

Self-delusion and Schizophrenia: A *Deleuzo-Guattarian* Study of Edward Albee's
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf

This research work on Edward Albee's play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf explores the subversive nature of schizophrenia as the characters' act of assuming opposite gender roles reflects subversive act of traditional gender notion. In order to analyze the schizophrenic acts of the characters, this study takes ideas from Deleuze and Guattari who describe schizophrenia as a central part of subversive postmodern politics with the radical potential to bring down capitalistic ideals. In the play, the couple Martha and George defy the generally established notion of family life, career and social values. In their acts, they end up becoming split or schizophrenic personalities.

In Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Martha acts as a violent and strong woman in contrast to her calm husband George. Martha's masculine nature creates conflict between the husband and wife. As a result, they are constantly engaged in argument over almost anything. She openly flirts with Nick who also works as a professor with George at Biology Department. This shows that she attempts to live in illusion of masculine world, whereas George behaves calmly. Moreover, their engagement in constant games shows that they love to live and enjoy in illusory world. The couple cannot have a child so they fantasize about an imaginary son whom the husband claims to have died. George's professional career has not grown as well. In other words, he has become a flop in whatever activity he has pursued. George and Martha resort to illusion as a means of escape from reality. In this way, the characters become schizophrenic characters.

In the play, from the very beginning George and Martha are a surprising and disturbing couple. They waste all fantasies about the pleasure of marital life as they

desire more, which creates more desires as described by Deleuze and Guattari who view that "schizophrenia is the process of the production of desire and desiring-machines" (Deleuze and Guattari 24). As a result, they become schizophrenic characters, thus rejoice the world of self-delusion.

Martha and George's married life is chaotic as they try to escape from reality. They are not ready to accept their situation or their lack in life. Their career ends in failure; they cannot produce children. As they are unable to find satisfaction in life or achieve American dream, they tend to assume opposite gender behavior and other bizarre activities. Martha frequently hurls abuses after abuses at her husband. Strangely, she makes a blatant attempt at infidelity right in George's bed. This raises the questions as to why Martha and George act as freaks, why Martha acts aggressively and engrosses herself in drinks. Most of the time, Martha speaks with George incoherently. So, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, as the characters' weird act such as disorganized speech, mention of imaginary son and assuming opposite gender behavior reflect their schizophrenic behavior, which challenges capitalistic gender ideology.

Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf has received criticism from many critics in regard with gender issues, it could be noted that in "Barren Ground: Female Strength and Male Impotence in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," Kundert-Gibbs considers Martha as one of the strongest female characters in American theater, noting that her strength is mitigated and undermined in the course of the play as she is "effectively punished for overstepping the bounds of what is considered appropriate behavior for women," so, although she is "granted a typically masculine strength and attitude," she is "betrayed by these strengths, trapped in society's eye between proper male and female behavior" (230). Kundert-

Gibbs refers to Martha's childlessness, and notes that in the time of the play's production, motherhood was the only area in this world through which women were allowed to create a life of their own, so the fact that Martha has no children is not only central to the play, but also a sign of Martha's being a failure "of society's gender expectations" in heteronormative society (232). Here, Kundert-Gibbs' interpretation is in line with the traditional patriarchal thinking.

*Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* impels us to think about family and sexuality in the era of queer theory. In addition, Akira Hongo explores "the significance of homosexuality" represented by the characters in the play (41). In this regard, Philip C Kolin cites an interview by Albee hinting, "a number of the movie critics of the play have repeated the speculation that the play was written about four homosexuals disguised as heterosexual men and women" (52). This shows that critics have tended to undertake a gay reading of the play. John M. Clum has remarked how Albee has been criticized:*

Albee has been attacked from all sides: by Kauffmann for being closeted and, therefore, distorting the truth of heterosexual relationships and by Gilbert for being closeted and, therefore, distorting the truth about heterosexual relationships, women, and homosexual relationships. Many critics who insisted 'the disguised homosexual influence' really showed their fear of admitting the existence of strong women as represented by Martha who show overt sexual desire or the couple who enjoy fierce verbal attacks against each other. (148)

John M. Clum notes how Albee has been criticized for distorting the truth as he has explored the issue of gender ambiguity.

In the same way, Zwagerman offers a reading of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf "as a performance of the terminal unhappiness, the dead end, of the verbal gender conflicts . . . the failure of performative acts and the failure of gender equality as it relates to linguistic agency" (105). He asserts that Albee "deconstructs humorous talk to expose its ultimate infelicity, and that of communication in general, right down to its locutionary roots" (105). In Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, it is portrayed that although humor is on the surface playful and potent, it is "ultimately a failed, unhappy speech act, representative of the generalized failure of performative speech to conceive significant social or interpersonal change" (105). As it is seen through the play, Martha regards George as her equal. In her dealing with George, She exercises an equal authority over words and "a full appropriation of aggressive, sexual, masculine humor" (105). Martha employs aggressive sexual masculine jokes and humour which makes her behavior masculine. In this sense, the play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf is a play about the importance of equality between men and women. That is, Martha can do with words everything which George can. In "Edward Albee: the Poet of Loss," Stenz asserts that Martha is the depiction of a potentially powerful human being who is "discouraged by family, education and society from having personal goals," so she "dissipates" her great energy in vain, "vicarious living" (40). She is the victim of her lack of self-esteem and also "her own thwarted aggressiveness" (40). She is an example of an unfulfilled person (43). She is more interested in the idea of what she could become through a man rather than the man himself (42). In fact, she "seeks identity in the life of the man she married" (40). This reflects her search for equality with men in twentieth century America.

Many critics have tended to examine the theme of illusion/reality in the plays in the decade which passed since the play opened on Broadway. In this regard

Thomas P. Adler notes:

Albee's conclusion, however, may be less ambiguous if we no longer insist on the centrality of the illusion/reality theme, thus removing ourselves from any temptation to conclude, along with Richard Gilman, that Albee 'wants to say something' - or about truth. Far from ambiguity or cliché, the play's predominantly hopeful conclusion contains a large measure of profundity. (66)

Here, Adler regards the conclusion of the play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf hopeful because the characters in the play finally are made to see the reality of human condition. The characters try to be happy by flouting the social norms and values.

Similarly, Ruth Meyer explores the theme of truth and illusion. He examines how the characters in the play conceal their flaws – reality. This creates conflict among them. As Meyer views:

Language is a principal means by which Albee achieves this "comedy of concealments." The dialogue of the characters which reveals and conceals identity establishes the ambiguity between truth and illusion and in part accounts for the violent disagreement among the critics so as to the "message" of the play. For example, George's use of clichés reveals a characteristic of his personality; at the same time, it protects him from any exposure of real identity. (61)

The acts of concealment in the play and the truths that the characters reveal about themselves may not be true, which creates ambiguity in the play. All these activities of the characters question established truths about society and people.

As regards the other female characters of the play, Phyllis Dircks, in Edward Albee: A Literary Companion, notes that Martha and Honey are different in their attitude to having a child. Honey, at some point in the play, reveals that her illness is due to the fact that she is taking a substance to prevent pregnancy. So, she reveals her fear of pregnancy and the fact that her immaturity has impeded her natural desire for motherhood. Alcohol is “the attractive and readily available anodyne” to soothe her inner conflicts (70). At first sight, Nick seems to represent success as he is a promising young academic, and the desirable object of Martha’s advances. Nick and Honey’s marriage is revealed as an act of necessity due to Honey’s pregnancy. His academic position is undermined by Martha who announces him as being sexually impotent. Thus, Nick is another example of “the failure that comes between potential and performance” (Zwagerman 117). Here, Albee portrays males as powerless and females as powerful. This rejects the traditional stereotyping of gender identity and roles.

Dashrath Gatt analyzes the play from postmodern perspective. Albee’s play is a depiction of human relations in a chaotic academic world of mid-twentieth century America where failures of high expectations cause loss of warmth in human relations in familial as well as professional walks of life. In Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf the playwright covers a journey from separation caused by harbouring of false illusions in a demanding society to a contented reunion at the realization and acceptance of reality. Gatt remarks:

Devoid of any freshness in ideas or actions, not to speak of their appearances, all the characters appear an image of gloom and frustrations. The action in the play mainly revolves around the moves and verbal volleys of George and Martha who spare no opportunity in insulting the other, and Martha outshines her husband in this field by calling him a 'pig'. The constant acrimony between the husband and wife is the result of their incompatibility on account of their varied aspirations and goals in life. (132)

*Like his renowned predecessors and contemporaries, Albee delved deep into the human psyche to unravel the complexities of the human mind in a time of pulls and pressures. So, unlike the reviews, this research analyzes the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* from Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective.*

In general terms, schizophrenia is a psychiatric disorder characterized by hallucinations, delusions and impairment in the perception or expression of reality. People who suffer from schizophrenic behaviour often have trouble knowing how to differentiate the real from the imaginary, because the boundaries that demarcate the ego or self are distorted. They often experience multiple senses of self. These senses haunt the mind through psychotic hallucinations of visions or voices. It often seems as though several different characters live in a schizophrenic individual's mind. A schizophrenic person has paranoid or bizarre delusions, disorganized speech and thinking. Such a person faces the problem of significant social dysfunction as well. As a result, he is unable to establish proper relationship as normal capacities of communication are severely damaged. These symptoms are involuntary and uncontrollable, so the schizophrenic's subjectivity is shattered causing delirium.

Deleuze and Guattari believe that such psychotic delirium results from oppressive capitalism's inhibitions of an individual's freedom. Deleuze and Guattari see the schizophrenic as capitalism's "exterminating angel" (qtd. in Murray 156). For them, the schizo is a radical, revolutionary, nomadic wanderer who resists all forms of oppressive power. They claim that schizophrenic sensibilities can challenge and replace ideological and dogmatic political goals with a radical form of productive desire. This "desiring-production" brings the unconscious into the real, and helps unleash its radical potential. Productive desire includes the "group psychosis" inspired by radical postmodern artistic creations and political movements. Desiring-production is not limited to clinical schizophrenics. Rather, it brings out the schizophrenic potential in everyone to resist the power of repressive capitalist ideology.

In fact, it is the capitalism which produces 'schizos' in society. But the schizophrenic is put in institutions under strict observation and treated as a patient under "confined clinical entity" (245). Deleuze and Guattari believe that the schizophrenic really represents the culture of capitalism. So, 'schizos' should be celebrated as heroes and heroines in contemporary capitalist society as Deleuze and Guattari conclude:

Schizophrenia is the exterior limit of capitalism itself or the conclusion of its deepest tendency, but that capitalism only functions on condition that it inhibit this tendency, or that it push back or displace this limit... Hence schizophrenia is not the identity of capitalism, but on the contrary its difference, its divergence, and its death. (246)

As capitalism exploits every field of socio-political life, it reaches a limit at which point it must artificially make itself strong by strengthening the state apparatus, and repressive bureaucracy and regimes. On the other hand, the schizophrenic never

reaches any limitation and boundary. Thus, a schizophrenic resists such repressive activities of capitalism.

According to Freud and Lacan, the desire is associated with lack. But, for Deleuze and Guattari a schizophrenic cannot experience lack. For an individual, the unconscious is not fantastical but productive. Desire itself produces the real and creates new world which is different from the recognized and the accepted one. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari see schizophrenia as a central part of a subversive postmodern politics with the radical potential to bring down capitalism. As schizophrenic logic allows for the inclusion of many heterogeneous and different elements within a single subject, schizophrenic strategies are helpful in coping with a totalizing or repressive capitalist system.

In the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, the major character Martha tries to escape from the reality of oppressive patriarchal norms and values. So, she creates an illusory world of fantasy where she acts as an aggressive male. This makes her a schizophrenic character who at various stages flouts the enforced traditional gender roles assigned by capitalist ideology. Martha assumes the role of oppressive male as she shouts, gives orders and humiliates her husband. At times, she makes fun of him and repeatedly accuses him of knowing nothing. She seems to be imitating the socially recognized role of a man in a traditional society. So, in the eyes of conservative males, Martha's act seems insane. By the middle of Act II, George and Martha declare "total war" on each other (175). As the conflict between the husband and wife grows serious, Martha tries to develop a close relationship with Nick. This attempt of Martha breaks the conventional rule of patriarchal values as her behaviour leans more towards insanity. Thus, her 'insane' actions have subversive nature as Deleuze and Guattari suggest.

Conventional psychiatry sees insanity and weirdness as a problem of the mind. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari see insanity and madness as an opportunity to overthrow capitalist society. They view that schizophrenics do not distinguish between personal and social experiences. Because for the schizophrenics, to say and to act are the same thing. Thus, the relationship between word and action, wish and act is direct and immediate. As Deleuze and Guattari remark:

The schizophrenic passes from one code to the other, that he deliberately scrambles all the codes, by quickly shifting from one to another, according to the questions asked him, never giving the same explanation from one day to the next, never invoking the same genealogy, never recording the same event in the same way. (15)

In this sense, schizophrenia works for liberation as Deleuze and Guattari state. In the first place, desire must be at the centre, because desire is revolutionary in nature. For them, capitalist power cannot tolerate the revolutionary potential of desire because only desire possesses the power to challenge capitalism.

From the very beginning of the play, Martha's insane activities such as vulgarity and aggressiveness can be observed. This is often the characteristic of male behaviour in patriarchal society. George and Martha speak a language of violence, shouting at one another, name-calling, indulging in abusive language. This shows a comic tone, through which they attempt to attack the repressive nature of patriarchy. She tells George, "I don't know what you're so tired about . . . you haven't done anything all day; you didn't have any classes or anything . . . You didn't do anything; you never do anything; you never mix. You just sit around and talk" (7-8). On the very first page of the play, Martha scolds George saying, "What a cluck! What a cluck you are . . . You pig" (3, 17). She shows a tendency to take control of everything.

Sometimes she even imitates the children's way of talking as when she says, "I'm firsty" instead of saying "I'm thirsty" (17). At this, George replies, "What do you want me to do? Do you want me to go around all night braying at everybody, the way you do?" (8). She refuses to be treated as the good, loving wife and caring mother. At other times, Martha acts like a "monster" in the house as George calls her, "some subhuman monster yowling at 'em from inside . . . ?" (20). George compares Martha's behaviour with aggressiveness manner of monster. Significantly, Martha is constantly trying to take on the male role because when we imagine an image of a monster we generally associate it with maleness or manliness. This act of Martha is a schizophrenic reaction to the oppressive patriarchal culture.

Deleuze and Guattari say that schizophrenia "is the direct or unfettered expression of a naturally rebellious desire", as opposed to "an aberration, an exception to the norm that is the result of a neurological, psychobiographical, or sociological problem" (qtd. in Woods 157). According to Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia becomes displaced or dispersed. It no longer remains the area of pathology, but "a deterritorializing process" which "swiftly dismisses the interdisciplinary debate concerning its aetiology" (qtd. in Woods 158). The political implication of dispersed schizophrenia arises from its uncontrolled higher aspects. It moves beyond its simple therapeutic area of clinical psychoanalysis. Its real working, that is the revolutionary schizos, can freely work and disrupt and subvert the capitalist mechanism. Yet, as Woods has already explained, it is unclear from Deleuze and Guattari's explanation as to what really differentiates the schizo from the schizophrenic. However, Deleuze and Guattari schizos or schizophrenics move beyond the boundary of social and psychic organization, therapeutic intervention and theoretical representation breaking any kind of limitation,

Schizophrenia must in some sense remain resolutely exterior to capitalism; it must exceed the boundaries of social and psychic organization, refuse interpretation and interpretive closure, and resist therapeutic intervention and theoretical representation. This is certainly an anti-fascist mode of being, as Foucault famously declared in the preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, but it is anti almost everything else as well. This model takes the concept of micro-politics to new extremes, radically undermining all forms of collective and individual political action. (qtd. in Woods 160)

Supporting the position of Deleuze and Guattari, Woods concludes that schizo is not only anti-Oedipus, he is anti-society, anti-politics, and most importantly anti-capitalist.

In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Martha does not act as society demands a woman to act. Her activities are thus anti-social. In an environment filled with anger and rage, Martha counters George's accusation that she's a "monster." She asserts:

MARTHA: I'm loud and I'm vulgar, and I wear the pants in the house because somebody's got to, but I am not a monster. I'm not.

GEORGE: You're a spoiled, self-indulgent, willful, dirty-minded, liquor-ridden . . .

MARTHA: SNAP! It went snap. Look, I'm not going to try to get through to you anymore. . . I'm not going to try. There was a second back there, maybe, there was a second, just a second when I could have gotten through to you, when maybe we could have cut through all this crap. (173-74)

This is an important scene in the play as it exposes how Martha does the things which are not recognized by the traditional gender-based society. Women were supposed to be, especially during that era, docile, proper and well-mannered, which is the essence of traditional notion of femininity. But, Martha behaves like a man as she possesses masculine behaviour. Martha is shown as a rebellious woman who at various stages in the play challenges the enforced gender norms. The most shocking thing Martha does is drink large amount of alcohol as George remarks: "My God, you can swill it down, can't you" (17). She drinks strong alcohol as strong-muscled boys gulp down neat and strong whiskey. As she acts like a man, George calls her "spoiled, self-indulgent, willful, dirty-minded, liquor-ridden" which are conventionally associated with male activities (207). George is helpless in front of Martha's alcoholic and sexual behaviour, her vulgar and dirty manner in public, her filling the house with "empty bottles, lies, strange men . . ." (240). So, Martha's act subverts traditional stereotyping of feminine gender, which is a capitalistic socio-cultural construct.

Steven Best and Douglas Kellner support Deleuze and Guattari's notion of schizianalysis as having subversive nature as their intention is to design schizoanalysis as a 'weapon' that "deconstructs modern binaries and breaks with modern theories of the subject, representational modes of thought, and totalizing practice" (85). Thus, Best and Kellner reiterate the fact that schizoanalysis ruptures every binary in society be it gender or anything.

In the process of going beyond the traditional notion of gender, Martha moves beyond those social and cultural norms and expectations because as a 'monster' she is an abnormality. This offers a challenge to the established social norms. In addition to the strange activities in which George and Martha involve themselves, Martha does not only deny a certain gender or approve another by mimicking masculinity. In fact,

by acting eccentric, she tries to deconstruct the binary of conventional notion of gender. In the play, Martha's father has failed to have a male heir. This incident has motivated Martha to have her father's desire fulfilled, which she does by assuming male identity. So, she exudes a pervasive display of masculine characteristics or traits. One of the advantages Martha has is that she is older than George; she has actively courted him. Martha has been sexually active and has chosen her own husband. It was a blow on the patriarchy when her father had her marriage cancelled because it was not proper for a woman to be sexual or to make her own decisions. George himself comments on how Martha's sexual expression is improper as he remarks "your skirt up over your head" (18). This very well shows her as a female with independent thinking who believes in living her life according to her own terms and conditions. In terms of physique, she is just opposite of the ideal notion of a perfect lady by being plump and fat instead of having a lean and thin feminine physique. Besides, she is far more aggressive in an open, harsh way. As males have traditionally tended to subordinate women, Martha tries to disgrace George after he has explicitly warned her against her behavior. Here, she assumes domineering male characteristics. This is a stereotypical masculine pattern of behaviour, while George is given the feminine attributes.

In front of the domineering Martha, George appears to be submissive from the very beginning. He looks helpless and powerless as Martha humiliates and insults him. When she chides him, George submissively says, "I'm tired, dear . . . it's late . . . and besides . . ." (7). Martha does not care about the traditionally assigned gender roles. What she does at the moment is that she is bent upon challenging the accepted gender identity. She orders him to do things and refuses to obey him though he becomes defiant later. She behaves and treats her husband as if she is the male figure. Martha

wants to break free from the conventional role played by a woman in being disloyal, aggressive and disrespectful to her husband George. The following dialogue between Martha and George shows how the couple tends to assume opposite roles assigned by capitalist patriarchy:

MARTHA: Hey, put some more ice in my drink, will you? You never put any ice in my drink. Why is that, hunh?

GEORGE: (Takes her drink) I always put ice in your drinks. You eat it, that's all.

It's this habit you've . . . chewing on your ice cubes . . . like a cocker spaniel. You'll crack your big teeth. (15)

The above mentioned dialogue describes the unusual kind of behavior between the husband and wife as they take on opposite gender roles assigned to them in patriarchal society. By presenting this act, Albee subverts the lines between fixed categories of gender through the characters who denounce the gender binaries. A college-educated woman, Martha always humiliates her husband for his lack of ambition and professional failures. The way the characters behave shows the fluidity of gender, because each one of them seems to shift between genders at different times and in different contexts, rather than holding onto a fixed stereotypical gender role assigned to them. The characters do not obediently follow the norms gender identity of capitalistic society. As the female characters assume the masculine nature, they act out the masculine roles.

George's life is surrounded by illusion. He never was able to succeed in anything he attempts and Martha finds joy in attacking him emotionally for this. He first wrote a novel which Martha's father refused to publish. The storyline is first brought up through him telling Nick a story from his adolescence. It's the story of his

friend who kills both of his parents and ends up institutionalized. When it is brought up in Act 1 by Martha, she presents it by saying "well, Georgie boy had lots of big ambitions in spite of something funny in his past. . . . Which Georgie boy here turned into a novel. . . . His first attempt and his last . . ." (149). This makes the reader question if his friend was actually himself.

Regardless of who it was about, George is angry that Martha brought up his novel because it shows a weakness about him. The novel was one of his ways of escaping reality and even that was put down. He had hopes of his novel become a success and instead he has to live with Martha who insists on telling everyone that he is a "great . . . big . . . fat . . . Flop!" (93). The biggest illusion in George's own life is the mystery behind whether the tragic novel he wrote was an autobiographical story or just a piece of fiction.

As a result of his professional frustration, George feels threatened by up-and-coming young faculty members like Nick and tries to compensate through showy displays of intellectual superiority. George appears to have been responsible for the deaths of both of his parents, in two separate accidents which Martha claims were intentional. He is clearly traumatized by this fact, and tells Nick the story as if it had happened to someone else.

As a domineering woman, Martha comes across as a strong, loud, drunk and violent in the play, which demonstrates her masculine attributes. She is an energetic woman who is described as a powerful person by her husband "Martha had her daguerreotype in the paper once . . . oh 'bout twenty-five years ago seems she took second prize in one o' them seven days dancing contest things . . . "biceps bulging, holding up her partner" (141). Here, George defeminizes the image of Martha dancing with images of male athleticism.

Martha's bizarre acts are even further emphasized by George's comparative weakness or femininity. George appears as quite feminine compared to the strong Martha. During a conversation between Nick and George, George claims he has been trying for years to "clean up the mess" he made (113). Here, the 'mess' symbolizes his marriage with Martha: "Accommodation, malleability, adjustment . . . those do seem to be in the order of things, don't they?" (114). While Martha adjusts herself to the manly role of the husband, George's unmanly character is revealed throughout the play. The other male character Nick on the other hand, refuses to relate to George's character, and he tells him specifically: "Don't try to put me in the same class with you!" (114). Nick's inability to relate to George's problem can be read as his unwillingness to imagine a male who is not conventionally masculine. Nick thinks that a man, who cannot fulfill his wife's needs, is incompatible with the hetero-normative male role. What Albee seems to be depicting here is two men representing the male gender category in very different ways because compared to the strong, masculine Nick, George emerges as weak and emasculated person.

George's continuous process of falling into emasculation is described throughout the play. In one of the instances, when George lights Martha's cigarette, it foreshadows his defeat as a masculine figure and thus subversion of traditional gender identity. On the other hand, asking George to light her cigarette reflects her desire to add more strength to her masculine attitude. This symbol has first been hinted at in the first act, when George refuses to light Martha's cigarette:

GEORGE: . . . Can I get you something?

MARTHA: . . . Well . . . uh . . . sure, you can light my cigarette, if you're of a mind to.

GEORGE: [considers, then moves off]: No . . . there are limits. I mean,
a man can put up with only so much without he descends a rung
or two on the old evolutionary ladder . . . [Now a quick aside to
NICK] . . . which is up your line. (54-55)

Out of fear or respect, George offers his wife to serve her. Another interpretation of the symbol of lighting cigarette reflects George's inability to light up Martha's sex life. In other words, George has failed to fulfill his masculine role of satisfying his wife. Whereas, Martha has become more outspoken in terms of expressing her desires as males have traditionally done.

Although he never gets angry with Martha, George's rage is indicative of his vulnerability and weakness. He feels humiliated as he cries:

GEORGE: You can sit there in the chair of yours . . . with the gin
running out of your mouth, and you can humiliate me you
can tear me apart... All NIGHT ... and that's perfectly
alright . . . that's O.K. . . .

MARTHA: YOU CAN STAND IT.

GEORGE: I CANNOT STAND IT.

MARTHA: YOU CAN STAND IT! YOU MARRIED ME FOR IT!!

(A Silence)

GEORGE (Quietly): That is desperately sick lie.

MARTHA: DON'T YOU KNOW IT EVEN YET?

GEORGE (shaking his head): Oh . . . Martha. (170)

Despite Martha's outrageous activities, George cares for Martha and constantly reminds her to get out of the world of illusion. To bring her out of her illusory world as he says: ". . . I don't mind your dirty under things in public . . . well I do mind, but

I have reconciled myself to that . . . but you've moved bag and baggage in to your own fantasy world now, and you've started playing variations on your own distortions . . . (259). All this shows how Martha is trying to subvert patriarchal capitalistic ideology through her imagination and fantasy.

George is aware of her wife's obsession with illusive world. In her acts, Martha is powerful while George has lost his power, so he tries to seek some new means of fighting Martha. The following dialogue between the couple reveals this:

MARTHA: Well, I guess you didn't get the whole story. What's the matter with you, George? You given up?

GEORGE: No . . . no. it's just I've got to figure out some new way to fight you, Martha. Guerrilla tactics, may be . . . internal subversion . . . I don't know. Something. (139)

Her schizophrenic acts have put Martha at advantage over her counterpart as it has helped her assert freedom and liberty. Here, George is presented as a meek man rather than a patriarchal masculine figure of a husband; he is not able to manipulate the situation to dominate in the house. It is Martha who rules in the house. Martha, the harsh and aggressive housewife seems to lack emotionality and sentimental behavior.

Every time she deconstructs established values though she is living in a society where there is a tendency towards stereotyping women, and she is unconsciously under the influence of the socially and culturally accepted norms. She is influenced by the powerful figure of her father as she always refers to her father in every instance such as "Well, Daddy knows how to run things" (28). She is consequently forced to seek identity through her father and to achieve her deferred dreams through her husband's career.

Martha's father appears to be a figure of obsession for her in the play. It seems as if Martha has idealized her father and he has a great influence over her life. She refers to her father several times in the play. She draws on what her father thinks, believes and says. She always boasts that her father is the president of the department, and she tries to seek her identity through her father. Influenced by her father's interest in boxing, Martha has beaten George as she mentions to Nick, ". . . and George wheeled around real quick, and he caught it right in the jaw . . . Pow ! (Nick laughs)" (61). Martha's self identity is in part formed through her submission to her father, and later on, her submission to the male dominated society. Her formation as a subject is related to her realization of the role of her father in her life. As the male figure of her father has dominated and influenced her life to a great extent, Martha behaves in a masculine manner to become influential in relation to her male counterparts.

George's role in the play is eccentric as he is a man who has failed to play the typical masculine role of being financially and professionally a successful supporter of the family. In addition, the characters' acts resemble to that of paranoia and schizophrenia in social structure. Citing Deleuze and Guattari, Eugene W. Holland states that paranoia represents "what is archaic in capitalism, the resuscitation of the obsolete, rigid, belief-centred modes of social organization. Whereas schizophrenia embodies capitalism's positive potentials: freedom, ingenuity, and permanent revolution" (3). So, schizophrenia has liberating quality. It frees an individual from all kinds of barriers.

In the play, a schizophrenic Martha enjoys all kinds of freedom as she does not obey the rules of patriarchy. This can be figured out through Martha's frequent, humiliating and rude references to George's failures in different respects: "I hope that was an empty bottle, George. You don't want to waste good liquor . . . not on your

salary. Not on an Associate Professor's salary" (93). She also freely laughs at George's attempt to publish a book, which was a flop:

MARTHA. Well, Georgie-boy had lots of big ambitions.

In spite of something funny in his past . . . Which Georgie-boy here turned into a novel. But Daddy took a look at Georgie's novel.

GEORGE. Stop it, Martha!

MARTHA. And Daddy said . . . Look here; I will not let you publish such a thing . . . (149-150)

Martha always expresses her anger towards George and the disappointment he has caused to her and her father. Her father has been an important figure of authority, whose presence and power has always influenced Martha's life and her relationship with George has shaped her relationship with him as well because Martha's father obviously embodies the spirit of patriarchy. He indirectly manipulates Martha and her life as he has motivated her into abiding by his decisions and demands absolute conformity. This is what Martha tries to emulate from her father.

Martha and George show their reality; that is their real identity, even if they consciously involve themselves in an act of seeming different. They give the impression that they are escaping from their reality in a world of illusion. In fact, Albee's intention to do so is to deconstruct the traditional patriarchal ideology. Their pretending act thus questions or challenges the patriarchal social order. Although their act might seem unusual to the audience's framed mentality as the audience was constantly and unconsciously affected by what the society and culture dictates to them as the appropriate behavior to expect from a man and a woman. As Martha finds no way other than defining herself through men – daddy, husband, and son in the

patriarchal set up, she imitates their male chauvinist attitude to counter patriarchy. Having failed to have a son or husband who can run a department at college, she finds herself desperately sad and unsuccessful. When George tries to physically challenge Martha to rip her to pieces, Martha retorts: "You aren't man enough . . . you haven't got the guts" (175). She makes fun of George and blames him for his inability to succeed and get a promotion at work, and attaches herself to an imaginary son who is beautiful and strong. As Martha has experienced the subordinate roles of females in capitalist society, she finds discrimination between males and females, which motivates Martha to raise her voice through schizophrenic acts.

When George provokes Martha toward the end of act two however, Martha flirts unashamedly with Nick, and dances closely with him. Martha deliberately flirts with Nick to hurt and provoke George. George observes her acts and responds to her provocation with contempt as Martha says, "Never mind that I said I was necking with one of the guests" (188). George's coolness irritates her. However, when Nick tries to pass a remark that George has no self respect she instantly counters him by saying: "you don't hunh? You don't' think so . . ." (172). Nick's assertion that he is better than most of them does not stop Martha from stating that he is like anybody else and there is nothing special about him.

George and Martha are not the only characters of the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* who seem to take on subversive acts. Honey seems to be the nice sweet housewife of the play. In the beginning, she behaves in a normal manner. However, as the play moves on, she gets drunk, begins to protest, and declares her dissatisfaction. Thus, Honey and Nick, just like the other couple, are suffering from difficulties in their relationship and their interaction with the world outside. In spite of what appears at the surface, Honey faces a lot of problems regarding the decision to

become a parent, and finds herself in conflict with her role as a woman, wife and a mother. She appears to be a typical woman—a submissive one yearning for a child though she earlier refused to have one as she says "I want a child. I want a baby" (236). However, when she gets drunk, she acts as a freak and becomes violent. In the same way, Nick looks like a man who does not behave in a masculine way in spite of being an athlete who has also a well-formed body. Martha tells him, "you sure are a flop" (199). Contrary to what Nick appears to be, it is shown that he is not so much of a masculine figure. He is a failure in his male role as Martha remarks, "I wasn't talking about your potential; I was talking about your goddamn performance" (199). Here, Nick's acts connote multiple meanings. Nick is a failure in his profession as well as in sexual matters as he suffers from impotency. So, she humiliates him and questions his strength as a man, calls him a "houseboy", saying, "You can be houseboy around here for awhile" (205). Here, she likens him as having feminine qualities. The two major male characters George and Nick tend to remain submissive in front of female characters. So, their act subverts traditional stereotyping of capitalist gender norms.

There are culturally assigned roles for them, but they resist them in some way or another; Martha by being harsh and vulgar, Honey by getting drunk, George by refusing to act like the controlling authoritative man. He even ignores it when he realizes that his wife is openly flirting with Nick. He goes outside the house, instead of intruding upon them, and tries to end their game in a way that puts him in the upper hand position.

As a result, the characters of the play act as if they have dynamic genders. In order to rupture the line between patriarchal gender binary, Albee does not draw a line between man and woman, and between what is considered masculine and feminine.

The playwright Albee brings into light the problems of men and women of this play, who protest against the socially constructed gender roles attributed to their bodies. They are involved in an unconscious and at times conscious attempt to take control of their bodies so as to redefine their gender identities.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the main task for a society, either in the form of despotic or capitalist, has always been to repress and dominate desire, to centralize power within its closed system or its state apparatuses. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "to code desire—and the fear, the anguish of decoded flows—is the business of the socius" (139). For them, even socialization is just a process of this process:

We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of any mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and the relations of production. There is only desire and the social, and nothing else. (Deleuze and Guattari 38)

It is exactly for this reason that "the deterritorialization of the socius . . . constitutes the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism" (Deleuze and Guattari 34). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the form of desire found within a society also determines its structure. For them, there are two kinds of desire in society: the paranoid and the schizophrenic. The paranoid and the schizophrenic desires suggest two different sides of delusion: paranoid and schizophrenic. While paranoid desire is despotic, schizophrenic desire is liberating. Paranoid society is a society that is built on the authoritarian structures and vertical hierarchal orders. But

schizophrenic society has small horizontal communities that have no hierarchy. This kind of society is the most liberated one.

In the play, Martha represents this horizontal community where she enjoys the unlimited freedom. She is so obsessed with her self-illusory world, so she tries to escape from reality. She fantasizes about her imaginary son. While Martha insists on affirming the imaginary son, George vehemently denies it.

GEORGE: Martha . . . I can hardly bring myself to say it . . . (sighing heavily) Well, Martha . . . I'm afraid our boy isn't coming home for his birthday.

MARTHA: Of course, he is.

GEORGE: No, Martha.

MARTHA: Of course, he is. I say he is!

GEORGE: Martha . . . (Long pause) . . . our son is . . . dead. (245)

George's sterility makes Martha to take on masculine attributes. This is how George's sterility directly affects her life, motivating her to act like males. Martha indirectly refers to his sterility in this way: ". . . that maybe George boy didn't have the stuff . . . that he didn't have it in him!" (92). This line reflects George's sterility. So, George's failure in his career as well as procreation makes Martha's life meaningless. As a result, she resorts to bouts of drink, which is one of the recurring symbols in the play.

George and Martha cherish their fantasy of the child because the child is created as an escape from the reality and to forget their sterility. Martha is very fond of this imaginative child. Her happiness in bringing up the child as a real mother is clear in her explanation of the child. She describes how they celebrate his birthdays, describes him in a loving manner, and pictures his colour of eyes, his pranks, his toys, and the banana boat made for him on Saturday nights. "Martha's dedication to the

child is apparent: She is almost lyrical in describing the child: "And I had wanted the child." George sparks her memory: "A son? A daughter?" Martha responds deliberately, "A child! (Quieter) A child. And I had a child" (298). When she describes him as "beautiful", George comments, "There is a real mother talking" (298).

In the opening scenes, we can see that, Nick and Honey believed that the child really exists. Throughout the play, illusion seems impossible to differentiate from reality. But finally George understands that Martha cannot escape from that illusion and he kills their imaginary child. And for this he finds out a reason that she disclosed the secret to an outsider. In the older version of the play at the outset itself George warns Martha not to disclose about their secret about the kid. This part is entirely omitted from the latest edition of the play. Martha broke the rule and reveals the secret to Honey: "All right. Our son. Our son was born in a September night, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty . . . one . . . years ago". (295) She adds "it was an easy birth. . ." "and I was young, and he was a healthy child, a red bawling child, with slippery firm limbs . . ." (295). At this point, the humiliated and emasculated husband in George comes out. He wants to take revenge on his wife, who was insulting him in front of the guests. Moreover, he is afraid that Martha is not able to escape from illusion. So he announces the death of their son. He says that he got a telegram which reports their son's death in a car accident. Martha is shocked and says he has no right to kill him:

MARTHA. You have no right . . . you have no right at all.

GEORGE. I have the right Martha. We never spoke of it; that's all. I could kill him any time I wanted to.

MARTHA. But why? Why?

GEORGE. You broke the rule, baby. You mentioned him . . . You mentioned him to someone else” (307).

We see that he has the right because Martha has found the secret to the outside world and moreover, it was he, who created the child to alleviate Martha's sorrow of being childless. Martha is broken. Her image as the Earth-mother is destroyed to the outer world. She became infertile. She is forced to face the reality. Thus the unfulfilled mother Martha is attempting to face the unknown future and there is only George is there to console her.

As a general practice, patriarchal society demands that women have to be submissive. But Martha escapes into the world of illusion through repetition of masculine behaviour. She tries to resist the current discourses of her society in some way or other. Nevertheless, her subversion takes place within the existing patriarchal discursive structure. She tries to imitate male behavior befitting male attributes in patriarchal society.

By going against socially established norms and repeating, especially the female characters deconstruct a set of norms under gender normativity. These are the norms imposed by the power structures and discourses of the society. They seem to have been perennially engaged in creating different identity. From their point of view, their acts seem appropriate and natural. But under existing patriarchal socio-cultural order, they are placed outside culture and considered anti-establishment. So, in an attempt to escape from oppressive reality, the female characters especially Martha and takes on subversive acts as she resists the discourses and institutional powers of traditional patriarchal society.

Schizophrenic sensibilities can replace ideological and dogmatic political goals with a radical form of productive desire. This “desiring-production” brings the

unconscious into the real, and unleashes its radical world-making potential.

Productive desires are not self-centered but they include the 'group psychosis.' This is inspired by radical postmodern artistic creations and political movements. So, desiring-production is not limited to clinical schizophrenics. But it unfolds the schizophrenic potential in everyone to resist the power of authoritarian tendency and capitalist centralization.

To sum up, the analysis of the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* describes how, in an attempt to escape into illusory world, the major character Martha questions the existing capitalist patriarchal norms and values. From the very beginning of the play, Martha acts as a schizophrenic character as she humiliates and insults George who is submissive. She is loud, vulgar, shrewd, intelligent, assertive, sexual and outspoken. This reflects the opposite of the traditional notion of femininity. And in many ways, Martha's bold acts seem to be anti-establishment of the traditional patriarchal society. She rebukes George giving him orders to do things. She treats her husband as if she is the male figure in the house. She continually shouts at George for not doing anything substantial. His sterility makes her feign her own sterility. This makes her even bolder and harsher. So, she asserts that she is compelled to wear the pants to compensate for George's failure in life. George serves her submissively catering to her every whim like a conventional housewife. To appear like males, Martha organizes parties at home and drinks freely. Drink is one of the reigning symbols, which is associated with capitalist attributes in patriarchal society. Martha's unsympathetic, harsh and aggressive nature lacks emotional and sentimental nature required of women's traditional identity. This is her deliberate attempt to question capitalist patriarchal values, which she does by frequently lapsing into the world of illusion.

In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, the characters are not portrayed as sane human beings. Their oscillation between real and imaginary world helps to attack capitalist ideology. Martha smokes and shouts a lot and flirts with Nick in front of her husband lacks sensitivity and craves for a son who could bring meaning and happiness to her life. She lacks emotions such as love and appreciation, something which she not only refrains from admitting directly, but also insists on portraying the contrary.

Martha's insane actions are substantiated by her obsession with the powerful and influential male figure that she idolizes her father and often brings his reference in the house. Moreover, her fantasizing of imaginary son substantiates her longing for masculine power. Therefore, Martha always tries to be like her father as she frequently talks about her father.

In this way, Martha's deliberate abnormality creates conflict between the Martha and George at home. As schizophrenic subject is beyond all logical categories, she becomes a schizophrenic subject, which is incoherent and uncategorizable. This act of Martha helps her to challenge repressive capitalist ideology because her acts go beyond the totalizing and hierarchal notion of the state.

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