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REVIEW ARTICLE

THE AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT, EDWARD ALBEE

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The American Playwright, Edward Albee

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Edward Albee (1928-) emerged with his extraordinary one-Act plays in the late 1950's. Since then he has established himself to be the most successful and critically acclaimed American dramatist commanding a global fame almost similar to that of his three illustrious senior playwrights Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), Tennessee Williams (1911) and Arthur Miller (1915). Albee felt interested in experimenting with new dramatic forms as well as with Existentialistic themes. He has a good objective control over playwriting with a fine ear for dialogue, reminding one of his equally illustrious British counterparts the Absurdist playwright Harold Pinter (1930.), from the earlier plays, all the way to the powerful rhetoric of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) or *Tiny Alice* (1964), Albee's chief characteristic is struck mostly in his powerful dramatic dialogue.

Albee's dramatic pursuit refers, to American Naturalism closely interacting with the twentieth century European Existentialism. Albee holds on to the modern absurdistic experimental drama in his own way, with his plays confronting the audience with a concrete pattern of poetic images demanding a positive effort at interpretation. Albee's drama as we find in *The Zoo Story* (1959), *The Seed Box* (1960), *The American Dream* (1961) and also in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1964) -- tries to analyses those tendencies of the characters which may be termed as Absurd. Besides, his plays are characterized by an overwhelming sense of loss, Which becomes an image of the loss of the principles by the Americans, which had been evoked by the founders of the nation, and also of the inevitable process of deprivation which is the basic of individual existence. The theatre of Edward Albee bears evidence that human society is deploying false and effective mane to evade the pain of real communication and the menace of a world moving very fast towards disillusion.

Albee's plays primarily deal with the theme of isolation of human self and a search for identity. The search is usually worked out through family relationship involving real or imaginary parents or children determined by death, and frequently framed by religious or irreligious license. In this connection the plays like *The American Drown* and *who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* may be cited, What is significant is that

both real or imagined parents and children find themselves ultimately in the similar menacing Existentialistic darkness or even in some terrifyingly heated up lights. The plays may be said to be basically images almost allegories pointing towards the inexorable human condition.

Who's Afraid of the Virginia woolf? Is rated as Albees's Magnum Opus. where the dramatic impact of the playwright can be clearly traced. The play is richly connotative where human predicament. Isolation of the human self and the inadequacy to establish effective emotional rapport with other homosapians are boldly underlined. The play is also critically considered to 'be a savage dance of death. Right from the moment that the curtain rises over Virginia woolf showing the couple George and Martha stumbling into a dark room until hours later. With a death at dawn, they are exposed to where they really are. Though apparently realistic in form, Virginia Woolf? Exists at least on two levels apart from the realistic one. It acts as an allegory of the society holding up a delusive poetic image of its emptiness and sterility; and also as a complex ritual to portraying human fighting against such forces which render them helpless and lonely. Perhaps no other contemporary American dramatist tells us through a considerably extensive dramatic excersize, more about' who we are or 'what we seem to be'.

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2. Amacher Edward Albee (New York : Twayne Publisher, 1969) p. 57