederick Ungar

22 Ibid., p. 139.

23 Guy Flatley, "Mr. Albee: Thoughts on Theatre," The American
Film Theatre/Cinebill: Edward Albee's A Delicate Balance, Vol. 1,
(as Clurman has assumed\textsuperscript{24}) a practicing lawyer like the Best Friend, for his dying and not just his death is considered newsworthy. He has habitually taken the Mistress with him to his "doctorates," indicating repeated academic recognition, and spoken at banquets, implying popularity, though the Daughter claims he has "too much up here" (59) to be a folk hero. The man cannot, certainly be Maeterlinck, for the Mistress and he were discussing "Maeterlinck and that plagiarism business" (4), when he made the quibble about the contradiction implied in being dead, a state of non-being. But to use a typical expression of Albee's, he is someone very much like Maeterlinck in some ways. And the reference to Maeterlinck, repeated by the Wife for emphasis, suggests that some of Maeterlinck's concerns may be examined in this play.

There are a number of ironic correspondences and dissimilarities between the dying man and Maeterlinck. For instance, Maeterlinck lived with a mistress for twenty-three years before he married his wife. The dying man, of course, acquired the Mistress after nearly thirty years of marriage to the Wife. Fascinated throughout his life by death,\textsuperscript{25} Maeterlinck fluctuated between cool reason and passionate mysticism, between deep pessimism and bright optimism, between fatalism and transcendent self-determinism. Educated as a lawyer and a registered barrister for most of his life, he never made a living at this

\textsuperscript{24} Clurman, "Theatre," p. 477.

vocation. The reason Maeterlinck never married his mistress is that she scorned the obligations of wedlock and in any case was still legally bound by a youthful marriage to a Spanish husband because no divorce laws existed in Spain. According to his express wishes Maeterlinck was cremated, as the Mistress claims the dying man wanted to be. Maeterlinck had no surviving children of his own but he was attracted to and often wrote of them and "their splendid innocence, their capacity for happiness." Halls speculates that if Maeterlinck's only child had not been stillborn, his artistry might have been revitalized. On the other hand, the fact the child did not live might have allowed Maeterlinck to escape harsh reality, keeping his ideals intact, just as Martha and George could make their "beanbag" fill any dream they wished, rather than having to face the disillusionment with their surviving children which the Wife and the dying man could not avoid.

And just what is "that plagiarism business" the Mistress refers to? She tells us later, "I meant at least two things, as I usually do" (68). So we can only wonder if she refers to the charge (that Maeterlinck himself admitted) that he had stolen La Princess Maleine from Shakespeare's MacBeth. Or were they discussing the charge of Maeterlinck's mistress, Georgette Leblanc, who claimed that Sagesse et Destinée (Wisdom and Destiny), the publication of which marked the beginning of Maeterlinck's international reputation, was the result of a true literary partnership for which she never received proper

26 Ibid., p. 13.  
27 Ibid., p. 165.  
28 Ibid., p. 138.  
30 Ibid., p. 63.
In a carefully worded dedication of this work, Maeterlinck had implied that he owed her only a very great debt for inspiration, nothing more:

To
MADAME GEORGETTE LEBLANC
I dedicate to you this book, which is, as it were, your work. There is a collaboration loftier and more real than that of the pen: it is the collaboration of thought and example. And thus I have not been compelled laboriously to imagine the thoughts and actions of an ideal sage, or to frame in my heart the moral of a beautiful, but shadowy dream. I had only to listen to your words, and to let my eyes follow you attentively in life; for then they were following the words, the movements, the habits, of wisdom itself.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

And even this small acknowledgement of her assistance was suppressed after their final separation and his marriage when a new edition of Wisdom and Destiny was published in 1926. But of course, if this was the "plagiarism business" they were discussing, we still cannot know whether the Mistress and the dying man were agreeing or disagreeing, and if the latter, who took which side of the dispute.

Perhaps another investigation could trace Maeterlinck's influence on Albee's thought; for the purposes of this investigation, however, two passages from Wisdom and Destiny seem especially appropriate to consider in connection with All Over. The first concerns losing a loved one:

31 Ibid., p. 124.


33 Halls, Maurice Maeterlinck, p. 58.
There is but one thing that never can turn into suffering, and that is the good we have done. When we lose one we love, our bitterest tears are called forth by the memory of hours when we loved not enough. If we always had smiled on the one who is gone, there would be no despair in our grief; and some sweetness would cling to our tears, reminiscent of virtues and happiness. For our recollections of veritable love—which indeed is the act of virtue containing all others—call from our eyes the same sweet, tender tears as those most beautiful hours wherein memory was born. Sorrow is just, above all; and even as the cast stands ready awaiting the molten bronze, so is our whole life expectant of the hour of sorrow, for it is then we receive our wage.34

The Mistress describes a veritable love very similar to Maeterlinck's concept, but ironically not for the dying man. Almost as if he were only an afterthought to her other three lovers, she describes her teenage affair with "the most . . . beautiful person" (86) she has ever seen. She loved him without restraint for one summer and then parted from him without regret when they both had to return to school. Though she obviously considers her affair with the dying man to be the most important event in her life, it lacks this total purity and innocent naturalness. The other passage from Wisdom and Destiny which may shed some light on All Over deals with determining one's highest duty:

It is not by self-sacrifice that loftiness comes to the soul; but as the soul becomes loftier, sacrifice fades out of sight, as the flowers in the valley disappear from the vision of him who toils up the mountain. Sacrifice is a beautiful token of unrest; but unrest should not be nurtured within us for the sake of itself. . . . Let us beware lest we act as he did in the fable, who stood watch in the lighthouse, and gave to the poor in the cabins about him the oil of the mighty lanterns that served to illumine the sea. Every soul in its sphere has charge of a lighthouse, for which there is more or less need. The humblest mother who allows her whole life to be crushed, to be saddened, absorbed, by the less important of her motherly duties, is giving her oil to the

34 Maeterlinck, Wisdom and Destiny, p. 113.
poor; and her children will suffer, the whole of their life, from there not having been, in the soul of their mother, the radiance it might have acquired. The immaterial force that shines in our heart must shine, first of all, for itself; for on this condition alone shall it shine for the others as well. . . .35

This is very much like saying, "I'm OK" must precede "You're OK" in order for a person to be happy: one should not even reverse the two clauses as the Mistress does. And we see the effects of the Wife's having figuratively given her oil to the poor to her children's detriment.

At first glance, the interactions of this play seem quite unlike the easily recognized gameplaying of most of Albee's plays, or what Cohn calls his "thrust and parry"36 style. As in Box/Mao/Box the characters seem to be talking more to themselves than to each other, from one ego state to another often within the same personality. As so many noted, this can get to be boring when the audience cannot piece together who is interacting with whom and why. Still, some principles of TA may help to illuminate a dense text.

The play sometimes seems a little like a therapy session, in which each character reviews his or her previous transactions and tries to determine the significance of her or his own previous actions. This is not inappropriate, because in some sense, each of the characters has given up on life and is making an evaluation of her or his own life before dying or facing a script-free life. The prospect of scriptless

35 Ibid., pp. 177-179.

living seems gloomy for them all, but as most critics and reviewers noted, the Wife and the Mistress are the most interesting characters.

Ironically, in spite of the compression of language, much information is not supplied and must be inferred. Even carefully piecing together all the information given leaves some holes in the background. For instance, precious little data are given to explain why the Wife no longer loves her children. At one time, apparently, both she and her husband loved them. She tells of their mutual wonder at their offspring:

THE WIFE (Laughs gaily)
He took me aside one day—before you and he had made your liaison; they were grown, though—and, rather in the guilty way of "Did I really back the car through the whole tulip bed?", asked me, his eyes self-consciously focusing just off somewhere... "Did I make these children? Was it our doing: the two of us alone?" I laughed, with some joy, for while we were winding down we were doing it with talk and presence: the silences and the going off were later; the titans were still engaged; and I said, "Oh, yes, my darling; yes, we did; they are our very own." [19]

Her joy is evidently sparked by being included in her husband's identity. "I" becomes "we" by implication as he uses the pronoun "our" in the next sentence. But she refers to the engagement of the titans in the cataclysmic battle for supremacy which resulted in the destruction of the titans in Greek mythology. She apparently did not want her son to join the melee. What happened is the phenomenon Steiner calls "Not that Shaggy," which refers to overreaction to parental programming. Steiner explains:

"Not that Shaggy" refers to the fact that parents want their children to behave in a certain way, but when the children follow the injunctions, modified by their own elaborations, the parents often are horrified at the results and cry, "Not that shaggy!" or in other words, "Oh, my God, that's not what
I had in mind!" The phrase comes from a shaggy-dog story in which a prospective dog buyer rejects all dogs brought to him as not shaggy enough. When the buyer is finally brought a peanut sized dog whose fur fills the living room and trails out the door and into the street as well, he cries in horror, "Not that shaggy!"37

The Wife apparently wanted her son to be a less overpowering man than her husband. So strongly did she instill mediocrity in her boy that when she saw how insipid he had become she cried something equivalent to "Not that dull!" The Son used the Best Friend for a model of respectable drabness and the Best Friend provided a sinecure in his firm for the Son. He describes his job:

I don't like it very much; I don't feel part of it, though it's a way of getting through from ten to six, and avoiding all I know I'd be doing if I didn't have it ... (Smiles a bit) those demons of mine. [60]

Berne defines the demon in the following manner:

Urges and impulses in the child which apparently fight the script apparatus, but in reality often reinforce it. ... The whispering voice of the Parent urging the Child on to non-adaptive impulsive behavior. The two usually coincide in their aims.38

The Best Friend confirms the innocuousness of the Son's job:

You fill your position nicely and you're nicely paid for doing it. If you choose to leave, of course, nothing will falter, nor, for that matter, will I feel any ... particular loss, but we know that about each other, don't we. [60]


The slogan on the Son's invisible sweatshirt says, "I never was any good at anything," and his sister reads this motto aloud to him from time to time. Rather than disturbing him, these barbs reassure him of his existential position.

Apparently the Daughter has also over-reacted to her father's wishes (assuming that the parent of the opposite sex is usually responsible for programming in each case). Her father had preferred a lover to a wife and mother for companionship, and the Daughter has chosen to fill the role of lover. But like her brother she has gotten "too shaggy." Whereas her father's ideal woman is one who loves her man first and only worries about respectability later, the Daughter actually flaunts her irregular arrangements. The Wife describes her Daughter's "fancy man" in a steely voice:

You live with a man who will not divorce his wife, who has become a drunkard because of him, and who is doubtless supplied with her liquor gratis from his liquor store—a business which is, I take it, the height of his ambition—who has taken more money from you than I like to think about, who has broken one rib that I know of, and blackened your eyes, and has dared... dared to come to me and suggest I intercede with your father... THE DAUGHTER (Furious)

ALL RIGHT!

THE WIFE

... in a political matter which stank of the Mafia...

In the process of taking her lover, the Daughter, unlike the Mistress, seems to have lost all self respect, and her beauty is fading. She admits that she acts as she does through strategy:

I'm not your usual masochist, in spite of what she thinks. I mean, a broken rib really hurts, and everybody over twelve knows what a black eye on a lady means. I don't fancy any of that,
but I do care an awful lot about the guilt I can produce in those that do the hurting.

(Suddenly a little girl)

Mother? [62]

Here, as elsewhere in the play, the Daughter tries to revert to child-like behavior, seeking comfort from her mother. But, perhaps because she has chosen a different life course from the Wife's own, the Wife is always either asleep or indifferent to the Daughter. Just before the close of the first act, she confronts her mother:

THE DAUGHTER

(A rough, deep voice)

Do you love me?

(Pause, her tone becomes fiercer)

Does anyone love me?

THE WIFE

(A bright little half-caught laugh escapes her; her tone instantly becomes serious)

Do you love anyone?

(A silence

THE DAUGHTER stands for a moment, swaying, quivering just perceptibly; then she turns on her heel, opens the door and slams it behind her) [51]

Unable to cope for the moment, the Daughter can only withdraw, as she does from time to time again and again during the play, even when she stays in the room.

After she leaves, the Wife then tries to explain to the others that she laughed only at the coincidence of hearing the same question she'd heard years before:

I laughed before, because it was so unlikely. I had an aunt, a moody lady, but with cause. She died when she was twenty-six—died in the heart, that is; or whatever portion of the brain controls the spirit; she went on, all the appearances, was snuffed out, finally, at sixty-two, in a car crash, all done up in jodhpurs and a derby, yellow scarf with the foxhead stickpin, driving in the vintage car, the old silver touring car, the convertible with the window between the front and back seats,
back from the stable, from jumping, curved, bashed straight into
the bread truck, Parkerhouse rolls and blood, her twenty-six-
year heart emptying out of her sixty-two-year body, on the fox-
head pin and the metal and the gasoline, and all the cardboard
boxes sprawled on the country road.

(Slight pause)
"Does anyone love me?" she asked, once, back when I was nine, or
ten. There were several of us in the room, but they were used
to it. "Do you love anyone?" I asked her back. Slap! Then
tears--hers and mine; mine not from the pain but the . . . ef-
frontery; hers . . . both; effrontery and pain.

The audience may feel, however, that the insensitivity of the nine-
or-ten-year-old girl toward her aunt might be excusable through inex-
perience, but the callousness of the aging woman toward her daughter is
less forgiveable. The Daughter responds to her mother's rebuff by
brining two photographers and a reporter into the room. This seeming-
ly senseless act of rebellion can best be understood as a childlike
plea for attention: if she cannot obtain strokes for pleasing her
mother, she will get them by offending her.

Fittingly, the Mistress, whose model the Daughter is awkwardly
aping, tries to instruct the Daughter about the nature of loving
commitment as she perceives it:

What words will you ever have left if you use them all to kill?
What words will you summon up when the day comes, as it may,
poor you, when you suddenly discover that you've been in love--
oh, for a week, say, and not known it, not having been familiar
with the symptoms, being such an amateur? Love with mercy, I
mean, the kind you can't hold back as a reward, or use as any
sort of weapon. What vocabulary will you have for that? Perhaps
you'll be mute; many are--the self-conscious--in a foreign land,
with only the phrases the guidebook gives them, or maybe it will
be dreamlike for you--nightmarish--lockjawed, throat constricted,
knowing that whatever word you use, whatever phrase you might
say will come out, not as you mean it then, but as you have
meant it before, that "I love you; I need you," no matter how
joyously meant, will be the snarl of a wounded and wounding
animal. [63-64]
Not only does the Mistress see love—true love—as something totally selfless, she sees it as involuntary, something that sneaks up on one without welcome or warning. This is not very different from the Wife's concept of passivity or dependence on her man to choose her, the Wife being a little girl waiting to be chosen. Both Wife and Mistress feel there is the quality of magic about love which suggests to the observer that the Child, not the Adult ego state, is in control of the lover. The Daughter responds to the Mistress's lecture by reminding her (and the audience) that all the Mistress's ideas are second-hand from the dying man (and not formed by the Mistress's own Adult observations) and therefore may not be totally reliable.

In several other ways the Wife and the Mistress are surprisingly similar. For instance, the Best Friend says he understands the feeling of being abandoned which the two women have been discussing. The Mistress calls it "... an indication that ... some small fraction had gone out of him, some ... faint shift from total engagement. Or, if not that, a warning of it: impending" (14). He claims he knows the phenomenon, but what he means is that he has done the withdrawing and not that he has felt the sensation of being left behind:

It was after I decided not to get the divorce, that year ... until I committed her. Each thing, each ... incident—uprooting all the roses, her hands so torn, so ... killing the doves and finches ... setting fire to her hair ... all ... all those times, those things I knew were pathetic and not wanton, I watched myself withdraw, step back and close down some portion of ... [15]

Rather than point out the difference in feeling oneself withdraw from sensing that one is withdrawn from the two women then form an alliance
and demonstrate the closing out process with echoes from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

THE MISTRESS
Ah, but that's not the same.

THE WIFE
(Not unkindly; objectively)
No, not at all; she was insane ... your wife.

THE MISTRESS
And that is not what we meant at all.

THE WIFE
No, not at all.

THE BEST FRIEND
It is what you were talking about.

THE MISTRESS
(Laughs a little, sadly)
No. It's when it happens calmly and in full command: the tiniest betrayal--nothing so calamitous as a lie held on to in the face of fact, or so niggling as a fantasy during the act of love, but in between--and it can be anything, or nearly nothing, except that it moves you back into yourself a little, the knowledge that all your sharing has been ... 

THE WIFE
... arbitrary ...

THE MISTRESS
... willfull [sic], and that nothing has been inevitable ... or even necessary. When the eyes close down; go out. [15-16]

By "arbitrary" and "willfull" the women seem to mean "open to choice," or not inevitably predetermined; but they permit the passive voice to obscure whose arbitrary choice they hold responsible for their sharing. Their solidarity on this point rests on their mutual perception of their dependence on their man for status. Though the Mistress does not specify whose willfulness has determined their lives, they both seem to assume that it is his decision that includes them in his life, and at his discretion they can be excluded. They do not seem to recognize, or perhaps they, like Agnes, do not wish to face, the obvious fact that this arrangement depends on their own willful submission.
The Wife and the Mistress represent just two of many banal life scripts open to a woman. By no means do they represent the only two general life courses open to women, but they do typify in a pure form two of the most common scripts for women. Both are defined primarily by their relationship to the great man.

Ironically, of the two, the Mistress has chosen the least unattractive life course. She does miss the ritual and the sanctions provided by the more socially approved life course of the Wife. These comforts are especially missed in times of joy and stress when a feeling of community is particularly supportive. Christmas and death are institutions surrounded by ritual which upset the Mistress. But she is free to move into the socially respected position of Wife if the wife should die or divorce—and if her man should then choose to "honor" her so. However, she is poignantly aware of the tentativeness of her position and she even expresses her gratitude to the Wife for not divorcing her man and thereby putting his devotion to the Mistress to the test. She has, in fact, succeeded to the position of wife twice in her life already, and she learned that, whether he was husband or lover, the man is just as lost to her when he dies. She now is more concerned about having kept her lover's affection to the last than about achieving the status his widow will have, though she is not oblivious of society's view: "I have always known my place, and I shall know it then [at the last rites]" (72). With full cognizance of what she gives up, then, she makes her choice for the warm comfort of love rather than the cool shelter of mere respectability.
But strangely, she never considers any other alternative such as a life of her own defined by a career or economic or social recognition. She seems ironically oblivious of the inconsistency in her philosophy which allows her to be proud of her financial independence--gained through inheritance, not from her own earned income--while she sneers at the Son and the Daughter for thinking she wants a "portion of what you were expecting for having permitted yourselves to be born" (69). At one point the Mistress tells the Son and the Daughter a story about two greedy siblings in their fifties who tried to maneuver their octogenarian mother into bequeathing more than half of her wealth to one, thus cutting the other out of his or her full share. The Mistress explains, "The daughter was the one at fault, or more grievously, for she had been spoiled in a way that sons are seldom" (70). From the context it seems that she means that the way the women are spoiled is in being educated to believe someone will take care of the economically; but, incredibly, the Mistress blames the learner, i.e., the spoiled daughter, and not the teacher, i.e., her parents, for this lesson.

Yet in some ways the Mistress seems remarkably free of a punishing Parent in her ego. She implies that she has learned to accept herself under the instruction of her lover, the dying man, who has taught her how to live, but her story of her first love would indicate that her self-acceptance and equanimity predated the lover considerably and is more likely based on a childhood decision to indulge her Child's sexual drives as much as possible, short of criminal prosecu-
tion. Actually, she has followed the example of her mother, who would rather risk her life driving with her husband than assume the (symbolic) responsibility for directing their lives, even in operating the family car:

THE BEST FRIEND

Why doesn't she drive?

THE MISTRESS

(Smiles a little)

No; she could learn, but I imagine she'd rather sit there with him and see things his way.

THE DAUGHTER (Dry)

Why doesn't she walk, or take a taxi, or just not go?

THE MISTRESS

(Knows she is being mocked, but prefers to teach rather than hit back)

Oh; she loves him, you see. [45]

For the Mistress, then, love is self-sacrificing in a different way from the Wife's. But the audience may question whether there might be still another less destructive alternative than these women have found.

Ironically, for all her wisdom, the Mistress accepts the apparent dichotomy between the functions of Wife and Mistress as necessary. Though she seems to respond to the Daughter more spontaneously as a nurturing Parent than the Wife does, the Mistress accepts the barrenness of her role as inevitable. The Mistress questions whether they could have lived one another's life scripts:

I was wondering, musing; If I had been you—the little girl you were when he came to you—would you have come along as I did? Would you have come to take my place?

THE WIFE

(Smiles as she thinks about it)

Hmmm. No; I don't think so. We function so differently. I function as a wife, and you—don't misunderstand me—you do not. Married twice, yes, you were, but I doubt your husbands took a
mistress, for you were that, too. And no man who has a mistress for his wife will take a wife as mistress.

( THE MISTRESS laughs, softly, gaily)

We're different kinds; whether I had children or not, I would always be a wife and mother, a symbol of stability rather than a refuge. [85]

Berne observes that girls are especially prone to make early and firm decisions on the kind of sex life they will have, whether they will remain virgins, become mothers, be frigid or responsive, etc.; and when her decision is made so young, it may well seem to the girl to be an inescapable destiny. 39 As the Wife implies, experience which conflicts with the firm self-image established in childhood is likely to be ignored so that the Mistress would continue to devote herself to Child-Child relationships with men even after her status changed to legal spouse, while the Wife would have immersed herself in the role of Madonna whether or not she had a family. Both women, having made early decisions, have notions of their limitations distorted by the imperfect reasoning of the immature girls they were at the time of the decision. They both passively accept what they believe to be these limitations of their roles and actively pursue what they take to be their storybook destinies. But of course the audience may not reach the same conclusions about the inevitability of the fate of the Wife and the Mistress that they themselves do.

The Mistress assumes that retirement, or the bleakness of out-living her script, is another inevitability of old age, and not just

for herself. She tells the Doctor, "I was not pleased to have you. Get a younger man, I said to him . . ." (24). Later she asks the Doctor if he will ever retire, to which the eighty-six-year-old man responds, "Couldn't now; I'm way past retirement age. I should have done it fifteen years ago. Besides, what would I do?" (98). He implies that fifteen years earlier, when he was only seventy-one (the age of the Wife now), he might still have changed his lifestyle.

The Nurse, four years older than the Mistress and still active in nursing, gives tongue-in-cheek advice on how to prolong vitality: "Eat fish and raw vegetables and fruit; avoid everything you like. (An afterthought) Except sex; have a lot of that: fish, raw vegetables and fruit and sex" (73). The Nurse sees no point in rushing toward dying until the "proper time." But there is no indication that the Mistress ever really understands that life need not be "all over" for her until her own death.

The Wife, however, does have a final insight that she unnecessarily gave up the last twenty years with her husband. She claims she's been "practicing widowhood," but is only when the Mistress asks her to be firm (as she has been without anyone's request) that she revolts: "You be; you be the rock. I've been one, for all the years; steady. It's profitless!" (107). She realizes that she has been not only steady but practically inanimate. The Wife at last recognizes that she has no real love for the Mistress, suddenly reversing her former claim, "She loves us. And we love her" (50)—now she declares to the Mistress directly: "(A sudden, hard admitting, the tone strong,
but with loss) I don't love you" (108). Nor has she any love for the Daughter, the Son, or the Best Friend, but she does still love her husband. His ability to generate her love is perhaps the greatest tribute in the play to the unseen man.

In her penultimate speech, the Wife, like Julian at the end of Tiny Alice, is conversing with herself, from one ego state to another. She speaks from her adapted Child first, answered by a cliché from her Parent; then a protest from her rebellious Child, answered by her nurturant Parent; then a reasoned objection from her sophisticated Adult and finally an Adult judgment arbitrating among her own ego states:

THE WIFE
(Calm, now, almost toneless. A slow speech, broken with long pauses)
All we've done . . . is think about ourselves.
(Pause)
There's no help for the dying. I suppose. Oh my; the burden.
(Pause)
What will become of me . . . and me . . . and me.
(Pause)
Well, we're the ones have got to go on.
(Pause)
Selfless love? I don't think so; we love to be loved, and when it's taken away . . . then why not rage . . . or pule.
(Pause)
All we've done is think about ourselves. Ultimately.
(A long silence. Then THE WIFE begins to cry. She does not move, her head high, eyes forward, hands gripping the arms of her chair. First it is only tears, but then the sounds in the throat begin. It is controlled weeping, but barely controlled) [109-110]

It is the context which suggests that the first line of this speech originates from the Adapted Child, while the last line, almost identical (except for the lack of hesitation, the emphasis on the word done, and the addition of the sophisticated word "ultimately") seems to be a
considered Adult evaluation of their situation. It is her Adult, then, who gives permission to unleash the feelings of her Child when the Daughter, bitter and accusatory, demands, "Why are you crying!" (110). For the first time the Wife faces her own unhappiness without pretending she does not care. Berne explains how such women manage to suppress their feelings:

It is very difficult for a wife . . . to face the fact that her husband's young mistress is giving him something she could give herself if she could cut loose from her early training. Most women in such situations would rather get a divorce than betray their parents by surrendering to their own and their husband's sexual desires, which after a lifetime of suppression seem strange, sinful, and scary, or just plain lecherous.40

But the Wife finally realizes she has been depriving herself of intimacy with the one person she truly loves and admires, the only one who she felt fully loved her in return, even though his love for her had apparently waned years before, perhaps because she had customarily viewed their marriage as a contest rather than an alliance.

Besides her reference to herself and her husband as Titans engaged in battle, there is another subtle allusion to these gods who preceded the Olympians when they mention the doctor who attended the dying man's birth, rumored to have gone down on the Titanic when it sank. This doctor's name was Dey, "a title given to the rulers of the Ottoman provinces of Algeria and Tunisia,"41 and Titan itself is etymologically related to the word for day in Latin and Greek. The Nurse informs us that Dr. Dey committed suicide when he diagnosed his own terminal ill-

40 Ibid., p. 134.

ness: "He locused in on his killer, and he looked on it, and he said, 'I will not have you'" (26). Afterward Dr. Dey's wife and mistress (the Nurse claims it was she, but she would have been at least thirty-five to forty years younger than Dey) concocted the ship story to save face, because ironically such self-determination is usually considered weak or even sinful. In contrast to this mighty willful act of self-determined destruction, the Doctor tells of men on death row, masturbating to the image of their own executioner, expressing not just submission to but love for their killers. Though generally a strong, self-determining person, the Doctor himself tries to explain his own fascination and sensual adoration of the younger generation which seems placidly eager to be rid of the elder: "You see: I suddenly loved my executioners . . . well, figurative; and in the way of . . . nestling up against them, huddling close—for we do seek warmth, affection even, from those who tell us we are going to die, or when" (32). The inevitability of his approaching death is, of course, not a delusion—unlike the beliefs of the Wife and the Mistress about the inescapability of their respective fates. But his reaction of loving the younger generation who are free from the necessity of facing their own mortal limitations for many decades, seems to be similar to the Wife's and the Mistress's adoration of the great man who is free of the narrow constrictions which have defined their lives.

This leads to a discussion of mercy killing. The Wife and the Mistress insist that when there is no longer hope left for receiving love, the unloved one might just as well be murdered. The Wife implies that the Best Friend has figuratively killed his wife by withdrawing his
affections. Though the Best Friend's sexual infidelities are symptoms of his disengagement from his wife, the Wife of the dying man suggests that the estrangement of the Best Friend from his wife was more complete than just a physical separation. But the Best Friend tries to avoid responsibility for the rift:

THE BEST FRIEND
(To THE WIFE, quiet, intense)
You said she was insane. You all said it.
THE WIFE (Rather dreamy)
Did I? Well, perhaps I meant she was going.
(Enigmatic smile)
Perhaps we all did. [33]

Subtly insinuating that the Best Friend drove his wife crazy, here again the Wife places the responsibility for the success or failure of a marriage on the husband. The Best Friend is baffled by the double bind, of course, because, like Tobias in A Delicate Balance, he is flattered by the notion that he possesses so much power over others at the same time he is overawed by the burden of responsibility for directing someone else's life. Similar to many of Albee's otherwise likable characters, the Best Friend seems to be hampered by extreme passivity and conformity. When the Mistress asks a witty question, he responds seriously and then says, "Don't involve me; please" (66). He contrasts sharply with the Doctor, who does get involved with his patients.

The Doctor, of course, has traditionally been used as a raison- neur. Since he is an outsider to the family it is possible to make him an extremely sympathetic character without destroying the dramatic tension between and among the major characters. The Doctor comments on the strange above-average survival rate of the Doctors and the Priests,
those who ministered to the sick during the bubonic plagues: "Might mean something; probably not" (99). It might mean that, for Albee, selflessness does not have to result in self-sacrifice, as it has, to some extent, for the Mistress.

These women's strengths and weaknesses counterpoint and highlight by contrasting one another's assets and liabilities, maintaining the audience's sympathy for as well as objective distance from both characters. Even the Mistress, who has chosen a full commitment to her man, believes that there is no further hope for fulfillment for her. She explains that she does not want to appear pathetic like the manless women she has seen all around the world. She explains her less-than-satisfactory solution to her problem:

There are different kinds of pain, and being once more where one has been, and shared, must be easier than being where one cannot ever... I think what I shall do is go to where I've been, we've been, but I shall do it out of focus, for indeed it will be. I'll go to Deauville in October, with only the Normandie open, and take long, wrapped-up walks along the beach in the cold and gray. I'll spend a week in Copenhagen when the Tivoli's closed. And I'll have my Christmas in Venice, where I'm told it usually snows. Or maybe I'll just go to Berlin and stare at the wall. We were there when they put it up. There's so much one can do. And so little. [101]

And so, she retains her delusion, or contamination of her Adult judgment, that her future cannot now be replanned, even though she has the advantage of wealth to facilitate any readjustment she might want to make in her lifestyle. There is a poignant ambiguity to have "been" somewhere, to have had existence there. She cannot articulate what it is that she feels she "cannot ever..." but evidently she believes her future will be cold and closed off from pleasure, life, freedom. Though she has survived widowhood twice already, she does not now ex-
pect to form any new alliances or develop any new interests in life. At sixty-one her life script is completed and she now has nothing meaningful to do but wait for death herself. Having assiduously avoided developing her Adult and her Parent, she faces the demise of her Child's lover without any compensation.

Several years ago Albee was asked how he felt about his female characters. His interviewer implied that Albee showed women in a terrible light. His reply is especially interesting in illuminating the balance between the Wife and the Mistress:

I've been accused a lot of writing about terrible women: Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, and Miss Alice in Tiny Alice and Agnes in Delicate Balance, not forgetting the nurse in Death of Bessie Smith who is considered one of the real monsters. But what is there to write about? Men, women, children and animals. Other animals rather, I suppose one can write about terribly content people, of what Herbert Gould was asked to write about by the television executive: Happy problems. I guess you can do that. I suppose my men and my women both tend to be a bit more argumentative than placid, to be a bit more discontent than content. But then again, to choose a few other examples throughout playwriting history, so was Lady Macbeth so was Clytemnestra. Serious plays have got to be based on a certain amount of conflict, discontent, and argument. What really bugs me is the accusation that my women aren't an accurate representation of the female kind in this world. I guess if I were insane, they wouldn't be. But the thing that interests me also is the fact that people don't see themselves in my characters. They see their friends and neighbors. I couldn't write about a character only with hatred. I feel ambivalent about most of the characters and then again most of the characters I create are ambivalent about themselves. Ambivalent towards each other and towards their role in or out of society. I'm very fond of Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf for example. I think she's a real gutsy three dimensional well rounded woman who can play the monster when she's thrust into that role. A lot of people misunderstand about a lot of the women I write. Usually the men misunderstand: women seem to be a little more tolerant of the women I create, which leads me to suspect they aren't monsters. The men seem to object to them
because they don't want to see women represented in that fashion whether it's true or not. I think my lady characters are quite nice.\footnote{42}

Neither the Mistress nor the Wife is a monster, of course; but they are not heroines either. Until women are accepted as complex, full human beings--offstage as well as on--Albee's women will probably continue to be seen as castrating bitches, or Albee will be viewed as advocating a return to a "golden age" when the proper order (i.e., men dominating women) prevailed. The dramatic medium makes it difficult to determine for certain what the author believes should be the direction of change, but Albee consistently shows that the present reality is undesirable. Even those of his characters who work hardest to preserve this state of affairs are unhappy with their own lives. \textit{All Over}, like \textit{A Delicate Balance}, shows characters for whom it is really too to change. As a warning challenge, the play may stimulate the audience who recognize that they are young enough to do something about their own lives if they choose to do so. But Albee pays his audience the compliment of permitting us our own choices.

\footnote{42 ADRIENNE CLARKSON, "The Private World of Edward Albee," \textit{Montrealer}, XLI (Oct., 1967), 45.}
CHAPTER X

SOME CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation has been to apply the concepts of transactional analysis to a close examination of the plays of Edward Albee, a playwright who not only has a gift for intuiting psychologically realistic dialogue, but who also gives generous stage directions about characters' attitudes as they say the lines to make clear the ego states and gameplaying, which in turn reveal the characters' life scripts.

Though short, Albee's first play, The Zoo Story, reveals Albee's genius at portraying the inevitable problem which will arise when an individual with a hamartic script briefly but deeply touches one with a banal script, i.e., an average person. Had Peter been a script-free person, another play could have emerged, of course. In The Zoo Story one of Albee's continuing concerns, the question of responsibility for one's own actions, emerges through TA as a central theme.

In The Death of Bessie Smith, Albee examines the formation of life plans, or scripts, and shows the way a "double bind" works. Through scenes with her Father, Nurse is revealed ironically as a potentially tender loving woman who is forbidden by society to show physical love and compelled by convention to submit her will to that of the man of the house, even though he is financially dependent upon
her. Not only is Father threatened by her sexuality, he taunts her with it and mocks her for not being a true Southern Belle. Nurse displaces her anger by taunting in turn the men at work, Orderly and Intern. But when Jack arrives with the dead Bessie Smith, the real impotency of the Nurse's position is exposed. The Nurse is shown to be only a link in a chain of exploitation that does not start with her Father, nor end with Orderly. In this play Albee balances individual against collective social responsibility, and ultimately they seem inseparable.

In The Sandbox and The American Dream Albee uses a number of the same characters to expose several aspects of our culture. In The Sandbox Grandma is left by Mommy and Daddy to die. Mommy, the Winner, dominates Daddy, the Loser, and almost succeeds in convincing herself that she is pleased by Grandma's death. Grandma, also a Winner, ironically fools Mommy into thinking Grandma has died sooner than she actually has, but in the process entraps herself so that death really is inevitable after all. Recognizing the snare, Grandma, a true Winner, meets her fate willingly, even smilingly, with a warm kiss. Grandma's interactions with Mommy are more complex in The American Dream. The story of Mommy's lunch box reveals the pattern of their games established by Grandma so they can both win; and Grandma's baking contest reveals that she still knows how to win, even if she has to resort to some irregular methods. Grandma's attractiveness in large part depends on her habit of initiating games where everyone close to her wins. Gameplaying between Mommy and Daddy and between
Mommy and Mrs. Barker reveals the way 'mommy applies her lessons in how to be a Winner, even from a position of seeming powerlessness. Much of the humor rests on implicit and explicit role expectations of the male and female in America. The American Dream himself is shown to be a nameless, aimless, cold product of Hollywood who only desires to get by without further harm. He appropriately finds his home in a family who has already done their worst to another boy, who may have been the original American Dream before he was stripped of his vitality by Mommy and Daddy. In the light of TA, he also appears to be a psychologically real boy caught in a dilemma of conflicting script demands from the Witch and Ogre adoptive parents who crush his Natural Child.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? demonstrates typical games married couples play with each other and with other couples. Albee has chosen two academic couples who have mastered these games and relish them psychologically at both the Child and Adult level. George and Martha play at the first degree, openly admitting their gameplaying; Nick and Honey play at the second degree, pretending that they are not aware of the intrigue and they are embarrassed at having their games exposed. The kinds of games each person plays show contrasts in scripting and in moral values between and among George and Martha and Nick and Honey.

In adapting Carson McCullers' novella, The Ballad of the Sad Café, for the stage, Albee retained the relationships among the major characters which follow the Karpman Drama Triangle. Though some of
the complexity of characterization was omitted, e.g., Marvin Macv's rejection by his mother and Amelia's altruistic "doctoring" competency, enough of the interrelationships remain to make it a psychologically satisfying play, if one can simply accept the human craving for getting and giving love. In adapting Malcolm Albee also deleted much of Purdy's original story to make it "fit" the stage. He retains the almost mythical scriptless "Prince," Malcolm, as well as three of the "addresses" of couples who are each dominated by Child, Parent, and Adult ego states, respectively. Albee retains the enigmatic Cox whose motivation is evilly obscure; Malcolm's "disappeared" Father whose abandonment of the boy is equally puzzling; and the grotesquely selfish Melba, the ironically "complete" personality who completes Malcolm's corruption. Unfortunately, Malcolm's personal attractiveness of the first act is gradually dissipated in the second act by his almost inhuman passivity and his apparent stupidity, until the audience becomes largely indifferent to his fate, leaving the play without enough dramatic tension to generate interest in the outcome.

Tiny Alice, a somewhat more successful venture into expressionism or surrealism, deals at the psychological level with the fulfillment of Brother Julian's Martyr script. The trio, Lawyer, Butler, and Miss Alice, combine as Parent, Adult and Child of one composite personality to form Tiny Alice, the deity to whom Julian lets himself be sacrificed. Again, Albee raises the question of self-determination and responsibility for one's own destiny.

Albee continues exploring this theme in A Delicate Balance and
shows how Tobias, Agnes, Claire, and Julia, as well as Harry and Edna, all wish to have someone else be responsible for their predicaments and all deny that they have the power to change their lives, yet each has some moment of feeling clairvoyant or omniscient, potentially godlike, with power not only over themselves, but perhaps over the others if each could muster the courage to change their games. But each consciously passes the moment of opportunity for change, deciding to let inertia prevail.

By contrast, in his adaptation of Giles Cooper's *Everything in the Garden*, Albee shows what can happen when a family member does decide to change her role, ostensibly—on the Adult level—for the financial betterment of her family; but the psychological payoff for her Child comes when she reveals that she not only can compete in the moneymaking world; she can outdo her more morally conventional husband who feels guilty over his involvement in germ warfare. Quickly overcoming her Parental outrage at the disgrace of prostitution with pseudo-Adult practicality, she carefully avoids the "inconvenient" law with a clear conscience so long as she does not permit herself the luxury of "enjoying" her work. Albee makes his Jenny and Richard slightly more sympathetic characters than the original Jenny and Bernard by increasing their social consciousness, or Parent ego states, thus increasing the impact of their corruption and maintaining dramatic tension to the end of the play. As Jack suggests, new decisions will be required of them after the play ends and the repercussions of Jenny's new "job" or script adaptation have only begun to be felt.
In *Box/Mao/Box* Albee departs entirely from showing gameplaying or psychological interactions. Four characters speak in turn, but not to each other. The first, the Voice of the Box, apparently talks spontaneously in all of her ego states, as appropriate, in response to a present (or perhaps future?) situation as she finds it. Of the other three, only the Long-Winded Lady seems to speak at all extemporaneously, and she has at least apparently a listener on stage, of whom she from time to time seems consciously aware of the impression her words may have. She seems herself to lack a strong Parent ego state and the Minister is not a very satisfactory (to her) substitute. Mao, Parentally dominated, speaks dogmatically and with the conviction of authority. The Old Woman, an Adapted Child, recites the story-in-verse of her banal life in the form of a sentimental poem. The four voices counterpoint one another on the themes of individual and collective destiny and the responsibility of each and all for the order and direction of life. The lack of visual action and particularly gameplaying interaction may account for some of the apathy of the audiences and confusion of the critics.

In *All Over* Albee returns to a realistic setting, showing a "family" of characters in middle or old age, each of whose life scripts are enmeshed with the life of the great man who is dying now as they gather to wait. They are named only by their relationship to the dying man, who may have been a rare scriptless individual; at any rate he is recognized as an extraordinary personage both within and outside his family. The Son and Daughter seem to be the result of getting "too
shaggy" in the course of trying to enforce their opposite-sexed parents' programing to correct what each parent perceived to be the shortcomings of the spouse. The Son should have turned out more like the Best Friend and the Daughter should have imitated the Mistress in order for them to have pleased their parents. But the Best Friend and the Mistress have their scripty limitations and are less than happy with the outcomes of their lives, which they now face joylessly scriptfree. The Doctor and the Nurse, reminiscent of Grandma in The American Dream and The Sandbox, seem to be able to accept death calmly when it is inevitable, but meanwhile have found satisfactory ways to live, based not so much on their relationships with single individuals, but on helping people generally. The two most interesting characters (largely because they have the most lines) are the Wife and the Mistress, and they are balanced against each other for strong and weak and admirable and unsympathetic qualities. Scripted living, even at its best, is shown as less than totally satisfactory.

In overviewing this study, I believe it is evident that TA is a valuable critical procedure, one that has shed light on some "difficult" aspects of Albee's work. While it ignores many other interesting aspects of the playwright's work, it does account for the psychological realism which is a major factor in the dramatic success of Albee's work. It seems likely that this technique will yield similarly helpful insights when applied to the work of other dramatists as well since it is primarily concerned with observable behavior. At this writing Albee
is preparing to open a new play and we may expect that it, too, will lend itself to interpretation under the principles of TA.
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GENERAL STUDIES


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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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