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Bestiality and the Deconstruction of Family Cohesion in Edward Albee's *The Goat or, Who Is Sylvia?*

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البهيمية وتفكك التماسك الأسري في مسرحية أدوارد البي
الماعز ، او من هي سيلفيا؟

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المستخلص

إدوارد ألبى (١٩٢٨-٢٠١٦) كاتب مسرحي أمريكي مشهور بأعماله المثيرة للجدل. تولد المأساة بشكل عام، ومسرحية ألبى على وجه الخصوص، أزمة وضع ضبط النفس ونقطة اللاعودة لأن شخصيات المسرحية تتجاوز حدودها وتقع في دائرة مأساوية بسبب أفعالهم المنحرفة. الماعز أم من هي سيلفيا؟ (٢٠٠٠) أحد أعمال البي المثيرة للجدل. تعتبر هذه المسرحية تحفة مسرحية حيث ناقشت المسرحية الطريقة المروعة لإطلاق رغبات الإنسان الأكثر جموحًا وتقليل التأثيرات المدمرة وغير الصحية للسلوك البشري. يبدو أن انتشار العلاقات بين الإنسان والحيوان (البهيمية) قد أصبح اضطرابًا واسع النطاق. وبالتالي فإن هذه العلاقة تعتبر جريمة جنائية وتندرج في مجال الاضطرابات النفسية حيث أن بعض الأفراد ينسبون علاقاتهم مع الحيوانات إلى نقص الدعم العاطفي والوحدة والقلق والاكتئاب والمشاكل النفسية. علاوة على ذلك، تعد البهيمية انتهاكًا أخلاقيًا خطيرًا لا ينبغي التسامح معه أبدًا. لقد كان ولا يزال هذا السلوك من المحرمات الكبيرة في المجتمعات الراقية في التقاليد الاجتماعية والدينية، والتي لديها قيود شديدة ضد هذا السلوك. في هذه المسرحية، يمثل فعل مارتن كسرًا في النظام المجتمعي. وبالتالي، تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تحليل المسرحية بالإطار النظري لمنظور البهيمية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تعتبر هذه الدراسة قيمة لفهم تعقيدات السلوك البشري، والعلاقة بين الإنسان والحيوان، وتأثيراتها الاجتماعية والنفسية على أفراد الأسرة.

Abstract

Edward Albee (1928-2016) is an American dramatist who is notorious for his controversial works. Albee's plays generate a crisis of a restraint situation and a point of no return where characters trespass the limits and get caught up in a tragic cycle. *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* (2000) is one of his controversial pieces, addressing (human-animal relations). This theatrical masterpiece unleashes man's wildest desires and ravaging behavior. Bestiality is a criminal offense placed in the domain of mental disorders attributed to the lack of emotional support, anxiety, depression, and psychological problems. It is also a serious moral infraction of communities' socio-religious traditions. In this play, Martin's bestiality leads to the collapse of his marriage and the slaughter of his goat. Thus, this paper intends to address bestiality in the light of queer theory. Furthermore, this study aims to comprehend the intricacies of human behaviour, the relationship between humans and animals, and its social and psychological effects on family members.

Keywords: Bestiality, human-animal relationship, queer theory, mental disorders.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البهيمية، العلاقة بين الإنسان والحيوان، نظرية الكوير، الاضطرابات النفسية



1. Introduction

In general, humanity as a species feels an extraordinary revulsion from everything that might remind it of its own animal nature, a revulsion that is strongly suspected to be deeply related to the persistence of its very real animality. Human beings claim to be civilized and modernized in the contemporary age. History reveals how wars, social and religious oppression, and deadly diseases have ruined human life. In fact, these elements are not the only dilemma and the negative side of contemporary life, but also the danger of environmental, cultural, mental disordered, and sexual disasters like bestiality that threaten man's life. In addition to depicting the emerging class distinctions of contemporary times, the illustration of animals' oppression is still a marginalized discussion, especially bestiality. It is a serious and frequently taboo issue, and there has been little academic study to expand our awareness of why it occurs or how we should or should behave. The theme of human animality was brought up by Albee in his dramatic work *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* (2000) is an interesting play about a man named Martin who has sexual emotions for a goat called Sylvia.

It is a complicated play covering a wide range of topics from animal subjectivity, sexuality, marriage, and family life, to love, morality, alienation and belonging, and the ambivalent relationship between humans, nature, and civilization. In terms of genre, too, the play has provoked a range of scholarly responses, interpreting the play as both tragedy and black comedy.

1.1 The Problem

Human relationships with animals are complex. Previous research has predominantly focused on human issues representation rather than neglected victimized animals. This qualitative study highlighted and identified both animal and human abuse to generate individuals' sympathy. In this regard, many literary works were written

in an attempt to disclose human calamities with animals. Among these works is Edward Albee's play *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* Since the beginning of his career, Albee has been the subject of a wide range of critical speculation. While the majority of his plays received almost unanimously positive critical reception, some of them received mixed reviews or even a majority of negative responses. His plays maintain his signature voice, always making use of themes and styles that tackle the issues of family and social politics in American society.

Therefore, Albee has expressed much about his troubled relationship with his adoptive parents, which could be a reason why he would be interested in writing a play featuring kinship trouble. Coles (2011) claims that Albee has said all his plays are about finding his lost family and that his wish is "to make known that all his plays are about a search for his family and the nature of true love." (Coles, 2011, p.21)

1.2 The Objectives

The playwright attempts to uncover American cultural mythology (the desire for the perfect family, and the attainment of a comfortable life". It tells the story of a family that finds itself in the middle of a set of tragic circumstances, but not in any traditional way. It contains realistic characters who struggle to create identities for themselves in an America still clinging to misbegotten cultural ideals of the 1950s (e.g. power, money, the perfect family). Focusing on the ethics of vulnerability and violence, this study will address the questions of how Martin and Sylvia the goat become close-knit while the bond of kinship between Martin and Stevie breaks apart, and why Sylvia is subjected to bodily harm, culminating in her slaughter in the hands of an enraged and grieving Stevie.

This paper investigates two primary views; the conditions under which harsh treatment of animals is carried out within texts and how a unique technical aspect of their representation, the human-animal spectrum assists in highlighting their oppression. Thus, this paper



was handled from observations of animal cruelty in the Absurd Theatre.

1.3 The Significance

The Goat stages the ethical conflict that arises from a pastoral encounter between a human and an animal, resolving in violent chaos. An anthropomorphized animal replaces the human as the tragic hero falls in love with a goat, and the pathos is brought about by the death of not a human being but an animal involved in a bestial relationship, the result being a perplexing drama of animal-human relations. Albee utilizes the concept of sympathy in his play as evidenced by his inclusive mindfulness and compassion against animal cruelty. By making the human protagonist acknowledge the animal as a "misused one" (Albee, p.64) and voice its concerns with compassion, The audience is inherently made aware of its poor and oppressed condition. The play is thus innovative both in its treatment of the conventions of the tragic and in its presentation of boundary crossing and inter-subjectivity through a human-animal-human crisis that brings kinship bonds into play with the ethics of alterity, loss, and vulnerability.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Key words

2.1.1 The Concept of Bestiality

Bestiality (also known as zoophilia) is human sexual interaction with (non-human) animals with the intent of human sexual gratification; it is a question of love and affection. (Michael Roberts, 2009) In the early 1600s, the term "bestiality" originally appeared in English. Scholars believe it was derived from the Latin bestialitas, which was used centuries earlier by theologian Thomas Aquinas when addressing human-animal intercourse. It is intercourse with animals that occurs due to circumstance and sexual desire. (Beirne, 2009, p.47)

The binary contradiction of humans and (other) animals is predicated on the presence or absence of logic, which has become an embedded thought pattern in ontotheological humanism. The conventional perspective implies that only

humans are rational since only humans have language, so only humans may be morally conscious. However, the rationality argument is irrelevant to the exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration.

The separation of human and (other) animal, as well as the superiority of one over the other, is deeply entrenched in all religions' beliefs, as expressed in God's injunction in Genesis that human should "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28) Thus, the anthropocentric perspective has hardly ever been contested. Little has altered to contradict the implicit belief that humans are superior to and apart from (other) animals. (Mouchang Yu, 2009. p. 247)

The term 'beast' denotes to human negative sexual behavior. Bestialists have intense sexual urges and hallucinations involving children and elderly people; or non-humans (e.g. corpses, animals, etc.) T. Twain (1973) writes that "of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel. He is the only one that inflicts pain for the pleasure of doing it" (p.84). In criminal law, bestiality is regarded as an "abominable" and "unnatural" act to underscore the conduct's ostensibly immoral nature.

In fact, bestiality could be traced back to ancient mythology. It was believed to be a cure for certain diseases in ancient Egypt. It is considered one of the oldest joyful pleasures of humanity since it was believed to throw off the gloom of anxiety and loneliness. It was also common among shepherds in ancient Greece and Rome. In this case, the animal is merely exploited to satisfy human's lust or to serve his ends.

Leach (1964) defines taboo as "obscenity and divides obscenity into three categories: (1) dirty words - usually referring to sex and excretion; (2) blasphemy and profanity; (3) animal abuse - in which a human being is equated with an animal of another category" (p.28). In other words, bestiality is regarded as an indecent behavior rejected by civilized communities. Yet,



bestialists view themselves as essentially part of the natural world with no sharp distinction between humans and animals.

In general, bestiality is considered a marginal issue for some people, but in fact, it indicates the importance of the instructive practice of how new concepts of anti-reciprocity and love might manifest between human and non-human species.

Since we are starting to grasp nature and the consequences of bestiality, our awareness of the connection between human and animal brutality is expanding. Human-animal studies courses and programs are being developed to understand the influence of bestiality on society better. Albee laments the abuse of animals in human life. Identifying the gap in modern times, Albee asserts that humankind has isolated and marginalized itself from others. As a result, man has exploited animals as bio-commodities, reproducing their images—not symbolically but realistically—and thereby abusing the animals effectively.

As a result, bestiality should be seen as a highly contentious and multidimensional kind of social connection that is only now beginning to be well understood. As such, they merit more investigation and research. In addition, there should be an increase in the number of human-animal research that demonstrates linkages between non-human animal exploitation and antisocial behavior.

Philosophers throughout history have praised this point of view "The strong relationship, or triangle, that bound man, and nature (animal) together formed one of the fundamental foundation stones of ancient civilizations. It manifested itself most clearly in the vegetation myths and legends and the mystery religions of ancient cultures". (Al-Nawas, 2008. p. 166) Those writers should address the animal question is no surprise, since writers from time immemorial have acted as reflectors of their society.

Therefore, Albee addresses the efficacy of drama in dealing with the ethical question of the

human-animal interface through his play *The Goat or Who is Sylvia*. It seems like a work of contemporary drama that deals with the animal in various ways and tests the audience's views against Martin's dualistic nature.

2.1.1.1 The Goat or Who is Sylvia? as a Facet of Bestiality

Albee uses the concept of a man falling in love with a goat, as both a literal situation and a complex metaphor for a human being's longing for love and ecstasy. Most critics avoided saying anything directly about the play's content, likely because of their discomfort.

The play tests the limits of how far one should be allowed to defy social taboos to pursue love, as well as the limits of an increasingly liberal society and progressive mentality. As with most Albee plays, the play aims to force audiences to question their own morality and system of beliefs. Albee himself suggests that it deals with the theme of the limits of tolerance; he aims for the audience put themselves in Martin's position, and think really hard about how they would respond in that situation.

Long before modern conceptions, many laws were established that prohibited and criminalize bestiality in order to preserve humanity and the construction of families. Bestiality was a vice not only against human beings but also against God. In existence, the "beast" in bestiality is the human perpetrator who has lowered himself to the level of his animal partner.

Animal symbolism is common in mythology, fables, scriptures, and world literature. The symbolism of animals in literary works is a device that makes the story complete and profound. It corresponds to human fallibility and becomes a metaphor for moral lessons. Ancient people believed that the Goat was a combination of good and evil. It embodies feminine nature, and some people see it as a symbol of evil and destruction.

Animals are frequently depicted as allegories of political leaders during times of war and as illustrations of human conflict situations such as



isolation, loss, and issues of existence in many literary works to show a "horrifying image of a society where furious activity serves only to mask an essential inertia and which sociality." (Mishra, 2004, p. 28)

Thus, according to Albee, the family is an emotionally interconnected system, the modifications in the functioning of one section of the organization are promptly followed by changes in the integrated structure. The family members do not perform or behave independently but just inside the system that determines their feelings, beliefs, and functions. Anxiety and change in one family member will influence the others' feelings, perceptions, and reactions. The Goat offers a new paradigm for comprehending individuals within the emotional framework of the family.

Bestiality is not just concerned with family ties, but also with comprehending other societal institutions and groupings, progressing in concentric circles from the private self to the larger family and its members' social activity. Like Albee's other plays, *The Goat* embodies the deeply humanist, but in an unconventional way. Both Martin and Stevie stare across the chasm of their troubled marriage, unable to persuade the other to comprehend the devastation they both feel. Martin does not ask for forgiveness from his wife, nor does he attempt to defend or rationalize his misdeeds. Instead, he wants to be understood and accepted.

Albee employs bestiality to delve further into the deeper challenges of human-animal/environmental connections since humanity is constructed in opposition to bestiality. His use of animals in his play raises a distinction in the animal issue which submits an important ethical inquiry about the animals' fates. He adopts an advocacy position in this play by pleading for more ecological and human awareness. Albee contends that the animal is an extension of the human and essential as a lung or a liver – it is a gesture intended to close the gap between animal and human "The Goat, a startling

and poignant black comedy that cuts to the heart of modern love." (Adams & Josephine, 1996, p.53) Consequently, the behavior of bestiality in the play is not socially acceptable for humans. Albee's play provokes us to question the decline of morality and the preoccupation with destructive self-deception.

2.1.2 Queer Theory

Albee sets his play concerning bestiality/ in the sphere of the queer theory which leads to a new kind of animal advocacy. Queer theory is "the lens used to explore and challenge how scholars, activists, artistic texts, and the media perpetuate gender- and sex-based binaries, and its goal is to undo hierarchies and fight against social inequalities". Analyzing human-animal relationships and their impacts on people have been increasingly popular in recent decades. As a result of animality (the animal nature or instincts of human beings), animals are treated as others humans which becomes a part of human exploitation. In addition, there is an anomaly called bestiality which is the sexual feeling of the animal. These conceptions of humanity and bestiality are determined by the desire to dominate and isolation, and losing a feeling of anchoring identity. As Beetz (2005) demonstrates that:

Humans used to humiliate animals since they saw them as inferior entities. Bestiality is a phenomenon rarely mentioned in either casual or scientific communications. In a non-scientific context, the subject of bestiality is often addressed in-jokes or is viewed as one of the most bizarre behaviours, and it provokes strong emotional reactions, such as disbelief, disgust, and abhorrence. Commonly, the term bestiality is used to refer to a range of sexual contact with animals, while sometimes it is more narrowly defined as penetrating or being penetrated by an animal. (Beetz, 2005, p. 56)



It was widely perceived as one of the most horrific crimes against nature. It seems to have existed throughout history nearly from the dawn of civilization until the present depicted in many cave paintings and prehistoric artifacts. Dr. Alfred Kinsey (1948), an American biologist, remarks that:

bestiality was primarily a rural phenomenon, and it has been found that bestial relations are considered a much more normal part of sexual maturation in nomadic herding societies, such as throughout Africa. (Kinsey, 1948, p. 37)

Albee's substitution of the human with an animal at the center of *The Goat's* epiphanic recognition scene where Martin forms a queer kinship with the animal, which eventually results in broken ties with his wife. This relation is an extremely erratic form of sexual irregularity; it is not confined to a specific age, location, or gender. According to Beetz's study *New Insights into Bestiality and Zoophilia*, bestiality has been extensively analyzed in the domains of sociology, criminology, psychology, and mental health as Beetz states:

The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, animals, and the environment. (Beetz, 2005, p.98)

2.2 Previous Study

Fatimah's dissertation "Revealing Hidden Political Agenda in the Representation of Martin as a Zoophile in Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* (2014)" explores the existence of deviant sexual orientation concerning the bestiality in the society. She debates that there is some political agenda attached to the representation of bestiality in the play. She analyzes the political thoughts behind the queerness of Martin as a bestialist to normalize

the political notions of alleviating discrimination and intolerance in the society.

Richard Brad Medoff's (2003) study of *The Goat or Who Is Sylvia?* explores the themes of existential theatre through the intersection of two distinct forms of comedy and tragedy. He further asserts that the play questions the theme of forbidden love. The title of the play has various interpretations. The goat can be the symbol of sexual appetite which was a prominent theme at that time in American society.

Eric Weitz in the article "Moving Target: Comic Calculation and Affective Persuasion in Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*" (2009) This study explores the play as a tool to represent the outer boundaries of the concepts of tragedy and comedy, sex and love, civilization, and barbarism. The play provides glimpses of the empathy that is to be felt for the characters like Martin.

Helene Narnhofer in the dissertation "A Study of Albee's Recent Plays *Three Tall Women*, *The Goat Or, Who is Sylvia?* and *At Home at the Zoo* (2012)" claims that Albee is no doubt one of the prominent leading playwrights. His plays explore the themes of broken identities, and the danger of routines and conventions. Albee illustrates that life must be examined by the inescapable proximity of death.

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Methodology of the Study

The current research is a qualitative descriptive study that involves a systematic subjective approach. Such an approach helps to describe life experiences or phenomena and give them meaning through exploring the depth, richness and complexity inherent in the phenomenon. To meet the objective of the study it explains the prominent American drama of Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia* that depicts how gradually the social issues, lack of communication, and bestiality took place. The importance of this drama specifically in the modern and postmodern period is clear in the several themes which are displaying the



difficulties of American society. The play also exposes how to struggle against social issues such as family fragmentation, lack of communication, and other issues like bestiality. So how Edward Albee accounts for the contemporary social issues in this play and how the American society influenced by those problems? These procedural steps are followed in this paper:

3.2 Data Analysis

3.2.1 Constructing the Human Beast

The 'beast' is a central concept of this study. It signifies, more so than 'animal', the extent to which nonhuman animals are symbolized as cultural artefacts. It provides a hybrid theoretical concept to account for the 'human' and 'animal' dimensions of animality. The word 'human' is more than just a noun, it is also an adjective and has implicit polysemic meanings. One of those meanings is of human as not-animal and, consequently, many people refer to 'humans and animals'. This discursive practice is somewhat analogous to the generic man or 'he'. It would be nonsensical to talk about 'men and humans' as if men are not humans. From this point of view, it is equally nonsensical to talk about humans as if they are not animals.

Albee's play *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* explores how humans perceive their "privilege" over animals in relation to class, nature, gender, nationality, race, and other factors that shape human society. Although the critical reaction to *Goat* was generally good, the play was frequently criticized as a large section of shocking absurdist humor. Most levels of irrationality found in Absurd theatre mirrors the impacts of World War II and are mainly understandable when examining the illogical chaos caused by war and its aftermath as dimensions for various types of mass exploitation. Thus, the study investigates the practices by which animals are subjected to cruel treatment and persecution, causing the family's collapse in this play.

The play begins with Martin (a middle-aged) man and Stevie Gray's lusciously furnished

- Selecting *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* as a facet of bestiality;
- Describing the constructing the human beast
- Clarifying the social features of bestiality association with violence and sex offending
- Describing The Human/Animal binary in the deconstructing of family relation.

suburban drawing room, a twenty-first-century Garden of Eden filled with all the accouterments of success and achievement. Martin appears to be at the height of his personal and professional strengths. His best friend is a journalist, Ross. He interviewed Martin for a television program commemorating Martin's winning of the Pritzker Prize for Architecture. He is a financially successful and intelligent man with an adoring wife and a thoughtful son. However, Martin winning the Pritzker Architecture Prize and being appointed as the architect for a multibillion-dollar project is a metaphor with deeper meaning. Martin has been given the keys to building a city, but he breaks the natural design of physical relationships by having sex with an animal. Albee is prompted to question how this would influence the construction of a whole community.

Martin recalls a vacation to the country when he marveled at the stunning beauty of the fields he traveled through. He discovered the countryside as a source of comfort. This rural haven is a dream for Martin, mirroring his planned expansion of the World City. It represents a way out of the city's difficulties and into paradise. Martin sees the fulfillment of that pastoral dream in Sylvia's love and succumbs to his desire. Martin discloses much to Ross on this excursion. Meanwhile, Ross attempts to get Martin to confess his infidelity "You're having an affair with her"; "And you're in love" (Albee, 2005, p.43)

Then, Martin replays his cowardly confession, and he starts to cry: "Yes! Yes! I am! I'm in love with her. Oh, Jesus! Oh, Sylvia! Oh, Sylvia!"



(Albee, 2005, p.44) In an interesting and dark stage moment, Ross asks, "Who is Sylvia?" (44), Martin wordlessly passes him a photo. Ross shouts "You're having an affair with a goat!" (Albee, 2005, p.46)

In a severe climax scene, Martin only replies "Yes," Ross insists that Martin has to tell Stevie the truth because "[y]ou're in very serious trouble" (Albee, p.45) Ross is shocked when he discovers that Martin, who has been devoted to Stevie his entire life, is currently cheating on her with a goat. Now Martin's infidelity has been revealed, that he has an attraction to a goat named Sylvia. Stevie doesn't know yet what's going on.

Martin has to confront the fallout of his infidelity. Ross has sent Stevie a letter in which he details Martin's affair with Sylvia. Rather than expressing sympathy for their marriage or the psychological consequences of Martin's relationship, Ross simply behaves as a protector of his friend's work and public reputation. A successful business and the impression of domestic harmony are his greatest priority to him.

Ross selects to inform Stevie about Martin's infidelity through a letter rather than as a more direct way of communication. This decision and the letter symbolize a form of detached attitude to human interactions presented throughout the play. Furthermore, the letter implies a return to traditionalism, which contradicts Martin's desire to participate in bestiality, solidifying Ross's position as a staunch opponent of his deviancy.

Stevie reads parts of the letter loudly, demonstrating the shallowness of its author's character "Because I love you both—respect you, love you—I can't stay silent at a time of crisis for your both, for Martin's public image and your own deeply devoted self" (Albee, p.56)

Throughout the play, Stevie wonders whether our behaviors simply define our identities or if there is something primordial and immovable about who we are. Throughout the play, each family member will be confronted with the same question. Martin and Stevie's marriage looks

flawless, and they also have a true relationship. They care very deeply about each other. Martin and Stevie have an authentic bond; they genuinely care for one another, and their marriage appears to be flawless.

Martin observes the repression and devastation around him but is powerless to stop it or mitigate it. He finds himself hopelessly alone "alone . . . all . . . alone!" (Albee, p.109) Man finds himself more in harmony with nature since he feels more secure than being with human beings and in the absence of a close person. In this play, nature is represented by an animal (the Goat). Martin's main problem seems to be alienation from his family and society.

Martin is alienated from his family and society. The lack of communication shows how it can destroy any relationship. Humans get used to their isolation, enjoy it, and prefer having their own space away from others. Humans grow acclimated to and prefer their isolation, and so as a result, they give up trying to interact with others. This solitude may appear tranquil at first, but if it persists for an extended period of time, it becomes a disorder faced by the fragmentation of family and friendship, and it can lead to psychological frustrations manifested in violent outbursts.

Alongside increasing urbanization, the family was constrained to adjust to a more sophisticated contemporary culture in which evolving family functions tended to lessen close familial relationships. All of these factors led to the disintegration of the family institution, raising the emotional worries of families impacted by death or forced migration, and creating economic and ideological uncertainty for the American family. In contrast, postwar commercials portrayed the suburban family as a harmonious and loving nuclear unit.

Albee emphasizes the social factor in shaping people's responsibilities depending on the status with which they are identified with a group. At first, Martin is seen as an ordinary man in this drama since he has fulfilled his societal obligations. However, he is defined as a person



with distinct social roles as a father to his son Billy, and husband to his wife, Stevie. As a father, he should serve as a serving guide to his son in the outside world, protecting and rearing him correctly and standing as a role model to his son. Ted Hughes states that:

the outer world and inner world are interdependent at every moment. We are simply the locus of their collisions. Two worlds, with mutually contradictory laws, or laws that seem to us to be so, collide afresh every second, struggling for peaceful coexistence. And whether we like it or not our lives are what we are able to make of that collision and struggle (Hughes, 1994, p.150).

This behavior criticized the hypocritical lifestyle that contradicted all narratives the Grays previously constructed about themselves and their connections with each other, the loving family that knows and understands each other perfectly. Albee denotes that the concepts we establish for ourselves are impermanent when Stevie actually sends an implicit admonition to the audience. Despite one's maturing self-image, there will still be situations when we are completely unprepared for how our tolerance is challenged. Therefore, Albee warns us of our proclivity to isolate ourselves from the horrible experiences of others.

Martin's passion for Sylvia reveals his actual, repressed seductive nature. He cannot deny this vitiated essential nature, even when it would save his existential dignity and marriage. Professor Bial states that:

When I read *The Goat* for the first time in 2009, I was amazed by the eloquent and witty phrasing of the main characters, Martin and Stevie. Albee managed to package such provocative matter as bestiality in a very compelling manner. Although most people in society don't even dare to think about zoophilia, ... The downfall of Martin at the end of *The Goat* and the painful mutual destruction of

Martin and Stevie is of course tragic. (Schleifer, 2000, p.3)

By examining humans as the "brute beast" reveals their inevitability of loss, suffering, and death. Albee intends to raise pity and terror in the audience; with the implications of animal abuse – rape by one human, slaughter by another – the play depicts realism and conventional notions of morality and justice. Examining humans as the "brute beast" reveals their inevitability of loss, suffering, and death.

The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like". For John Kuhn, "Sylvia's corpse forces Martin to face the full consequences of his act. (Kuhn, 2004, p.23)

The encounter scene between Martin and Sylvia brings the animal into the sphere of human ethics and makes Albee a humanistic playwright who depicts the human's journey of self-realization and reflects on ethical behaviour in difficult situations. Albee utilizes Sylvia as a dramatic technique to take Martin to a tragic end at the cost of his family and his status. In a dramatic moment: the existence of the dead goat on stage imposes ultimately imposes "facility" on Sylvia (Martin is obsessed with the goat's gaze) only to reduce that face to a carcass, (the violent reduction of the animal to the condition of pure physiology).

Gainor explains, "Stevie ultimately cannot accept an equation of herself with another kind of animal." (Gainor, 2005, p.214) Stevie ends up slaughtering the goat, coldly dragging its body to a sobbing Martin: "She loved you ... you say. As much as I do." Albee, p.62), leaving the audience potentially pondering about who is the animal: Stevie, the killer, or Sylvia, the one who is killed?

Albee focuses the attention on Martin's sorrow and remorse for the innocent victim (the goat). Thus, due to Sylvia's sexual



exploitation and slaughter, Martin is more sinning, Sylvia is depicted as a tragic scapegoat because it is an animal unable to verbally as Albee's points:

What I wanted people to do is not just sit there being judges of the characters. I wanted people to go to that play, and imagine themselves in the situation, and really think hard about how they would respond if it was happening to them” (Roudane, 2017, p.151).

Consequently, in his play, Albee depicted a tragedy of breaking the dualisms of natural and unnatural, culture and nature of human understanding. Man is a social animal and his actions are based on his social and cultural understandings. The death of the goat might be the ultimate consequence of marital reconciliation. On the other hand, Martin and Stevie's quest may be done, with both victims of a heavenly catastrophe. Instead, the audience is given a chance to change—to re-evaluate its self-definition and to examine instinctive moral judgments that are all too harmful (and simple) to make. Thus, Sylvia stands as a scapegoat for normalcy, just as Martin acts as a scapegoat for the desire to disrupt the existing order; both drives constitute the central tragedy here. Albee successfully raises the emotion of the audience by inserting a message of compassion towards both his family members and Sylvia (the goat).

3.2.2 Bestiality Association with Violence and sex offending

Sexual attraction to animals is rarely discussed within conservative societies' scope. Bestiality is just a mask that Albee uses to criticize the return of homosexuality. He addresses the controversial topic of sexuality in modern American society, which views bestiality as a normal and acceptable practice that seeks satisfaction from animals rather than humans. However, people have neglected their natural world and

committed crimes against nature. This reflects the sickness of man's instincts and innate nature. Thus, the play reveals how people can coexist with one another when they know how to conceal their heinous deeds expertly. Michael Portillo comments in "Beastly Behavior":

If they could see him through my eyes, maybe they would all understand,' blurts the protagonist of the play *The Goat or, Who Is Sylvia?* Martin while stepping out of his confessions, Edward Albee takes us one taboo further. Albee tells us that he is pushing the boundaries in a way that playwrights should. Now a day you have to push quite a distance to raise an eyebrow. It is possible that in our lifetimes, the play shocks people by challenging the intolerance of marriage between Martin and Stevie. (Portillo, 2001, p.125)

The Goat or Who is Sylvia? is one of those literary works that effectively shatter the illusions of contemporary American cultural and social ethics. Therefore, the protagonists are shown constantly struggling with their anxieties and existential anguish in society. This play is viewed as a rite of passage that allows both characters and audience members to experience the same situations, and mental, emotional, and spiritual states. And invariably leads to violence, anger, and revenge which are part and parcel of man's collapse. Albee's dramatic characters confront the limits of a culture where the individual is torn between the desire for belonging and that of control and independence, both fundamental human drives leading to the fatal crash, dismissal of illusions, and the loss of a sense of an anchored identity.

The issue here is moral relativism inside the framework of a supposedly flawless perfect marriage between a man and a woman, where invisible darkness may pervade. The play



essentially discusses the fall of a bourgeois and the great of a middle-class family. Martin pushes himself and his family to the edge of catastrophe, testing the limits of their tolerance and love for each other when he confesses his love affair to the family friend Ross. When he replaces his family with a goat, Martin has no idea how much he has damaged them.

Martin's selfishness creates an emotional and psychological breakdown and social trauma. Thus, this study aims to show the subsequences of Martin's bestial infidelity and immoral desire for his life and the family members. Martin's job as an architect is a metaphor for the truth he designs for a living. As a result, his sexual relationship with an animal indicates that he acts against human thought and nature.

By accentuating animal abuse, Albee revealed the callous nature of humans. Men's lack of moral awareness, especially their behavioural and intellectual downfalls, has been highlighted by exposing the mental and physical torment they inflicted on both humans and animals. He blasts social convention and precipitates a crisis. Martin confesses that "I've fallen in love!" but that "[s]he's a goat; Sylvia is a goat!" Martin then suddenly drops his Cowardly manner and says flatly, "She's a goat". After a long pause, Stevie laughs. In the beginning, Martin speaks out to Stevie in a parodic tone, but the reality slips out immediately: "She's a goat!" (Ibid, p. 100)

This goat becomes a sacrificial victim of this bestial anomaly. Despite the fact that Albee appears to be no stranger to sensitive themes, he was well conscious that *The Goat's* drama would strike an extraordinarily discordant chord with the audience. Ben Branley comments that *The Goat* is "a very appropriate Powerful ...extraordinary... Four decades after Virginia Woolf sent shock waves through the mainstream theatre, Mr. Albee still asks questions that no major American dramatist dares to ask." (Schleifer, 2000, p.45) Much of the critical discourse around the play has focused on the

bestial, gruesome behavior. In *Stretching My Mind* Albee indicates:

I mentioned the idea of the play to a number of people whose opinions I respect and I was shocked by the hostility and condemnation I received for even considering writing about such a matter. Clearly, I was on to something! —either the collapse of my mind or a set of propositions perplexing enough to demand examination. And I went on." (Albee, 2005, p.261).

Martin's devastating words damage Stevi, fundamentally making her shocked, suffocated, and disgusted. "You're sicker than I thought." (Albee, p.103) Martin's expression of his first sight of Sylvia:

(Sad) you don't understand. (Pause) I didn't know what it was – what I was feeling. It was ... it wasn't like anything I'd felt before; it was ... so ...amazing, so . . . extraordinary! There she was, just looking at me with those eyes of hers. (Albee, p.103)

Stevie listens in revulsion as her husband describes his relationship with the goat. Martin's love for Sylvia cannot coexist in Stevie's mind.

Stevie: (Abrupt; cold) Stay away from me; stay there. You smell of goat, you smell of shit, you smell of all I cannot imagine being able to smell. Stay away from me!

Martin: (Arms wide; hopeless) I love you!

Billy: (Softly) Jesus. [. . .]

Stevie: How can you love me when you love so much less?

Martin: (Even more hopeless) Oh, God.

Billy: Fucking a goat?! (52; emphasis in original)

Martin's apology "I'm...I'm sorry" (Albee, p.48)

Sylvia, of course, epitomizes Martin's sexual deviancy. More than that, she is a goat, an animal



typically associated with sexual encounters and fertility, highlighting the animalistic aspect of Martin's affair. Sylvia also represents a wider argument about sexual taboos that Albee is making, one regarding homosexuality and the so-called "slippery slope." The slippery-slope theory basically claims that homosexual conduct leads to aberrant sexual behavior, such as bestiality. Albee asserted Martin's affair with a goat as a part to demonstrate how stupid this argument is, by showing how drastically different it is for a human to love someone of the same gender and a man to love someone of a different species " the play has four human beings and one goat ... and it involves interrelationships." (Gainor, 2005, p. 200).

The play is a metaphor for what might happen if someone did not respect society's taboos. Albee stages the drama in Martin and Stevie's house, but the suggestion is that it will have a far-reaching impact on society. Indeed, Martin must be "sick" and "disgusting" when the goat becomes an object of his desire. The shameful equality between Martin's affection for Stevie and his passion for the repulsive "goat" makes her feel existentially degraded. Her statement, "How can you love me when you love so much less?" tends to confirm such a parallel. (Ibid, p.52) Stevie's outrage and tragedy stem from revealing her husband's real passions and ability to love the unbelievable. Actually, when Stevie starts smashing the house furniture, Martin remains unable to capture how his relationship with Sylvia could have badly impacted her.

Stevie: (Shaking her head; oddly objective) How much do you hate me?

Martin: (Hopeless) I love you. (Pause) And I love her. (Pause) And there it is. (Stevie howls three times, slowly, deliberately; a combination of rage and hurt). (Albee, p.82)

However, the animal indeed exists within us all. A bestialist is frequently regarded as an opportunist. Martin has achieved the ultimate

passion he sought, but he completely undermined his wife and family. Martin wants Stevie, whom he still loves, to accept and understand him for who he is. Martin's behavior cancels out Stevie's identity as a woman and a wife, therefore; Albee's depiction of Stevie's destruction of the domestic scenery indicates her "act of self-demolition." (Robinson, 2011. p.65)

Albee undermined the tragic heroism of Martin due to the powerful male's breaking of the norms, the woman used to be sacrificed. His double life would create him as a cowardly and pathetic character rather than a tragic one because "the tragic feeling is invoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing – his sense of personal dignity." (Miller, 1996, p.213). Many of today's concerns are reflected in Albee's *The Goat's* themes, motifs, and subtexts.

The Goat symbolizes the framework of the human state or dilemma in which humankind has lost its previous meanings and has not yet acquired new ones. In essence, it illustrates man in transformation. The other part of the drama is the atmosphere of terror for unclear reasons. Anxiety, fear, and tension occur not simply as a result of the characters' antagonism, but also as an unnamed 'threat.' Most of his plays are filled with such instinctual fear and anxiety. Stevie's thoughts are echoed by a similar worry for the uncertain future as Martin declares his love for Sylvia-the goat.

Martin's view of social hypocrisy is an anagnorisis in which society is primarily concerned with civility and decency rather than love and self-comfortable. In modern society, a successful career and the appearance of domestic serenity are of paramount importance. Martin sees the world from the perspective of an innocent; from this perspective what he sees is reflected in Sylvia's eyes. Martin is shamelessly seeking comfort from animal love out of habit or loneliness. Martin rejects accepting his love for Sylvia as an illness or perversion; it is simply



love. "It was as if an alien came out of whatever it was, and it . . . took me with it, and it was . . . a purity, and it relates to nothing whatever, to nothing that can be related to!" (Albee, p.81)

Therefore, Martin rejects the justification that his passion for Sylvia is "just sex, either a recreation to be enjoyed or a sickness to be cured. Instead, Martin insists on his true, emotional love affair with a goat." (Olsen, 2016). Sexual union with animals occurs as a consequence of that emotional intimacy. Bestiality is a metaphoric union of man and goat which represents the recovery of man's animal nature. Martin is ridiculed for his delusional love for Sylvia as Clum states: "Martin seems attracted sexually and spiritually to the goat's lack of human consciousness, which he confuses with innocence," in "a bizarre form of the midlife crisis faced by many of Albee's characters." (Clum, 2012. p.187)

Although Martin laments being misperceived, he seems unashamed of his emotions for Sylvia. He admits to having already attended AA-style counseling sessions for those who have sexual relationships with animals to forestall the fact that he requires professional help. Each member of the group had their own human story to share. On the other hand, Martin was confused by the others' shame and suffering. He questions why people in his support group were so "unhappy; "I didn't understand why they were there – why they were all so...unhappy; what was wrong with...with...being in love ... like that" (Albee, p.70). Martin also naively indicates that "No one [gets] hurt" as a result of man-beast relationships (Albee, p.71)

Albee's play confirms the human-animal relation and the profound relationship between them. Martin's connection with the goat illustrates the equal existence of animal beings to human beings on earth.

Martin: And there was a connection there—a communication—that, well ... an epiphany, I

guess comes closest, and I knew what was going to happen. (Albee, 2005, p.90).

Martin argues with Stevie about the existence of animals as beings and values like human beings have:

Stevie: (Pause; then, even more sure) Yes! It is about you being an animal!

Martin: (Thinks a moment; quietly) I thought I was.

Stevie: (Contempt) Hunh!

Martin: I thought I was; I thought we all were ... animals.

Stevie: (Cold rage) We stay with our own kind!

Martin: (Gentle; rational) Oh, we fall in love with many other creatures ... dogs and cats. (Albee, p.93)

Martin reconstructs his shock and incredulity that others fail to comprehend his transformation, which is beyond words due to the beloved. Through the goat, Martin's authentic self, as well as his real sexual nature, are demonstrated. Martin is definitely guilty of human-animal rape causing Stevie's rage at her husband's sanity

Stevie: You take advantage of this...creature!? You...rape this...animal and convince yourself that it has to do with love!?! (Albee, p.87)

This deviant conduct has shattered his former identities as a husband and father. His tragedy stems from his failure to miscommunicate sincerely with a woman he claims to love. As a result, the husband and wife clash against one another. Stevie's speech focuses on her anguish and the complete betrayal and disillusionment she experiences due to her husband's infidelity. On the other hand, Martin's determination to make Stevie realize his conduct is at stake. He doesn't seem to concede how his actions caused his wife so much heartache. In this regard, Keith Sagar (1981) states:



The gulf between man and animal is also the gulf between civilized man and his animal self, which is also his angelic or demonic self the only self-capable of recognizing divinity in the darkness and being at one with it. It is the doom of all animals to live according to one categorical imperative. Man's doom is different: the doom of consciousness and choice, the burden precisely of not knowing what to do, of perpetually questioning a deaf and dumb world and peering into the darkness for a sign. (Sagar, 1981, p. 15)

Martin's affection for Sylvia was an indestructible force in his mind. However, he has evolved into a stereotypically isolated figure. Martin is now obviously abandoned and alone in his emotions; his ultimate hope is to be understood by his wife. At the outset of the problem, Martin is confronted with a stark decision: to keep Sylvia in the dark and live in the illusion of his marriage, or come out as an adoring Sylvia and blow everything apart. Martin distinctly states Stevie's recent speech: "She said what she wanted to say; she finished . . . and she left. She slammed the front door and left" (Albee, 2005, p.93). By slamming the door, Martin seems to assume that Stevie has ended the action, completed her role, and left the house of marriage. In this extraordinarily powerful image, Stevie has embraced her new role as a tragic heroine with revenge.

Stevie's oath means she does what it says "You won't get away with it". It is firmly in the genre of revenge tragedy, where justice requires the avenger to become the deed's executive. Martin blames Ross for his own tragedy and refuses to admit responsibility for it. He believes that if it hadn't been for Ross's letter, he would have "worked it out" (Albee, p.106)

In answer to Billy's question about whether he killed Stevie or not, Martin says "No, I did not kill her – of course not – but I think I might as well have. I think we've killed each other" (Ibid, p.92). They find themselves in a situation where words have lost or switched value. Stevie finds herself totally defenseless and in a disempowered position. She starts using violence to gain control

over the situation. It is a tragic climax stage moment when Stevie has committed the greatest violation. She enters "dragging a dead goat. The goat's throat is cut; the blood is down Stevie's dress, on her arms. She stops." (Albee, p.109)

Even though the goat is essentially a home-wrecker, the spectators cannot help but sympathize with her as her body is brought on stage. Although hundreds of goats are slaughtered every day, the death of a goat shock the audience in the play since Martin loves her. By slashing Sylvia's neck and hurling her corpse at Martin, Stevie put an end to the conflict and brought Martin down with her, precisely as she had done before leaving him alone in the ruin of their home. In *The Goat*, Sylvia's corpse becomes the basic problem for taking Martin's love seriously. Martin is devastated. He pleads and then yowls in agony:

Martin: What have you done!? Oh, my God, what have you done!?

Martin: What did she do!? What did she ever do!? I ask you: what did she ever do!? (Albee, p.103)

The metaphorical union of man and goat is dead. Stevie's justification of killing Sylvia as a tragic justice is simple and clear: "She loved you ... you say. As much as I do" (Albee, 2005, p.110) Eventually, Sylvia may not be the only victim in the play; Martin and Stevie have ruined one another. She comments "Why are you surprised? What did you expect me to do"? Martin's desire is attacked by everyone around him, culminating in Sylvia's death, since most communities believe heterosexual relationships are an aberration. Martin talks to Sylvia as "her" and "whom" throughout the performance, which Stevie dislikes since he is trying to humanize an animal. He is taking what is abnormal and turning it into natural, whereas Stevie is determined to keep this type of language from being conventional.



Human guilt about killing of animals is rationalized away through psychodynamic means. Stevie slashes the throat of the goat demonstrating her determination to go to even more extraordinary distances than Martin could have imagined. It is the amount of violence in her that shocks us, although for Stevie her final revengeful act is justified and cathartic. Stevie's response grows gradually and steadily. In only twenty-four hours, she experiences the whole rampaging spectrum of rage: disbelief and irritability at the discovery of this terrible news, disgust, outrage, uncontrolled fury, and, finally, the violent act of killing the goat.

More critically, this act indicates society's aversion to sexual taboos such as bestiality. As a typical a symbol of society and its conventions, Stevie completely shuts off any possibilities of Martin's enjoyment in his deviancy by using force to enforce societal standards. Structurally, this play is a marital tragedy. Martin's bestiality is the catalyst for Stevie's descent into violence, which reveals her animal nature that is identical to her husband's. She changes and learns more than the passive Martin. In her article "Ties of Blood", as Daniel states that:

if the fathers are responsible for bringing a curse on the family through their selfishness and abdication of patriarchal duties, then mothers, likewise, renounce their maternal role which might alleviate the curse brought by the father. (Kadhem, 2008, p.186)

3.2.3 The Human/Animal Binary in the Deconstructing of Family Relations

Albee considers his works to be family plays since most of them are essential to addressing domestic and family issues. The pertinence of the family as one of modern society's core components, the influence of the family in molding an individual's personality and perspective, and the family as a destination of accomplishment and frustration are all generally acknowledged. "The family is the basic unit of

society, the unit of growth and experience, of fulfillment and failure. The family is also the unit of illness and Health." (Ackerman, 1964, p. 175)

He believes the family is the most significant element in modern society, reflecting all of the traditional American family, which includes a father, a mother, and one or two children, and their conventional responsibilities in the family. Albee is frequently concerned with upper-middle-class white Americans. This type is basically consistent with the theatre; this is the class that relates to the Theatre of the Absurd.

Albee's emphasis is on norms about the construction of families and relationships and standards about which familial connections are deemed meaningful and valued. Thus, as a dramatist, he is a firm advocate of the belief that each performance of a playwright's work must be faithful to the writer's core intention.

The theme of familial disintegration pervades Albee's plays. His absurd plays reflect humanity's interaction with the breaking up of the American family, where lack of communication and sharing emotions seems impossible to most characters in this play. This failure of communication between family members reveals the state of severe hopelessness and frustration in which they live, which leads to a man's loss of desire to communicate with others, even his wife. The play has received mixed reviews. Some people believe that the play's primary theme is bestiality and find the subject matter disturbing; others believe that the play serves a much larger purpose than bestiality such as loneliness, the isolated self, family disintegration, quest for identity, and meaninglessness in human life "A good play can make us more aware of our failings, our responsibilities to ourselves and others . . . It may be able to change us into better people." (Albee, p. 69)

At the beginning of the play, there is a clear sense of unity between Martin and his long-term wife, Stevie; the dialogue addresses the marital history of a husband and his wife. Stevie, the



female protagonist, is an emblematic contemporary character. She has been Martin's wife for three decades. Therefore, the play attracts a wide audience since it depicts a woman's traumatic experience and sorrow in a suburban home when a lady discovers that her beloved husband is having an affair with a goat which brings her down. Stevie inquired of Martin about Ross' letter which revealed his secret relationship with Sylvia, a goat. Here, she questions her previously unflinching perception of her husband. When confronted with her husband's unimaginable behavior, Stevie must question herself if Martin is still the same caring, morally upfront man she married. Furthermore, when a woman and a four-legged beast equally share her husband's affection, she must examine her own self-esteem and status as a proud mother and supporting wife. Effectively, *The Goat* questions our understanding of personal identity and encourages us to sympathize with, rather than separate ourselves from, the problems of its characters.

Albee's drama illustrates a mirror reflecting society's dreams and nightmares for its audience. One of the important things that made Albee a prominent dramatist in the history of American theater is that all plays address the crises being faced by the people and the state of the American community. All over history until the 21st century, marriage has been considered sacrosanct. In his literary works, he criticized the new material state that prevailed in American society during his period and called for adherence to the values and ideals of human relationships. His plays expose an unfamiliar, disharmonious, and disquieting world to its spectators. Albee addressed this problematic and embarrassing topic of bestiality "People don't want to go see [plays] because they are real experiences," he remarked. "They're not safe fantasy experience. There's something about the reality of a play that's disturbing to a lot of people." (Albee, p. 68).

The goat humiliation also leads Stevie to confront the emptiness of her marriage, overwhelming her with the pain of loss. She loses Martin as he "screws up" by breaking something that cannot be fixed, by loving her and an animal equally, "shatter[ing] the glass" and closing every possibility for forgiveness (Albee, p.74).

Stevie Hamartia is characterized by blind faith in her husband's fidelity, and her ignorance of the true value of her existence. When Martin admitted to her that he was having relations with Sylvia, she laughed it off as a joke. She drew little attention to the unusual smell she smelled on Martin's clothing. Stevie shows her monologue about her failure to take Martin's initial confession seriously: "You said it right out and I laughed. You told me! You came right out (emphasis added) and fucking told me, and I laughed, and I made jokes about going to the feed store, and I laughed. Until it stopped; until the laughter stopped." (Albee, 2005, p.58)

Albee's plays often present women who are strong-willed and considered maternal rather than romantic. Consequently, Stevie is not concerned about Martin's health, as we might expect, but instead, existential indignation lies "if there's one thing you don't put on your plate, no matter how exotic your tastes may be is . . . bestiality". Martin elaborates that each group member ended up with animals due to profound unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their life. "Not everyone is satisfied in that way," he points out, "No matter. And I was unhappy there, for they were all unhappy." (Albee, p.73).

Martin's love for a goat faces a tragic fate. This tragic fate is the fate of any and all who would transgress the lines of kinship that confer intelligibility on culture. Albee exposes the fatal male force and animosity that can violate the woman and hurt her. Stevie feels humiliated and hysterical by Martin's emotional passion for animals. Part of her humiliation is that, as the "wronged wife". Stevie views Martin's horror



action as the source of an unpardonable existential defect. Stevie: "If I'm going to kill you I need to know exactly why all the details". Stevie raises herself as a martyr, weeping "Cut me! Scar me forever!" (Albee, p.77)

Ultimately, Albee utilizes the play to re-examine the fundamental concerns of identity raised in the play. The emphasis is now on Stevie's struggle and a quest for truth and a journey through loyalty. In revenge, she makes Martin lose both herself and Sylvia. She cries furiously:

Stevie: You have brought me down ... You have brought me down, and, Christ! I'll bring you down with me!.You have brought me down to nothing!" (Albee, p.89)

Her astonishment deepens as Martin insists that he still loves her. Stevie's death of the goat at the end of the play is a metaphor for catastrophe. She evokes her husband's tremendous suffering at the loss of his love, and she imposes this agony, the same pain she feels as a result of his betrayal of their marriage.

Loss can stir up rage, growing into violence, leading to further loss time and again. Stricken with grief and driven by loss, Stevie finds herself devastated in being loved by Martin in an equal amount to an animal. Having lost, Stevie feels that she has been brought down to nothing. This experience delineates the ties she has to Martin, and with the loss of these ties that constitute her sense of self, she no longer knows who she is. She falls into grief and grief. or "deep woe" as Stevie herself puts it, she apprehends how vulnerable she is, how physically dependent, beyond herself, to the other: "I've laid it all out for you; take all your knives! Cut me! Scar me forever!" (Albee, p.84). and this is why does she engage in violence and kill the goat. Stevie engages in violence because grief is unbearable and from that unbearability one kills.

While everyone is shocked by what they see as bestiality, Martin perceives it as a mutual love that is equal to the love he feels for Stevie, his wife. Upon discovering the truth, Stevie, who

admits to her profound love for Martin, voices the possibility of killing him,104 for he has "broken something and it can't be fixed." (Albee, p64) Stevie wonders, about her worth, and significance as a wife and partner? Her husband's affirmation of his love for her drops on deaf ears. She is less anxious about the basic act of bestiality than about its prominence over her sense of self. Stevie feels desecrated and debased by the idea of this strange love:

Stevie: You love me. Let's see if I understand the phrase. You love me.

Martin. Yes!

Stevie: But I'm a human being; ... I don't understand.

Martin. Oh, God!

Stevie: How can you love me when you love so much less? (Albee, p.52)

Martin does his best to describe to his wife, Stevie, how he may have a bond with Sylvia the goat. He explains to her that she is a creature that loves him just as much as Stevie. However, this explanation led to Stevie slashing the goat's throat, ultimately destroying Martin's relation with it. In general, goats are recognized for fertility and sexuality. This association relates to and maybe enhances the issue of sexual taboos. The fact that Martin has relationships with an animal that is generally associated with sexuality highlights the animalistic essence of Martin's escapades. This relationship ultimately confirms Martin's insistence that what he feels for Sylvia is a real sense, firmly placing it in the realm of deviant pleasure as Bailin's remarks:

The boundary Martin crosses goes far beyond bestiality; his words are as transgressive, if not more transgressive, than his behavior, for the way he understands and communicates the nature of his relationship destroys his world, more so than what he actually does with Sylvia in the barn. [. . .] If language normally civilizes and humanizes, here it uncivilizes, dehumanizes, and animalizes. (Bailin, 2006. pp. 5–23)



Albee has a unique style to bring his audience's attention to the issue of abstract fracturing of the woman's identity and the interrogation of personal identity. Stevie's increasing revulsion: she doubts the authenticity of her own identity when her husband forsakes her for a barnyard animal "But tell me you love me and an animal – both of us! – equally? The same way?" (Albee, 2005, p.88)

Family structures and roles have been modified throughout the last two centuries by the social, cultural, economic, and historical contexts that are often significantly larger than any single family can control. The family was the emblem of integrity and solidarity within a cohesive rural culture in the early phases of America. The Grays shift from familiar cultural traditions to contradictory conditions. More than twenty years of marriage can be doubted in a single afternoon. Stevie sends an implicit admonition to the audience when she implies that the concepts we establish for ourselves are impermanent "Albee's characters are interrelated and cohesive from play to play. They represent a family unit experiencing the failures, hopes, dilemmas, and values of the American society." (Baxandall, 1967. p.19)

Stevie is extremely skeptical about their marriage's foundation. What seemed to be an illusion-free confederation based on honesty and sensitivity was in fact the ultimate deception. She remarks, **Stevie:** We all prepare for jolts along the way, disturbances of the peace, the lies, the evasions, the infidelities—if they happen ... we think we can handle everything, whatever comes along, but we don't know, do we? (Albee, 2005, p.59).

The family is the basic unit of society, the unit of growth and experience, of fulfillment and failure. The family is also the unit of Illness and Health. (Ackerman, 1964, p. 175) Stevie describes the rules governing "The Way the Game is Played have been abandoned, our sense of tolerance is challenged yet again." (Albee,

2005, p.59). Thus, this collapse is an entirely logical expression of the deviant act and a loving human-animal relationship. The characters in this play, such as those in any other Albee's work, are not given solutions to their dilemmas. Instead of repulsion, the author hopes that the audience's reaction will catalyze self-examination. Ross constructs a moral distinction between Martin's infidelity with Sylvia as he remarks: "This isn't the stuff that stops a career in its tracks for a little while—humiliation, public remorse, then back up again. This is beyond that—way beyond it! Somebody will catch you at it. (Albee, p.108)

The Gray family's future in *The Goat* would be precarious. The play portrays the collapse of the organizations of law and marriage, but it also reveals universal disintegration in a setting of metaphors and symbols (Al-Alwan, 2006. P.205). While Stevie's heinous murder, is awful with its horrific inevitability and indicates an irreversible schism between her and Martin, there may be hope for redemption. Just as father and son realized the need to confront each other with a blank slate—to reconstruct their connection in the spirit of compassion and acceptance—Stevie may be able to do the same with Martin after Sylvia's death.

Not only Martin and Stevie but Billy is also full of grief. He is living in a condition of grief over the misrecognition between himself and his familie's ties which breeds within him a sense of loss. In a moment of confusion in which typical family connections have been deconstructed and renegotiated, a moment in which the present is almost as doubtful of the future, father and son create a gap in familial attachments. Martin realizes the implications of his involvement with Sylvia for the first time. Billy's "great Mom and great Dad" are great no more. (Albee, 2005, p.101).

As the play closes, nobody is physically hurt. Yet Martin and Stevie will never be happy again. Billy will never be able to see his father as a role model as he first did. He is desperate and has to rethink his entire existence within his family.



In the final line, Billy closes the play with a question that sheds light on the family's unity and survival: "Dad? Mom?" (Albee, 2005, p.110) He assumes a tragic role alongside his parents. Billy may question whether Martin and Stevie are his "legitimate" parents. If Billy is adopted, he becomes the scapegoat. Billy's psyche has been devastated by Martin's relationship with Sylvia. His initial perception of Martin as a hero, father, and infallible protector has been transformed into a blank page. Martin is merely a man with whom Billy must familiarize himself. He has watched the figurative killings of two individuals whom he worshipped and has appeared terribly distressed, but more mature. His parents, possibly out of a desire to shield him, or perhaps out of unwillingness to confront his emotional reaction to Martin's infidelity, try to diminish his presence in the family drama.

4. Conclusions

Edward Albee's works generally address the challenges facing individuals and the status of American society after World War II, which is one of the elements that made him a notable character in the history of American theater. Albee critiqued the new material condition and the deviation behaviors that reigned in American society during his time and argued for devotion to values and ideals in human interactions in his literary works. Albee's collection of work encompasses a wide variety of artistic and thematic topics. His plays frequently transition from the sorrowful to the humorous or from the realistic to the ludicrous within the length of a single page in his continual quest to communicate with his audience.

The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia? in which the dramatist expertly mixes bathos with melancholy in depicting one man's love affair with a domesticated animal and the consequent breakdown of his family. Albee emphasizes the aspects in which Americans remain estranged from one another, desperately seeking escape from a death-in-life existence in each of his dramas.

The Goat is simply a story of the bonds of kinship that get broken and those that get formed. It is also an analysis of a family which is forced to reconstruct its spiritual beliefs and left hopelessly isolated from one another. Albee's dramatic figures face the limitations of a civilization in which the person is trapped between the impulse to belong to the family on the one hand and the bestiality passion both leading to a deadly confrontation. Martin's act represents a fracture in the societal system in this play. He is defined as a person with distinct social roles as a father to his son Billy, and husband to his wife, Stevie. But, his bestiality ruins the well-ordered world and disrupts each family member's sense of self, leading to the subsequent collapse of his marriage and the goat's slaughter. Albee was thinking about real bodily injury, yet Sylvia is treated as a human by Martin. He talks to her (nearly) constantly as if she were human.

Thus the impact is the same as for a woman. Martin's relationship with Sylvia moves the realistic ambiance of the play onto a symbolic level and invites the audience to see beyond the literal in this extraordinary contact. While Albee's goat proves real as the blood-drenched carcass is dragged on stage at the end of the play, it also serves to convey something beyond a literal animal with whom Martin comes into sexual contact. On a symbolic level, this anthropomorphized goat could be any other – human and animal – with whom we enter into an ethical relationship and anyone who makes an ethical demand upon us. It could also be anything that pushes us over the boundaries of what we are politically and culturally allowed to desire.

Martin's experience with Sylvia gives us a way of thinking about the relationship between the self and the other as well as an insight into the relation between ethics and violence. With the inclusion of an animal at the heart of his play, Albee brings the animal into his experiment with the tragic genre to explore what it means to be human. This experiment challenges normative morality and destabilises the conventional



understandings of the tragic in crossing the boundaries between human and animal.

Martin is defined as a person with distinct social roles as a father to his son Billy and husband to his wife Stevie. But his abnormal sexuality ruins the well-ordered family life. He is devastated by Sylvia's death. The dead goat reflects the characters' fragile relationship. Nothing can be forgiven, and matters will never be the same again. The perfect family relationship has been shattered, so the audience perceives Sylvia's death as more significant than any nameless goat's death.

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