

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 7. Issue.2. 2020 (Apr-June)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF CHILDLESS MOTHERS IN EDWARD ALBEE'S
SELECTED PLAYS

VAISHALI B.PATIL^{1*}, Dr. B.G.PAWAR²

¹Research Scholar, KBC NMU Jalgaon,

²Assistant Professor, Faculty of English, M.J.PV. Arts, commerce and V.K.Kulkarni science college,
Dhadgaon, KBC NMU Jalgaon

*E-mail: vaishali42937080@gmail.com



Article information
Received:12/04/2020
Accepted: 26/04/2020
Published online: 30/04/2020
doi: [10.33329/ijelr.7.2.51](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.7.2.51)

ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to show a comprehensive analysis of childless mothers which are the central figures in the absurd plays of the American dramatists Edward Albee. "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "the American Dream" these two plays of the Edward Albee are selected to explore the characteristics of childless mothers Martha and Mommy respectively. Both Martha and Mommy are similar in some extent, as a wife both of them are dominating, humiliating to their husbands. As a childless mother they are completely opposite to each other, it means that their behavior towards their child is different. The treatment given to their imaginary son and adopted son is disparate. Martha has too much concern for her child, entire play she is waiting for her imaginary child and Mommy is waiting for the replacement of the mutilated child. The theme of both plays is different but Edward Albee took the help of childless mothers to present the themes of his plays.

Keywords: imaginary, adopted, dominating, humiliating, childless mother, mutilate.

Martha is the childless mother from Albee's long and most famous play, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", which first staged in 1962. Mommy is the another childless mother of Albee's very short one act play "The American Dream" premiered in 1961. The play "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" opens with ironical laughter of the Martha at her living room in campus of a small New England College at the dark late night. Martha is the childless mother of 52 years old who has completed two decades of the unfulfilled married life. Edward Albee presented Martha as a real mother of everybody's house, the mother who loves her child, cares and concerns for her child. Martha is childless mother, but she has concern and care for her imaginary child. Martha wants a child because she wanted to fulfill her motherhood. She thought that the child will help her to construct the rational bond between her and her husband George. With the help of the child she wanted to create an emotional link for her marital life so the feeling of warmth will strengthen and she will live the life with reality. But Martha fails to give birth to the child, so infertility brings the hollowness in her life. She is not succeeded to face the reality of her life that she is childless woman; it brings frustrations in her married life. She tries to run away from the reality so she with her husband George invents an illusion of imaginary child. She has the dream of motherhood and to fulfill this dream the illusion of imaginary child helps her.

“but as she and George have not been able to beget a child, both have created the illusion of an imaginary son”¹.

Martha develops an illusion of imaginary child as it helps her to continue to live with her husband. The child is the only reason of her married relationship otherwise there is nothing remaining in her married life. George fails to accomplish success according to the expectations of Martha, George fails to execute his position in the university.

Martha : The hell I will! You see, George didn't have much.....pushhe wasn't particularly....aggressive. In fact he was a sort of a a FLOP! A great ...big...fat.....FLOP!²

According to Martha, her life stuck with George who is a great big flop. Nothing happens according to the expectations of Martha, her life is full of misfortunes. She lost her mother in her childhood; her father marries with another woman and neglects Martha. As a child she didn't get the love of her mother and father as well and when she becomes young, marries with George, her husband is unable to function like her prospect. Physically Martha is not capable to produce the child as she lost her motherhood. All these disasters of her life brings loneliness, isolations, illusions to her so she continuously over drinks and because of intoxication she discusses in front of guest the secret of child which she and George developed in their personal from last twenty one years.

Martha : Our son. Our son was born in a September night, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty one.....years ago....

...our child. And we raised him.....yes, we did; we raised him.³

To hide the harsh reality of life, to exist the life on the hope, Martha a childless mother created a world of illusion in which she has given the birth to her own healthy child with the green eyes. she has raised it, she played with him. She celebrated her motherhood with an imaginary child.

Stenz argued that

“ With nothing to do that interest her and nothing to live for; she spends her nights; leaving a trail of half-filled glasses of gin around the house and her days sleeping off her drunkenness”⁴

Martha has spent her twenty years of married life in a hope that one day her illusion turns into reality and they will celebrate the 21st birthday of the imaginary son with authenticity. Martha's life becomes very miserable because she knows that she is childless mother so George decides to kill the illusion of the imaginary child. He proclaims that the son was killed late in the afternoon.

George breaks the illusion of Martha and forced her to accept the bitter reality of her life.

“The American Dream” in this play Mommy is also a childless mother and central figure of the play but she is totally opposite to the childless mother Martha. Both Martha and Mommy are rich but richness is more important to Mommy than Martha. Money is more important to Mommy than love for child, affection, and family values. Both Martha and Mommy dreamed for the child but the objectives of their dream are different. Martha genuinely wants a child and Mommy wants a child only to show the society, to show the completeness of her family. Though Martha is educated and modern but still she loves her child as a typical mother. We fail to spot the love for a child in Mommy, Mommy is not a typical mother, and she wanted a son to complete her social values not the moral values of her mind. Mommy is living her life in search of the real happiness, she pursued the American dream. In search of the happy life she is moving and moving forward only without the satisfaction. Like Martha, Mommy is also unable to give birth to the child. So she decided to adopt the child from the Bye- Bye Adaptation Service with help of Mrs. Barker. But when the child was failed to fulfill her American dream that time she mutilated the child into small pieces. Mommy is very dominating wife as well as very cruel mother and daughter also. She is unable to give not only the birth of child but also she is unable to give real happiness, satisfaction, and peace of mind to her husband and her mother. Like her womb her mind is also empty, it is not full of love. Through presenting the childless mothers in most of his famous plays Albee is commenting or satirizing his own adopted mother. In this play we find the autobiographical references of the

Albee's adopted mother. In *Character of Mommy*, Albee presents her own adopted mother Frances. Like *Mommy* she was also dominating in nature. In his childhood days Albee was also hurt by his adopted mother. His childless mother also punished him like *Mommy* punished the small child. *Mommy* has the tremendous expectations from the child. In this play importance is given to the childless mother, father is not important; he is like a puppet who act, who speaks only what his owner want. Martha failed to accept the reality of her infertility but *Mommy* has the daring to accept the reality of her life that she is childless mother. She doesn't have any guilt in mind for her infertility. The adopted small child she kills and demands for the replacement of the child. Martha is waiting for her real child and *Mommy* is waiting for the artificial child. The artificial child which will work for her like a robot only, it will also emotionless, careless. It will work only for the money, *Mommy* will pay for him and he will work according to the vision of the *Mommy*. *Mommy* has the vision of American dream and for completing her American dream she kills the emotions of her mother grandma, her husband Daddy. She always gives threats to grandma that she will send her in nursing home. She never cares for her old mother, she cares for only the money of daddy, she openly accepts that she has married with daddy in sake of his money only. She says that after the death of daddy, she reserves the rights to get all his money and property to her because she is the wife of the him. Martha cries for the death of her son because she emotionally attached with her son and *Mommy* becomes happy after the death of her son because she economically attached with his son. Generally mother is most kind and lovable member of the family, mothers devote their whole life, their carrier, happiness, satisfaction for their child like Martha but *Mommy* is selfish mother who kills her son for her satisfaction, and for her so called concept of "happy life." Grandma, the old mother of *Mommy* recognizes her daughter's dream and in the form of "Young Man" she gifted an American Dream to selfish and cruel childless mother *Mommy*. Rutenberg writes that,

"*Mommy* is the consummate 'bad mother', sadistic, jealous, greedy and onward. On the same level, the play leaves the spectator enthralled with *Mommy*' sadism: the effect it generates is one of a masochistic submission to her violence"⁵

Mommy accepts Young Man as gift from Grandma and becomes very happy, she thought that she got a great deal; she got her American Dream in form of Young Man.

Mommy: Yes sir! Yes, sirree! Now this is more like it. Now this is a great deal more like it! Daddy! Come see if this is n't great deal more like it.⁶

Childless mother *Mommy* celebrates the joy after getting artificial child. At the end of this play *Mommy* creates her illusion that this young man, the artificial child will fulfilled all her expectations and she will live her happy life with it.

Conclusion

Edward Albee in his plays "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "The American Dream" shows the completely opposite childless mothers in the form of Martha and *Mommy*. *Mommy* is kindhearted for her child and *Mommy* is hardhearted for her child. Martha sacrifices and *Mommy* commemorates. Childless mother *Mommy* becomes happy and rejoices her illusion by drinking and the childless mother Martha cries because her illusion is destroyed by her husband, she drinks to forget sadness, death of her child and by drinking she runs away from reality. *Mommy* drinks to celebrate her happiness and arrival of her child. Edward Albee uses childless mothers as a symbol in his plays to reform the society. He shows that the new American Dream is full of separation, disillusionment and defeat. It is better to accept the reality rather than to live life into the illusion. The new American Dream will separate the mother from her child, wife from her husband. It will separate the man from the man and it will bring the life of illusion with frustrations which Martha faces in her life and it will transform the mind of human being into emotionless and hardhearted like the mind *Mommy*, who likes the artificial, materialistic child not the child of real humanity.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Eisenmann, Maria, "Werk Edward Albees: Analyse, Oxford : Rayan,(2004)pp. 111-125.
- [2]. Edward Albee,"Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?", Broadway Revival, Signet Drama, 2005.pp.93

-
- [3]. Edward Albee, "Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?", Broadway Revival, Signet Drama, 2005.pp. 230-231
- [4]. Stenz, Anita M. "Edward Albee: The Poet of Loss", New York: Mouton Publishers, 1978, pp.43
- [5]. Michael. Philip C. Kolin, J. Madison Davis. "Albee in Protest", Critical Essays on Edward Albee. Boston, Massachusetts: G.K Hall and Co. 1986. PP.231
- [6]. Edward Albee, "The Collected Plays of Edward Albee": 'The American Dream' vol. 1, 2004, the Overlook Press, and U.S .pp.146
- [7]. Kadhim Hatem Kaibr, Guo Jingjing, "Sense of Loss in Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" *American Research Journal of English and Literature*, Vol.4, No.1, 2018, pp.1-8.
- [8]. Mrudula M.M, "Edward Albee and His Mother Characters: An Analysis of Selected Plays", *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 20, Issue 2, Ver. V (Feb. 2015), PP 47-51
- [9]. Vaishali B.Patil, Dr.B.G.Patil, "Analysis of Absurd Theatre as a recent trend in Modern American Literature", *Modern Trends in Languages and Literature , Research Journey , International E-Research Journal ,* Feb 2019, special issue 135 (A), PP. 128-129.
- [10]. Vaishali B.Patil, Dr.B.G.Patil, " Thematic Perspectives of the selected modern American Dramatists", *Literature :Culture , society and media adaptation , Research Journey , International E-Research Journal ,* Feb 2019, special issue 111 (A), PP. 261-263.
-