

Albee's the Zoo Story in Concept of Modern Psychoanalytic Theory: (An Analytical Study)

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Abstract: Many modern people feel that their relationships and self-identity have been lost in American society after the Second World War. This crisis has been taken up by several writers. Edward Albee is one of them who was interested in highlighting the crisis of the troubled man. Albee went deeply into the human psyche and searched for the psychological conflict of the modern American man in order to reflect the emotional need for people to understand the meaning of life. This study introduce an analytical study of modern psychoanalytic theory for the most prominent Albee's plays. The focus will be *The Zoo Story* and on the psychological behavior of Jerry and Peter's characters such as isolation, loneliness and the absence of social relationships.

Key words: Albee, *The Zoo Story*, modern psychoanalytic theory, loneliness, isolation

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that, the American drama has affected by the European and British patterns in particular but the plays that presented on the early stage of the American theater were simple and primitive, showing the naivety of ideas and the lack of experience in theatrical writing compared to the evolution that European theater has reached in that period. In order to keep pace with the evolution of the world theater, they established American Theater Association. The effort of the Theater Association was focused on putting a plan for the future of American theater, looking for the modern Springs in theatrical writing and provides the theater movement with new blood. So, the Theater Association thought from the beginning to establish bridges with the European theater which was much ahead of the American theater stage. As a result of those efforts, a number of playwrights like Eugene O'Neill and others have emerged and presented some plays can be considered as the real beginning of Modern American Theater (Rodriguez, 2017; Harehdasht *et al.*, 2015; Nabi and Ahmad, 2016).

Although, there is no agreement to determine the beginning of the history of American theater, everyone agrees that the history of American theater is not as deep as the history of the European theater. Also, most researchers agree that the American theater began in 1916 when a group of talented actors did a theatrical show for two plays by Eugene O'Neill at the Greenwich Village Theater. Although, there was an emergence of many

writers of that period, they did not emerge as the emergence of Eugene O'Neill. During O'Neill's period of several American theater has been affected by several factors, during that period the First World War had broken out which threw its negative astray on theater and drama in America. In addition to the impact of the First World War on literary production in general and theater in particular the American drama has been affected for the period (1920 -1930) by the conflict between capitalism and workers, this conflict has led to the loss of social peace and social values which making most writers to focus on the problems of the individual and his daily suffering by providing plays looking for a revival of the social moral. So, O'Neill and the other playwrights lived in a period of depression and stagnation which had an effect on their literary production.

One of the important things that made Edward Albee occupies a prominent place in the history of American theater is that all his literary works were devoted to addressing the issues of the individual and the state of American society after the Second World War. The study will discuss a various aspects and dimensions, how the circumstances and situations effect on the individual and led him to feelings of loss and frustration. In addition, the impact of the researchers life which was reflected on most of the characters of his plays. It will also explore the state of American society when Albee wrote these plays and the impact of conditions in that period on the life and behavior of modern American man.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Albee is considered the leading figure of the new American theatre. He was categorized at the head of the classification of the absurd theatre, because his dramatic work criticized and attacked the foundations of American optimism. Albee pays a great attention to the individual and the nature of his relationship with his family from one side and with the community from another and how he behaves when the emotional communication is lost. In his plays, Albee explains that modern man feels unaided and insignificant within his infinite universe, because he has been forsaken by his fellow men. Albee is interested in making his characters appear in their environment with uncertainty both of uncertainty of identity and existence.

In Albee's *The Zoo Story* play, Jerry and Peter come across each other in New York Central Park. Jerry is looking for someone to talk with. Peter, "a thoroughly respectable young executive, sits by himself, enjoying a Sunday afternoon reading in the park" (75). The play seems very quiet but not for long: as Anita Stenz writes "without warning on a pleasant summer's day, the comfortable (6), self-reflecting world of this man shatters all around him". Jerry starts to question Peter and it is clear that Peter does not care to communicate with such an ordinary person as Jerry but he answers out of politeness. The events gradually develop between them and reached a climax. Indeed by the end of the play, Peter is forced to take a man's life horribly and leaves the park.

In the first part of the play, Albee describes Peter's and Jerry's backgrounds. He describes them as if they were to belong to different worlds. Roundane asserts that "Peter is representative of an upper-middle-class world which Albee will assault often throughout his career" (30). He has an acceptable figure not very handsome or ugly; he wears tweeds, smokes a pipe and wears glasses. His style would suggest a younger, ordinary man with a very calm and settled life. He is a high middle class and he spends his Sunday afternoon reading a magazine on his preferred bench at the park. He is married has two daughters, two cats and two televisions in his home and he gets \$18,000 a year from his job as a publisher. Peter reveals that he feels he would like to have a son "every man wants a son" (16). But his wife can't give him more children.

From the early stages of life, Jerry had a sense of non-affiliation because of his bad background: his mother was a prostitute from the south and died in Alabama "Adulterous tour of our Southern State ending with her death in Alabama" (24). Shortly afterwards his drunken

father accidentally stepped in front of a moving omnibus. His mother's sister had died "on the afternoon of my high school graduation" (24). Donald (1960) states that Jerry did not feel sorry for him about all these past things and he is tough-minded about all aspects of his personal experience. His loneliness drives him to seek a companion with strangers; this companionship is what he seeks from Peter. Jerry is critical of his society and he is keen to share his ideas about love, life, isolation with others (75-76).

Jerry talks about his personal life, revealing that he is not married and has had no experiments with women because he was a gay early in his life. In contrast to Peter, Jerry has a different education and belongs to a different social class. Through the conversation, Jerry focuses on his sense of isolation and how he has no contact with anyone in his daily life: "And in the other front room, there's somebody living there but I don't know who it is. Never, Never, Never" (22).

This is the first sign that there is a psychological conflict between Jerry and his milieu, it is a psychological conflict present in many of the tormented characters on the modern American stage.

In several situations, Jerry appears as worried, when he says to Peter: "you are not angry?" and "you are not thinking of going, are you?". This speech reflects the frequency of his troubled state of not being accepted by others.

In the second part of the play, Jerry tells Peter his story with the landlady's dog. When Jerry wants to access in his room, the dog attacks him.

JERRY: What I mean is: animals are indifferent to me... Like people (He smiles slightly)... But this dog was indifferent from the very beginning; he'd snarl and go for me, to get one of my legs

This attack represents, that even at home Jerry is threatened by cold hostilities and his life is not safe. So in several situations, Jerry appears as reluctant, reflecting the state of anxiety he was suffering from. Jerry failed in creating a relationship with the dog, so, he decided to kill the dog by poisoning him. However, Jerry felt sorry for him and he explains to Peter his feelings towards the dog. Later, he feels guilty about his act and wished the dog not to die.

JERRY: I was so hoping for the dog to be waiting for me... Well, how would you put it... enticed? ... Fascinated? No, I don't think, so... Heart-shattering anxious, that's what I was, heart-shattering anxious to confront my friend again... Yes, Peter, friend... That's the only word for it

Jerry's desire to establish relationships with others in order to stop the cruel feeling of loneliness is observed by Hayman, who says that "It's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. With animals" (12). Communication with the dog was an attempt from Jerry to enter the animal world, hoping to find the communication and social relations he missed:

JERRY: ... here is what I had wanted to happen..... I loved the dog now and I wanted him to love me..... I had tried to love and I had tried to kill and both had been unsuccessful by themselves.... I don't really know why I expected the dog to understand anything... much less my motivations. . . I hoped that the dog would understand (13)

Esslin (1969) confirms Jerry's inability to find genuine interaction with a dog, let alone a human being. Albee himself comments in one of his interviews with the media, "The dog story in *The Zoo* to a certain extent is a microcosm of the play by the fact that people are not communicating, ultimately failing and trying and failing". His failing to connect with the world (both animals and humans) causes him to put an end to his miserable life by committing suicide. Jerry states that "animals are indifferent to me... like people (He smiles slightly). Most of the time" (30).

Concerning the third part of this play, Jerry's death is an important part. After the bad experience with the dog, he realized that violence is the successful way to make a connection with others. So, he decides to share Peter's bench in order to have a conversation with someone on his last day. At the beginning, Peter does not agree to sit beside the local man but after a long argument, he responds to Jerry's desire.

JERRY: I've come here for years.... I have hours of great pleasure, great satisfaction, right here.... That's important for a man. I'm a responsible person ... I'm a GROWN-UP. This is my bench..... You have no right to take it away from me (45)

Jerry's sense of isolation forces him to include Peter in his death in order to achieve his missing sense of companionship in the last moments of his life. Jerry throws a knife on the ground near Peter's feet and intimates that he should pick it up. As a frightened man, Peter slips away, holding the knife and Jerry stabs himself. As he dies, he asks Peter to leave, saying:

JERRY: You've lost your bench, but you've defended your honor (40)

In fact, his wish was to attract a large number of people to be witnesses to his death, and what he could not achieve throughout his life, maybe he would get through the media after his death. Through this cruel act, Jerry gives a meaningful end to his meaningless life; he considers himself a victim of failing social relations. Zimbardo (1962) claims that "Jerry dies for Peter. He dies to save Peter's soul from death by spiritual starvation" (12). Warren also observes that "Albee creates a protagonist who is a martyr to brotherly love... In a rousing smug Peter to enact a zoo story, Jerry strikes hard at complacent conformity" (30). By including Peter in Jerry's death, Albee gives a vivid image and a strong message about the violence which was dominant in the human minds at that period. Bailey (2005) claims that not only has Jerry succeeded in implanting his story in Peter's memory but also Albee has used *The Zoo Story* to duplicate the experience in the minds of his audience (31-33).

In this dramatic death, Jerry triumphed over the barriers that prevented him and Peter from breaking their loneliness. Some critics regarded Jerry's death as an example of self-sacrifice to save other his death is an attempt to change Peter's traditional way of life. The bloody end of Jerry adds a special mark to this one act play. At that time, the drama focused on dialogue and conversation rather than action, yet the importance of this event comes about as a result of Jerry's feeling of society's rejection. Albee uses symbol to indicate that the world is like a zoo, where everyone is separated by bars from others. Animals in the zoo live in separate cages which humans made from iron and at the same time, the man puts himself in a similar cage. This cage is created by the absence of social relationships and lack of communication between people. Such absence of relations led to the disappearance of emotional relations in modern American society at the time. Albee's aim was to criticize the incorrect attitude of the American culture.

The Zoo Story is a morality play. Zimbardo claims it is about isolation and salvation through sacrifice. Naturally, man is alone and a prisoner of the self. He pretends that he is not alone and gathers all different things and ideas around himself and in this way he creates stronger barriers between himself and other creatures (23). According to Kolin (2005), symbolically, the play is about "cages, boxes, frames, bars, encasements, the shrinking territorial ties of a prison cell or madhouse." (17).

Albee was very successful in employing expressions of isolation, loneliness and lack of social relations to reflect the state of society at that time. He could deliver the message of this play to the public in a simple way. According to Amacher (1982), considering the title of the play, Albee intends to show the human condition as both “absurd and subhuman” and it is important that Albee “uses no terms other than vegetable or animal to describe the human condition” (65).

Albee describes human community through the two lenses, the absurd and the subhuman. In this description, he used two terms, vegetables and animals. We can note that, when Jerry divides men into two layers, they are vegetables and animals. This scene reflects his unstable behavior because at first, he sees Peter as a vegetable but in the moments before his death he says:

JERRY: Peter I'll tell you something now; you're not really a vegetable, you're an animal (49)

In the third part of the play, Jerry's visiting the zoo has multiple dimensions. Firstly, it represents the escape from the real world to fantasy to escape his isolation and lack of physical community. He accedes to another world where the animals live to find salvation from his deadly sense of isolation. The second dimension is that Jerry lives in a harmonious world like all human beings but he is rejected by individuals. Therefore, he prefers to join the animals rather than his own world. The third dimension is that he chooses the animal world in order to satisfy his sense of isolation that troubles him. He chooses a public place on that day to get the interest of the media, thus, he will get the largest possible number of sympathizers and convey his message to the largest area in his community.

JERRY... It's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. With animals... where better where ever better to communicate one single, simple-minded idea than in an entrance hall?... Than with a dog. Just that... a dog (34-35)

Finally, Jerry's attempt to involve Peter in his death carries psychological meaning, that Jerry has spent his entire life deprived of communication with anyone, in other words, he suffered a lack of passion, so, involving Peter in his death reflects a Jerry's desire to communicate with someone in his last moments. As well as achieving Jerry's aim, this shakes Peter and makes him change his lifestyle which was the message that Albee wanted to send to the community.

MODERN PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

This theory is developed by the Austrian doctor Alfred Adler (1870-1937). He cared for the theory of Freud (1958) also, he admitted that these theories have opened a new avenue for the modernization and development of psychology. There are two main thrusts in psychoanalysis:

- Classical psychoanalysis: backed by Sigmund Freud.
- Modern psychoanalysis: backed by the new Freudians. Like Carl Jung, Anna Freud, Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, Otto Rank, Erich Fromm, Harry Stack Sullivan

In spite of the integration between the direction of the classical psychoanalysis and modern psychoanalysis, there are several differences between the views of Sigmund Freud and the views of modern psychoanalysis. Freud sees that psychoanalysis is based on instincts, sexual motives, Oedipus complex, biological determinism and focus on the unconscious processes but the new Freudians see that psychoanalysis is based on cultural, psychological and social factors, also, based on the personality structure, adjustment and emotional experience as well as unconscious. Adler joined the discussion group that was set up by Freud in 1902 and in 1910 and became president of the compound of psychoanalysis in Vienna by an endorsement from Freud himself. But the differences soon emerged between them, the dispute between his views and the views of both Freud and Jung became greater than that condoned, which led Adler to the resignation in 1911 component with some of his fellow group “free search in psychoanalysis”. Then in 1912 he changed its name to the group of “individual psychology”.

The difference between Sigmund Freud, a leading figure of classical psychoanalysis and Alfred Adler a pioneer of modern psychoanalysis and the founder of “individual psychology” is reflected in the following table that compares them (Hoffman, 1994).

PERSONAL PATTERNS

Based on the general behavior of the person, Adler has proposed general models by which the type of each character could be determined as follows:

The ruling dominant type: He has a high degree of determination and control over life is highly aggressive, and suffers from a severe lack of social concerns.

Table 1: comparison between Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler

Sigmund Freud	Alfred Adler
Human biological object	Human social being
Important biological needs	Important social needs
Important instincts and impulses	The tendency to join the group an important motive
Emotions are not controlled by the individual	Emotions can be controlled
Sex is very important	Sex is less important
Personal (psychological device) composed of superego and ego and exercisers and instincts	Personal holistic the formation cannot be divided

The getting-learning type: He expects to satisfy his needs and has a weak social concern (Table 1).

The avoiding type: Hesitant personal, his overall activity is weak, unable to achieve his goals and his social interests are weak compared with all other groups.

The socially-useful type: Activity pattern who seeks to achieve his goals within the limits of the interests of society (Buhler, 2013).

Adler divides factors that affect the human personality into biological factors, painful childhood, and life events. Back to the main character in *The Zoo Story*, the general behavior of Jerry's personality comes identical with the third pattern of Adler's classification (The Avoiding Type) stated at the beginning of this study. This person is characterized by indecision and the inability to achieve his goals in addition to have a weak personality and being unable to build social relationships. Adler attributes such behavior to the harsh childhood that the person passed by and that's what happened to Jerry. Peter's character agrees with the second category (The Getting-learning Type) which is characterized by access to good education and weaknesses in social relations. Psychologically, the circumstance of suffering, pain and solitude has a great effect on man's behavior, and we can observe that in the character of Jerry. In other words, this character is a victim of inner psychological conflict and the harsh circumstances related to the emotional detachment which the individual suffered at that time. Scientifically, there are natural instincts in the human growth with him through the nature of his humanity such as the instinct towards emotion in all its aspects such as the love of parents, family, relatives, society...). It is the instinct which prevents the emotional detachment inside the human.

Clearly, the psychological conflict is rooted in Jerry's personality: his aggressive behavior is emotionally detached from other people. Bailey claims that "Albee

embodies a message to denote the struggle of humanity which is located beyond their isolation and violence. Actually, Jerry's violence reflects the trouble of his inner psychological conflict, under the effect of the theme of isolation in the modern age" (25). Jerry's story with the dog and his meeting with Peter prove his failure to build a relationship with them. Jerry's aggressive behaviour does not mean that he is a bad man. In fact, he wishes the dog will not die. Before his death, he tells Peter to run away by saying "You'd better go now. Somebody might come by, and you don't want to be here when anyone comes" (49). His emotional attitude appears only in these two situations throughout the whole play. The psychological factors mentioned above which Jerry suffered, because his isolation and seclusion, which makes him fail to find contact with other people or even animal. So, the final result of this failure leads him to put an end to his life, where he has not any emotional association which makes him impossible to continue.

CONCLUSION

The psychological factor is one of the most important reasons that affect the individual behaviours. Psychologists, including Freud and Adler, see that the period of childhood and the method adopted in the child's upbringing have a great reflection on his behavior in the future. After applying modern psychological theory into *The Zoo Story* play, this study concludes that the conflict which the characters of *The Zoo Story* play suffered are due to psychological reasons, related to their troubled childhood and the difficult circumstances and events they encountered during their lifetime.

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