

The Neurosis of Blackness and Psychological Trauma in Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith*

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Abstract

Edward Albee (1928-2016), as a playwright, indicates that art should be useful and have a message. Therefore, his work foregrounds and critically examines issues concerning the neurosis of blackness and psychological trauma. Albee uses cruelty of racism in reflecting psychological trauma and emotional abuse of American black identity in his plays. Race, social inequality, and gender still sustain to engender controversy audience consciously. Racial discrimination is one of the major issues that affect the American Society. Albee challenges and exposes the presumptive dreams of equality of American society and institutional racism. Therefore, one of the main problems of the twentieth century in America is a skin color. It affects every phase of African Americans' life including self-concept and identity which are never resolved, in addition to outlining the reasons and origins of violence as a cause of white-dominated supremacy. In his, work Albee gives different insights and meanings to those elusive dreams, showing that the consequences of such unfulfilled dreams are disappointment, despair, and death. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of psychological trauma and emotional abuse of the racial distinction in Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1956) and its effect on the elusive dreams such the dream of turning white, liberty and equality of Afro-Americans.

Keywords: elusive dreams, the cruelty of racism, the neurosis of blackness, the presumptive equality, psychological trauma.

عصاب السواد والصدمة النفسية في مسرحية وفاة بيسي سميث لأدوارد ألبى

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المخلص

يشير إدوارد ألبى ، كمؤلف مسرحي ، إلى أن الفن يجب أن يكون مفيداً ولديه رسالة. لذلك فإنه يعالج القضايا المتعلقة بمفهوم عصاب السواد والصدمة النفسية. يستخدم ألبى قسوة العنصرية في عكس الصدمة النفسية والإساءة العاطفية للهوية السوداء الأمريكية في مسرحياته. لا تزال قضايا العرق وعدم المساواة الاجتماعية والجنس تثير الجدل لتحفيز وعي الجمهور. التمييز العنصري هو أحد القضايا الرئيسية التي تؤثر على المجتمع الأمريكي. يتحدى ألبى ويكشف زيف المساواة المفترضة للمجتمع الأمريكي والعنصرية المؤسسية. لذلك ، واحدة من المشاكل الرئيسية في القرن العشرين في أمريكا هي لون البشرة. حيث إنه يؤثر على كل مرحلة من حياة الأفارقة الأمريكيين بما في ذلك مفهوم الذات والهوية التي لم يتم حلها أبداً. بالإضافة إلى تحديد أسباب وجذور العنف كسبب للسيادة البيضاء. يعطي عمل ألبى رؤى ومعاني مختلفة لتلك الأحلام صعبة المنال التي تبين أن

عواقب هذه الأحلام غير المحققة هي خيبة الأمل واليأس والموت. ان الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في تأثير الصدمة النفسية والاعتداء العاطفي للتمييز العنصري في وفاة بيسي سميث إدوارد ألبى (1956) وتأثيرها على الأحلام صعبة المنال مثل حلم التحول إلى الأبيض وحرية ومساواة الأفريقيين الأمريكيين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأحلام صعبة المنال ، وحشية العنصرية, عصاب السود ، المساواة المفترضة ،الصدمة النفسية .

American's Racial Caste System:

Over the past several decades, researchers have increasingly examined the influence of the neurosis of blackness and psychological abuse in the study of literary works. Therefore, this article presents an overview of the complex experiences of racism related to issues of emotional abuse and psychological trauma for colored people which are resulting from the Neurosis of blackness. It means "dream of turning white" (that is, the wish to attain the level of humanity accorded to whites in racist/colonial contexts) as it comes into conflict with one's being in a black body, and in a racist society, which make this wish impossible" (Hook, 2004, p.118). In Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1959), the dramatist explores the core of the destruction and failure of these elusive dreams of black which are confronted by American racism.

Fanon's use of the idea of neurosis of blackness makes it an explicitly social psychological phenomenon, rooted in the specific historical and political contexts. *The Death of Bessie Smith* is a one-act play written by Edward Albee in terms of dreams and values of African-American affairs. Albee is considered as a social critic who is extremely preoccupied with a painful period of American history of the 20th century when the South's aristocracy values are collapsing amidst the pointedly racist judgments of its black citizens. In *The Death of Bessie Smith*, Albee continues to share his social criticism from the viewpoints of his characters like the Nurse, the Orderly, and Bessie Smith who emerge from the core of American society.

In this context, Sanchez-Hucles describes emotional abuse as "consisting of both acts of commission and omission that are psychologically damaging and can be perpetrated by groups or by individuals" (Blitz, 2006, p.16). So the viewpoint that discrimination based on racial group membership can be considered "a specific type of life stressor has received much conceptual and empirical attention over the past few decades" (Contrada, 2000, p.9). Generally, the play is an apparent depiction of a social protest against the white policy of despotism, racism, and oppression towards African Americans. It shows the black resistance against white intimidation, hostility, and violence. The status of Afro-Americans in the American community has always been inferior and basically overlooked within a white-dominated community which was generally accepted. This propensity stems from the heritage of slavery when African Americans were the exclusive possessions of their white master and had seldom any rights. The whites still insisted on considering blacks as inferior which needed to be kept as a subordinate race.

Throughout Sanchez-Hucles' points of view, he indicates that racism can be described as a form of emotional abuse and trauma for ethnic minorities because it involves negation, rejection, and demeaning social messages that undermine self-esteem (Blitz, 2006, p.16). Consequently, even after proclaiming egalitarian rights for African American people, the white population, especially in the South, was confident that their white superiority should be preserved. The whites practiced a policy of despotism, segregation, and racism towards the African American society regardless of the law. They believed that African Americans were doomed to be slaves. As Smith explains: "Over the course of the postwar decades, white southerners, committed to and obsessed with maintaining their supremacy, used every means at

their disposal first to define a special, unequal sphere for African -Americans and then to keep blacks in their place"(Smith,2001,p.4).

The Dream of Struggle for Equality in *The Death of Bessie Smith*:

This paper focuses on the ways Albee uses the neurosis of blackness and psychological abuse and their relation with cruelty in his plays which ultimately connect him to the Theatre of Cruelty and its essential goal of revealing the real image of the world as Albee calls it "to put up an accurate mirror of reality"(Amacher,1969,p.22). Albee is considered one of the most representative figures of the American Theatre due to his individual style of writing, which is an amalgamation of the obvious and the mysterious, the familiar, and revelation so that the audiences can fully comprehend the actuality behind the dreams and illusions of his characters. *The Death of Bessie Smith* is a realistic play that depicts the characters and events from that period based on a historical incident in connection with Bessie Smith's death. Albee's success as a dramatist is due to his ability to dramatize the process of the moral breakdown, the social crises and diseases by combining reality with imagination in criticizing his age "the only dramatist that comes after O'Neill, who shows real growth, and the only one who makes a serious effort to break away from the 'message' plays which have dominated the American theater since O'Neill" (Paolucci,1972, p.7).

This work illustrates how cultural abuse and dreams are used in drama to express psychological problems and perplexities. The term "dream" that is dealt with in this study refers to the African Americans' dream of social equality and prosperity that are converted into elusive dreams and nightmares. This elusive dreams and frustration have emerged from disillusionment and dissatisfaction with lofty ideals inherent in American society. In reference to the psychological abuse of African descent, scholars have highlighted into account both current experiences of discrimination and historical legacies, e.g. slavery, colonization, on which those experiences to gain an accurate understanding of the psychological responses to racial and ethnic discrimination(Bryant-Davis,2007,p.35). Despite the truth that the termination of the servitude and despotism of African Americans, as well as, the tendency irrespective of law of the whites and treat them as marginal creatures specifically in the south is obvious. They were deprived of their human rights and permanently discarded in the American society that is based on racism. Albee's shows that when the dream of equality is distorted or unfulfilled, it will be followed by an endless nightmare and suffering.

Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* embraces and penetrates the illusion of idealism of American society through the regularly encountered of the social injustice and exception on health treatment of blacks. He delves beneath the surface of that society which has seen the collapse of moral, religious and political structures, to reveal a society where intolerance, racism and discrimination are present. So it is "a morality play about the collapse of human values and national purpose"(Bryer and Hartig, 2010,p.125)

Psychological and emotional abuse can negatively affect the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive performance of the individual. In this play, Albee explores a society that suppresses its ideal principles of false freedom that its predecessors had suggested. It is the elusive dream of African Americans which constitutes the essence of self-destruction, disappointment, and failure for those who are looking for self-fulfillment in a society that abhors them. Albee focuses on illusions that screen man from reality and his endeavor is to shed light on the verity behind illusions which man created in order to survive. Unfortunately, that what is genuine lies deep under the layers of self-imposed illusions of his characters, and those illusions can only be

crushed with something fundamentally shocking – cruelty. This agrees with the definition, stating that "cruelty is any deliberate action motivated by the desire to produce physical or psychological suffering; those actions result in indifference and pleasure in other people's distress" (Mayes,2009,p.14). This definition specifies cruelty as a predominantly destructive drive that exists within people, which is usually aimed at inflicting either mental or physical pain on others.

Edward Albee is usually associated with the European absurdist, he is usually concerned with dramatizing "the reality of man's condition" (Cohn,1969, p.6). In this play, Albee represents two converging worlds: one concerns the singer Bessie Smith and the other concerns with the Nurse and her relationships with the Orderly who is ruled by the bourgeois morality "The person who spreads abuse is the Nurse. She is the only coherent character in this play, and it might as well be because she is the cruelest one; she uses her words to display scorn and conformity" (Cohn,1969, p.15). Albee uses a prototypical figure of a malignity woman the Nurse". Amcher states that Albee brings together those two worlds by "intertwining or alternating, and then by ultimately bringing about an outright clash"(Amcher,1969, p.73).

According to Fanon's conceptualization, racism is the origin and source of emotional and cultural trauma. Fanon attempts to understand the logic of racism as a kind of psychological and cultural victimization that has been existing in society. He claims that this abuse is a form of collective catharsis through which "a certain amount of aggression of some people can be channeled outward and released. In addition, cultural abuse can show its expression in cultural colonial contexts and take on a racist coloration whether it is talking about the characters or plots of television, comics, films, popular jokes, stories 'the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage who are always symbolized by Negroes" (Fanon,1986,146).

The awful consequence of social deterioration and racism is a series of constant frustration. Albee, sees racism as a fact of general injustice and inequality, therefore, Bessie Smith's death has inspired him to write this play. To add realism of the play, Albee gives the exact time and place of the play, setting it in Memphis, Tennessee, on September 26., 1937. "Ironically, the place where cruelty is most evident is the institution dedicated to providing help – the hospital"(Amacher,1969,p.51). It is a story that summarized the ongoing cruelty and all prejudices of racism tensions against the African American race. The period in which the play is set in the thirties of the twentieth century, when American racism was more pronounced. The play takes place in the city of Memphis, Tennessee in South where man is lost in a racial structure. Albee charts the climate of the South which becomes a horrible place than it can be imaged; it becomes an apt expression of unrealized hopes and misdirected passions. The social and racial divisions underscore a natural gulf between people, who are locked inside their illusive dreams and memories.

In fact, according to some scholars who emphasized that any discussions of race and ethnicity as sources of psychological trauma should be associated with the need to understand that trauma with racial discrimination can be viewed as cumulative in nature according to historical and political facts. The concept of disaster, the ailment of American humanity and the deterioration of values are saturated into his own vision through his critique of the social verity of the fact that the roots of the American social decline lie in the degeneration of individual relationships and the collapse of the ethics that vindicate individual existence as Ruby Cohn explains, "he is concerned with dramatizing the reality of man's condition"(Cohn,1969,p.6). Albee represented African Americans' lives and suffering as they regularly faced within a white- predominate society during the 20th century in America

through the character of Bessie Smith who dies in a car crash. Bigsby points that "Albee contemplates writing a play which would robustly discuss apartheid, he indicates that the play is a social protest but which is more usefully seen as a morality play about the collapse of human values and national purpose." (Bigsby,1984,p.261).

Some scholars believe the legacy of trauma from slavery transcend generations, creating residual effects that are manifested in the present behavior. Hence, the neurosis of the black man or woman has stemmed from actual experiences, rather from fantasized experiences, or from indirect cultural forms of oppression and trauma. The idea of the title comes from that real accident in which the life of a colored singer Bessie Smith who is about to re-emerge from a period of temporary obscurity into a new beginning. She and her manager, Jack, set off after a drink for Memphis and then New York. On the road, they have an accident. She is taken to the hospital, ironically named Mercy Hospital, where neither her name nor critical condition gives her the emergency treatment she needs. She might have been saved if she had been treated immediately. The nearest hospital refused to treat her because it receives white people only, thus; the African American singer loses her life. There, Jake's request is inadmissible by the Nurse despite his frequent question. This shows a horrible crime in which the law becomes an object of concern while the life of human beings bleeds into nothingness.

It is possible to argue that real examples of traumatic racist violence or abuse seem quite commonplace in the colonial environment. Since the hospital, which is assumed to be the institution of mercy, the racial and social injustice is concentrated and this is what is called Institutional racism which means the process whereby individual racist beliefs, nurtured by convictions of power and authority, are converted into discriminatory policies and procedures of the institution. These policies manifest in the conscious or unconscious prejudicial feelings of the dominant group towards others. Through biased policies, the institution helps maintain the advantage of one group to valuable resources and opportunities. It represents the decaying world. The Intern, however, goes to examine the signer and returns to report that she is already dead. The Intern tries to help Bessie by breaking the challenges of the Southern racial hierarchy, but she has unfortunately died.

JACK: There has been an accident, ma'am... I got an injured woman outside in my car...

SECOND NURSE: Yeah? Is that so? Well, you sit down and wait... You go over there and sit down and wait a while.

JACK: This is an emergency! There has been an accident!

SECOND NURSE: YOU WAIT! You just sit down and wait!

JACK: This woman is badly hurt...

SECOND NURSE: YOU COOL YOUR HEELS!

JACK: Ma'am... I got Bessie Smith out in that car there...

SECOND NURSE: I DON'T CARE WHO YOU GOT OUT THERE, NIGGER. YOU COOL YOUR HEELS! (p.65).

Fanon argues "That the colonial environment is unlike any other characterized by racism, violence, and oppression. These material and cultural forms of trauma may act as the causes of neurosis"(Fanon,1986,p.120). The essential aim of revealing the Nurse's behavior is to expose the end of the humane configuration and the real image of the White hospital system which allows the treatment of white and refusing nigger. It is clear that throughout the conversation

between Jack and the second nurse, there is an indication of the social conventional of the superiority of whites and inferiority of the African Americans. Number of researchers have documented that racism is a unique source of stress impacting African American's and is associated with anxiety and major depression.

Esslin describes the play as "an examination of the American Scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation, and vacuity; it is a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen"(Esslin,1962,p.226). Bessie is racially motivated and offensively named Jack a nigger in contrast to him who is respectfully calling her madam. Jack contemplates that mentioning Bessie's name will create a difference in treatment not only as an African American woman but of her social status as a respectable woman. He compares nurse's reactions to another one in different hospitals where the Nurse comments "Oh, this is no plain woman... this is no ordinary nigger... this is Bessie Smith!"(p.78). The Intern tries to reject the shackles of his white community and helps Bessie Smith but his endeavor is in vain as a result of social and institutional racism that has consistently led to the inferior treatment of colored people by the medical field disparities in health care have become a major health issue.

Many critics interpret this play as a criticism of a racially divided community. Smith(Smith,2001)indicates that such a presumption is wrong, especially in the South "the poorest illiterate white could claim a standing in society denied to the wealthiest and most intelligent and educated black"(Smith,2001,p.162). However, this accident indicates a bitter fact that African Americans cannot look forward to any kind of help from whites to support and improve their expectancy and situation. Consequently, the visibility of race and skin color becomes an apparatus of trauma that black women live through on a daily basis. These traumatic experiences are maintained and supported by the racial institutional system. Albee's play is an attempt to show the whites as callous; moreover, it is regarded as a tragedy at the hands of whites who concern more about preserving segregation than saving a life.

The play appeared at a time when the civil rights movement was at its height. It presents racism as a symptom rather than as a disease, since the inhumanity which is involved in the callous treatment of Bessie Smith is merely the extension of a process that goes beyond the question of prejudice. To portray that time and the inhumanity more effectively, Albee uses cruelty in the shape of psychological and verbal abuse. Those types of abuse are actually failures at communication. Racism is at the root of the problems in this play, and it is nothing else but a cruel disregard and refusal to accept another one's humanity only because of the color of their skin: "Cruelty is also present due to the hierarchy in the hospital, which, once again, brings forward unjustified discrimination"(Bigsby,1984, p.261).

Edward Albee hints to Bessie's plight throughout Jack's soliloquy. Jack, who is "a fifty-five years Negro (p. 67) attempts to help Bessie to make a comeback: "wake up... out of this dump" (p. 67). He persuades her to get out of bed, have a drink and then set off for Memphis and then New York where nobody is better than another. Lucina P. Gabbard states that: "Bessie is not only dead before her arrival at the hospital, but she is also dead before the accident. She has killed her career and her spirit several years earlier by drinking instead of meeting her commitments."(Gabbard, 1982, p.23).

It is now generally accepted "that experiences of discrimination based on race and ethnicity tend to be positively associated with negative psychological outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, emotional reactivity, and lowered self-esteem"(Carter,2007,p.35). Due to their social pressure, both Bessie and Jack have been drinking. They drink to escape from their

sordid reality. Bessie has chosen alcohol, drink at night and sleep at day. She is paralyzed by abandonment and depression. She has faded from the sight in the last years. She is the victim of the nightmare of racism. Josh Kun comments that:

Bessie Smith signifies a version of American blackness. She is the summation of all prejudices, all the projected social and sexual fantasies. She has been rejected in her first studio test for being too rough. She has been turned down because her voice as too rough, too Negro and too black. She was the most popular singer for classic blues, which many educate condemned as crude art form(Kun, 2005, p.1).

This play is an overview of the psychological abuse of racism and its complexity. It focuses on understanding the role of White privilege plays in their treatment of black. At the beginning of the twentieth century, American society suffers from many social issues such as social oppression, racial discrimination, and social injustice that led to ferocious conflicts. Albee is described by scholars as a "social critics" as Mary Lukas states that: "Albee's outlook has a strong relationship with the decline of society. His argument is less with life than with society" (Lukas,1961, pp.335-336). According to Albee, the connection between community and drama is very significant. He indicates that the main responsibility and function of the dramatist are to stage and review the central troubles to rehabilitate the society through theater. The play reverberates Albee's ravishment for social drama and reveals his great wit to introduce social protests.

Albee shows his ability in elucidating man conflict and his moral message to the modern generation. Albee comments that "the responsibility of the writer is to be a sort of demonic social critic – to present the world and people the way in it as he sees it and say 'Do you like it? If you don't like it change it'" (Dircks, 2010, p.146). Jack has also escaped in drink, but he still has illusive dreams of wealth and money that they would have it when they are in New York. He considers their travel to New York as a "good thing"(Albee,1960, p.67). But their illusive dreams are destroyed by the bitter reality of American society even after Bessie's death. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. argues that: "For blacks the American dream has been pretty much of a nightmare and far more than white ethnic, they are driven by desperate need to reindicate their own identity"(Schlesinger, 1998, p.1050).

According to Fanon's points of view, "The white coloniser and the black colonized exist within the grip of a 'massive psychoexistential complex' he suggests:- "that has multiple detrimental psychological effects. Such effects are realized not only in the dreams of the colonized but also in the psychic life of the colonized, who, in many ways, thinks of himself (or herself) as white"(Fanon,1986,p.12). Moreover, Albee sheds light skillfully on the institutional racism dilemma throughout *The Orderly* character. He is the only Negro in the play who has not been given a name. He is described by the playwright as a light-skinned Negro, twenty-eight, "trim and prim" who stands for a servant. He is an empty creature who is disgraced by his race and derided by his unsatisfactory position. He is the essence of exoticism excluded from white existence. Albee uses him as a means of dissecting the psychopathology of a culture. In other words, he is turned into a literary figure, a device, an experience, which has been shaped by history, or more precisely by economic circumstances, and social pressures, which are themselves, a product of white prejudice. Debusscher points out that "Albee verifies the racial structure when he establishes two contrasted groups of characters. Those who have a glimmer of hope they die because they are born black like Bessie and Jack. Other characters are identified by their function like the Nurse, the Intern, the Father, the Mayor and the Orderly"(Debusscher,1975, p.60).

In the Orderly's relationship with the Nurse, Albee finds the most effective level of meaning. Moreover, Stenz explains that Albee's characters "also function symbolically. Therefore, in this play, the Nurse quite clearly symbolizes the white supremacy, while the Orderly represents a black inferior minority"(Stenz,1978, p.3). The Nurse behaves in accordance with the pervasive conventionalism of the South, she verbally attacks and humiliates the Orderly. At the same time,

she seems to be confident and aware of the fact that she is superior and hence can humiliate him as she wishes. Her assumption is confirmed by the Orderly who first considers opposing her, but after a short while he rather retreats to avoid difficulties; therefore, he admits his position of an inferior black. His obedience is not only expressed by his action, but also by his agreement in which he expresses politeness and respect to the contemptuous Nurse referring to her as a madam, a title required by the Southern customs (Smith, 2001, p. 22).

In accordance with psychoanalytic theory, Fanon looks to the underlying desire motivating the dreams, the actions and the personality of the colored people, and claims to find there a simple wish. 'What does the black man want?' he asks mimicking Freud's famous 'What does a woman want?'. He answers that 'The black man wants to be white' (Fanon,1986,p.9). Regardless of the Nurse's prejudice as a white woman, his obsession is to live in her shadow. He desperately thinks that by education, money, and lightening his skin, he can step across the color line for better future prospects. He is a man trapped by social and private illusive dreams: by history, by his own psychology, and by the seemingly inescapable forces of economic determinism. Despite being considerably insulted by the white Nurse, the Orderly, yet imagines that he can ameliorate his position in the community, therefore he "tolerates racial abuse in order to be accepted into the society which abuses him" (Bigsby, 1985, p. 261).

Psychological abuse causes mental anguish by means of threats, humiliation, fear, manipulation, or other cruel conduct (Eckroth-Bucher, 2018). *The Death of Bessie Smith* preoccupies depiction of racism, the reason for the social inequality is out of the Nurse power conscious as a white southern woman, The Nurse holds over the black Orderly "bred in the racism of the South" (Bigsby, 1984, p. 261). Therefore, her behavior towards the Orderly stems from the tradition of her supreme position as a white woman. Furthermore, her influential position as a nurse affects her relationship with the Orderly as Smith states: "Black men were expected to look down when they spoke to whites, especially white women." (Smith, 2001, p. 22). The Nurse informs the Orderly about Mayor who is hospitalized on account of his hemorrhoids. She compares the mayor to a black man who was entered the hospital the previous night with seriously wounded. However, in their conversation, the Nurse exposes how Southern society actually values blacks, showing the source of the cruelty experience and the unequal treatment is the color of skin. Nurse says:

Now, it's true that the poor man lying up there with his guts coming out could be a nigger for all the attention he'd get if His Honor should start shouting for something... he could be on the operating table... and they'd drop his insides right on the floor and come running if the mayor should want his cigar lit. ... But that is the way things are. Those are facts. You'd better acquaint yourself with these realities. (p.41).

The Mayor himself is incompetent, he continues to wield power from his sickbed. This is symbolically an indication of the sickness of the society that he heads. The Nurse says that in the hospital they are more concerned about Mayor than they are about the patient whose life is in danger. The Nurse speech affirms the presence of social inequality and vicious prejudice that

the Mayor is more significant than others. The Mayor receives special treatment because of his social position. So, the priority of the better treatment depends on the color of skin and social status and this indicates the fact that the black man will be abandoned in favor of the white one. The Nurse says: "but we are no one bit more concerned for that man than we are for His Honor" (p. 40). It is worth emphasizing here again that Fanon takes solid social and political inequalities to be at the bottom of what might be seen to be the exclusively intra-psychic problem of psychological neuroses.

This permanent fuss about the Mayor's need shows that the Nurse is discontented with the hospital and the incommensurate way of caring for its patients. But the behavior in which the Nurse's exasperation exposed reveals that her revolutionary spirit does not expand as far as Negro. George Wellwarth points out "that when the Nurse refuses to admit Bessie Smith because she is a Negro, she reflects the mentality of typical southern white women the viciousness of such a person's resentment against the Negro is the result of a series of constant frustration." (Wellwarth, 1971, p.324). Consequently, the Nurse's treatment of the Orderly like a slave by sending him to get her cigarettes implies a supremacy demonstration of the south attitude towards the black considering them only servants. Cohen comments "she [the Nurse] is the cruelest one; she uses her words to display scorn and conformity (Cohn, 1969, p.15).

NURSE: I'll tell you what you do... You go north, boy... you go up in New York City, where nobody's better than anybody else... get up north, boy. (Abrupt change of tone) But before you do anything like that, you run downstairs and get me a pack of cigarettes.

ORDERLY: (Pauses. Is about to speak; thinks better of it; moves off to door, rear) Yes'm. (Exits) (p. 47).

Hence, this desire to be white is not "in any way trans- historical or universal; rather, it is an outcome of a specific configuration of power, of real material, economic, cultural and sociopolitical conditions that continually celebrate and empower the white subject and continually denigrate and dispossess the black man or woman". To achieve his prospects and opportunities of equality and self-respect, the Nurse suggests the Orderly go to New York. During the early of the twentieth century, there was a great displacement wave of African Americans shifting from the South to the North in what became "known as the Great Migration" as Meltzer explains that New York became "the race capital, the forum for expression of a developing racial pride" (Meltzer, 1967, p.p. 43-44).

Here, Albee illustrates the contradiction between the South symbolized by Memphis and the North symbolized by New York City where African Americans are equal to the whites. Consequently, the Nurse suggests for the Orderly to leave to the North where he has more opportunities to achieve his ambitions, escaping from segregation and racism in the South. It can be more beneficial to disband his unsatisfactory position in Memphis. As Myrdal clarifies that: "In several minor cities in New England with a small, stable Negro population, for instance, social discrimination is hardly noticeable. The Negroes there usually belong to the working class, but often they enter the trades, serve in shops, and even carry on independent businesses" (Myrdal, 1996, p. 601).

Thus, the Nurse spread discontent around her. Malice is something she is used to degrading The Orderly by using cruel words. She proceeds with the verbal abuse, which has psychological effects, at her workplace with the Orderly, who is a light-skinned black man. Since he is more educated than she is and is using complicated words, she is cruelly mocking

his attempts to blend in with the white people, but failing to do so, since he is "the inhabitant of no man's land, on the one side shunned and disowned by your brethren, and on the other an object of contempt and derision to your betters" (p.59). The Nurse intends to hold the Orderly at "the very bottom of the social ladder. She claims that whites perceived blacks as competition and hence want all Negroes kept down 'in their place.'"(Myrdal,1996, p.597).

The Nurse's speech implies a warning to the Orderly that he should accept his social standing and be grateful for his low-grade work. NURSE: I'll tell you something... you are lucky as you are (p.42). And at the same time because of the Great Depression, the Orderly should be fortunate to be employed. Even though Orderly's job is considered a deplorable work still the Nurse indicates it is the adequate work for an African American. She believes that his position should be occupied by a white man due to that there were many unemployed white American despite his position is the lowest manual labor in the hospital. "He is constantly threatened by the Nurse not to violate the Southern etiquette; however, he decides to take action instead of only waiting idly" (Stenz,1978, pp. 22-23).

For Fanon, the dream of turning white is "a neurotic condition". A neurosis is an emotional disorder, manifest at the level of personality, which stems from the conflict between a powerful (often instinctual) impulse or wish and the need to repress this instinct. Neuroses hence, can lead to a whole series of irrational behaviours and beliefs that are the result of "the conflict between powerful unconscious urges and the social/cultural need to keep these urges outside of the conscious mind" (Fanon,1990, p.17). The Orderly caught in the web of confusing illusive dreams of opportunity, talent, and fundamentally right. Democracy which is sought after for the furthering of the wellbeing of black man strangely confronts him and makes it less and less likely for him to succeed. He dreams of a more satisfying life but then he realizes that his dreams are elusive.

There is a real sense of alarm about real values and the play proposes a polarization between genuine values, ideal dreams, and the merely expedient, elusive dreams and nightmares. His words "going beyond that" reveal his education to change his social outcast to gain a decent job. In combating the stress, emotional abuse, and psychological trauma caused by racism invisibility, and discrimination. It is important to remember the strength, resilience, personal and collective determination, and spiritual faith that have allowed generations of people of color to develop effective coping mechanisms and to survive these traumas (Boyd-Franklin, 2003).

However, Fanon believes that the basis of the racial neurosis of the black subject lies in the trauma caused by the black exposure to the racist values of the oppressive colonial environment. Hence the Orderly's ambitions to advance himself for a better status will never be commensurate to the whites because of his race and this reveals the existence of social inequality. Also, the Orderly suggests assumptions that the conditions of black should change and the promises regarding equal rights should be accomplished:

ORDERLY: There are some people who believe in more than promises...

NURSE: Hunh?

ORDERLY: I say, there are some people who believe in more than promises; there are some people who believe in action. (p.43).

Then, Fanon suggests that cultural trauma can be shared better rather than suffering in intrapsychic and individualistic. It is obvious that the ambition of the black race is explicit through the character of the Orderly, who considers himself to be one of the "some people". Supposedly, he indirectly desires to be engaged and fight for his rights. Consequently, out of superiority motivation, the Nurse's anxious behavior of fear of the downfall of white superiority. This assumption of challenging the white authority leads her to threaten and discourage him. She is asserted that if the Orderly tries to break this rule he is going to lose his work, saying:

NURSE: I'll tell you what you just want... I'll tell you just what you want if you have any mind to keep this good job you've got... You just shut your ears... and you keep that mouth closed tight, too. All this talk about what you're going to go beyond. You keep walking a real tight line here. (p. 45).

Moreover, critics indicate that a single accident is not the cause of the psychological trauma but often arises out of 'multiple traumas, frequently analogous and repeated' (Fanon,1986, p.144). Therefore, such traumas are expelled from the mind as a means of saving the individual from great suffering. Bryer and Hartig conclude that "Albee's concern is much more the depiction of people who suffer from stagnation and desperately want to change their lives" (Bryer and Hartig ,2010, p. 125). The Orderly endeavors hard to improve himself by avoiding vernacular language and his way of talking implies that he wishes to achieve a higher status by submitting himself as a cultured man as it is clear in the following dialogue:

ORDERLY: Why, it's a matter of proportion. Surely, you don't condone the fact that the mayor and his piles, and that poor man lying up there...?

NURSE: Condone, will you listen to that: condone! My! Aren't you the educated one? What... what does that word mean, boy? That word condone? Hunh? You do talk some, don't you? (p. 41)

Critics and community activists have identified a number of steps in the development of an antiracist ideology. Many authors agree that the first step, particularly for concerned Whites, is to educate oneself through reading and discussions with persons of color about the nature of racism in its individual, institutional, and cultural forms. Knowledge of White privilege is equally important because it is so intrinsic to American life that deleterious outcomes are often unrecognized and unacknowledged by many White individuals (McIntosh,1998,p 147).

The Nurse attacks The Orderly for using educated vocabulary as if the African Americans have no right for education so that white supremacy should be maintained. However, the southern society exemplified by the Nurse denies such attitude, as it could imperil their white supremacy. For this reason, they threaten blacks and discourage them from any advancement Smith states that "white people were afraid of educated blacks and consequently limited their access to education, as

[T]he Southern people do not believe in 'social equality'. Therefore, it can be assumed that the reason why the Nurse ridicules the Orderly's way of speaking is to discourage him from further education because she is afraid of his possibility to advance himself and get a higher position in the social hierarchy than she has (Smith, 2001, p.159).

Albee proves the purpose of the cruelty and the psychological abuse is to show that person cannot hide his own vulnerability. It was Fanon who bluntly observed that it was people who made people the way humans perceive one another affects the way they perceive themselves

and this includes race. Albee portrays a society that does not believe the principle that its predecessor suggested. It is a society that suppresses its idealism and its transcendent values. The Nurse's continuous to attempt to ridicule him is based on Southern discrimination. She accuses him of "bleaching away", she accuses him of trying to change his physical appearance to remove dark color into white skin by the procedure of bleaching. Her racism and her verbal abuse are evident in her vicious comments when she accuses him of bleaching his skin.

NURSE: and at night... (She begins to giggle)... and at night if you want to... on your own time... you keep right on putting that bleach on your hands and your neck and your face...

ORDERLY: I do no such thing!

NURSE (In full laughter): and you keep right on bleaching away. (p.45)

Albee uses emotional abuse and cruelty in this play to prove that communication is not possible unless the walls imposed by society are shattered according to Franz Fanon's theory "ethnic psychology" which penetrated an essential part of the human condition, "The colored man enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation"(Fanon,1986, p.63). Later on, the Nurse described the Orderly as a "white nigger" (p. 47) because according to The Nurse, the Orderly effort is futile to become part of white society by imitating their behavior, appearance and sophisticated language. Myrdal argues that whites used to believe of a black in this way: "the educated Negro trying to climb in social status: one moment hostility will hold sway – this Negro is 'smart,' 'uppity,' he 'wants to be white'"(Myrdal,1996, p. 597). Out of his cleverness to achieve his aim the Orderly depends on a technique for his advancement and raises his social position by flattering both the Mayor and the Nurse's father calling him an "informed man" (p. 68). The Orderly expresses his tendency to the Nurse to talk to the Mayor to raise his social status:

The ORDERLY: I know... I know the mayor is an important man. He is impressive... even lying on his belly like he is... I'd like to get to talk to him.

The NURSE: Don't you know it? TALK to him! Talk to the mayor? What for?

The ORDERLY: I've told you. I've told you I don't intent to stay here carrying crap pans and washing out the operating theatre until I have a ...a long gray beard... I'm... I'm going beyond that.

The NURSE (patronizing): Sure.

The ORDERLY: I've told you... I'm going beyond that... (pp.41-42)

The Nurse's vicious comments dishearten his ambition and make fun of his thinking because of the deeply rooted traditions and beliefs of the south that he is not competent in a better work "Since the manual labor was the most common type of work for blacks" (Meltzer,1967,p.137). Moreover, the use of language especially the verb "go" supports the idea of hesitation of characters, Witherington points that "Albee frequently makes use of the verb "go" to efficiently imply some kind of movement or action. However, in spite of the fact that all characters keep talking about "going", the absurdity lies in the fact that they hardly ever take action to accomplish what they desire"(Witherington,1967,pp.84-85).

At the same time, Myrdal who asserts this idea comments that: "[Negro] is discouraged when he tries 'to work his way up.' It is considered better for him never to forget his 'place,' Negroes in the South have often confided to me that they find it advantageous to simulate dependence in order to avert hostility from the whites and engage their paternalism". (Myrdal, 1996, p.596) .The Orderly's attitude is discovered by the Nurse, who accuses him of agreeing with everybody and everything only to gain their sympathy and achieve what he wishes. Arguing that the "tolerates racial abuse in order to be accepted into the society which abuses him". The Nurse is censured his intentions saying: "You try to keep yourself on the good side of everybody, don't you, boy?" (p.45).

The most typical form of psychological abuse is verbal abuse, in which the abuser uses language or behavior which seeks to coerce its victim to doubt their perceptions of their abilities and subjugate themselves to the abuser (Holly,2016). The Nurse's speech shows the contradiction in his attitudes. Nurse: "you are so mixed up!" (p. 45). She ridicules his struggle to advance himself and becoming a white man and at the same time the pursuit of his ethnic identity for equality as Holly (2016)explores that "The most typical form of psychological abuse is the verbal abuse, in which the abuser uses language or behavior which seeks to coerce its victim to doubt their perceptions of their abilities and subjugate themselves to the abuser". The Nurse adds:

NURSE: (Maliciously solicitous): Tell me, boy... is it true that you have Uncle Tom'd yourself right out of the bosom of your family... right out of your circle of acquaintances? Is it true, young man, that you are now an inhabitant of no-man's-land, on the one side shunned and disowned by your brethren and on the other an object of contempt and derision of your betters? (p. 47).

Eckroth-Bucher points out that "Psychological abuse causes mental anguish by means of threats, humiliation, fear, manipulation, or other cruel conduct" (Eckroth-Bucher.2018). The Nurse implies a truth which is denied by the Orderly himself that his own society will reject him as a result of his attempt to improve his situation by obedient, serving them and even his agreement with their violent behavior against his race instead of discriminating them, for this, he becomes an outcast from his own society as she calls him: "you are a genuine little as slicker" (p. 46) When the Intern reserved Negro workers, the Nurse comes out that the Orderly's uncle is one of those who had been punished, she justifies that by saying that: "the Governor called out because of rioting." (p.93). She reminds the Orderly to keep his job, he has to keep his "mouth closed tight"(p. 93).

The technique which is used by Albee to make this play unique throughout his presenting the symbolic characters of the white hostility that African Americans had to encounter is represented by the Nurse's character. She is a symbol of an active entrant in perpetuating the organizing of socially sanctioned despotism. On one hand, there are Jack, Bessie, and the black Orderly who symbolize minor black society and on the other hand, there is the white Nurse, a symbol of supreme white society, who adoptive typical themes including social discrimination and racism. Throughout the play, it is obvious that the Nurse indicates her strength that she has over the Orderly and shows him contempt, suggesting that he belongs to the inferior race which has no right to demand equality. In addition, she uses every opportunity to insult him and dishearten him from his dream of advancement that he desires to fulfill "Albee finds a way for them to participate in life as fully as possible, to make them fully conscious – he uses cruelty to help them make a choice between two possibilities – to live dangerously but fully or to continue with the illusions"(Roudané,1987,p. 20).

Finally, in Fanon's attempt to understand something about the logic of racism and its relation to cultural trauma, he claims that each society has a form of collective catharsis through which a certain amount of aggression can be channeled outward and released. Cultural forms of expression are one way in which this happens. Cultural forms in colonial contexts overwhelmingly take on a racist coloration, that whether we are talking about the characters or plots of television, comics, films, popular jokes, stories 'the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by Negroes' (Fanon, 1986, p. 146).

Albee's play is a warning of elusive dreams of American society. The play is prophesied of doom. A doom for the materialistic society that has failed to live up to its pioneer ideals. A doom for unjust society in which human life has no consideration as symbolized in the tragic destiny of Bessie Smith. Albee shows how society has witnessed the deterioration of moral, religious, political, and social values. It focuses on the indictment of contemporary Americans for having failed to bring about the dreams of their forefathers. People who display racist behavior are actually the ones who are also vulnerable. They tend to hurt other people out of fear, because it gives them a semblance of superiority, and creates an illusion that they are untouchable but they are not. Such behavior merely creates an impression of supremacy, which is what racism is based on as Formm remarks:

If the economic, social, and political conditions, on which the whole process of human individual depends, do not offer a basis for the realizing of individuality in the sense just mentioned, while at the same time people have lost those ties which gave them security, this leg makes freedom un bearable burden. It then becomes identical with doubt, with the kind of life, which lacks meaning and direction.(Bigsby, 2000, p.124)

Thus, Albee's tries to show that it is difficult to achieve justice in a world of nightmares. The hostility of white society encompasses color people and converts their lives into nightmares. The final moment of the play sums up the nightmares of that society as being hopeless, helpless, and self-concerned. Albee shapes the black Americans under the pressure of events, of social hostility, and under the examination of the nature of private and public truth. The play indicates twin goals; on one hand, it has the crucial objective of presenting the Negro to himself, of reflecting the dreams and nightmares of black Americans, which is faced either with submission or with self- destructive revolt. On the other hand, it tests the American principles which expose a gulf between spiritual ideals and practical principles. In holding the mirror up to black life, it has held the mirror up to potentially fatal flaws in the fabric and substance of American life.

Conclusions

The Death of Bessie Smith aims to awake the social conscience towards the discrimination of the African Americans in the American society. This study engages the impact of racial segregation for African Americans and its relation with the Neurosis of Blackness. A relation dialectic that structures a relation of recognizing superiority and inferiority among White and Black people. Albee's exploration of the disaster of the social reality of the American social descend lies in the collapse of the ethics of American humanity and exploited slaves. It is generally agreed that racial discrimination and the subservient position of the African Americans are the roots of the major problems of their suffering. Racism brings forward illegitimate discrimination which is nothing else but a severe disregard, ignored and denied their humanity just because of their color skin.

Wrapped up in the trimmings of culture and race is an existence that is oppressed and screaming for freedom. But languages, customs, and laws simply do not understand the voice of true freedom. Thus the scream is silenced or at least unheard. The blacks as an inferior race who are deprived of their rights struggled against social inequality the white-dominated community through Orderly's character. Despite his efforts to change his social position towards equality, yet the Nurse is cruelly mocking him and behaves according to southern structures showing no respect for his wishes, owing to his color of skin which determines him to be inferior, forsaken, and obedient. At the same time, the Orderly tolerates her racial humiliate to achieve his self-improvement in order to blend in with the white society. Finally, the Orderly should realize that his real prospects to improve his position is in vain because racism is manifested in its individual, institutional, and cultural forms through domination and White privilege.

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