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THE THEME OF TRUTH AND ILLUSION IN
TINY ALICE

TESINA PARA OBTENER EL GRADO DE LICENCIATURA EN
LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA PRESENTA



FILÓSOFÍA
Y LETRAS

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Wayne F. Sewell

TO TOMO, TANIA AND IAN

**Albee: What a critic should tell his reader
is how effectively he thinks the play
has said whatever it chooses to say.**

**H. Hewes: As I closed my notebook, I
wondered if Mr. Albee would
have been pleased if some-
one had called Tiny Alice^a
play that unfolds with great
skill, whatever the hell it
is choosing to say. (1)**

The present analysis attempts to trace the theme of truth and illusion as Edward Albee presents it throughout Tiny Alice, an essential theme which has been mentioned by many drama critics but has seldom been studied.

Edward Albee received all sorts of criticism, both good and bad, after the presentation of the play, which first opened at the Billy Rose Theater in New York City, the 29th of December, 1964. Critics such as Gerald Weales think Albee is THE American playwright of the 1960's. (2) In support of this opinion, George Wellwarth states that the new promise Albee had presented with The Zoo Story and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? admits that Tiny Alice aroused more controversy and criticism than any other Albee play. (3) It is, as John Markson points out, "that drama critics" reviews ranged from 'lofty and profound' to 'childishly prurient'. Individuals who had seen the play seemed to suffer the emotional extremism of 'All-For-It' or 'All-Against-It'. (4)

Nevertheless, most critics agree that Albee as a modern dramatist fulfills one of the tasks of today's theater: to protest against what is bad in order to progress. (5) Albee himself believes it is his responsibility to be a "sort of demonic social critic" and to present the world and people in it as he sees it. (6)

Albee's plays, says Gerald Weales, form a unity as a whole, even though each new play seems different in style and

form. There is a constant repetition of interest "in the basic assumptions about the human condition"⁽⁷⁾. The playwright is mainly concerned with the separateness which exists among human beings. Throughout the play he shows the way man attempts to transcend his isolation by violence or love.

In all of his plays Albee shows the accommodations forced on modern man by society. At times the characters are confronted with such stereotypes as Jerry -the eternal wanderer and truth seeker- in The Zoo Story, or the innocent who is attacked by his social surroundings, like Malcolm in the play which carries his name. Throughout Albee's plays, he continuously "attacks the very foundations of the American optimism"⁽⁸⁾. He presents the uselessness of the values of the North American society and the consequent absurdity of the human condition.⁽⁹⁾ But it is though Tiny Alice that the author provides the audience a new perspective: illusion and ideals are a meaningful and liberating part of the lonesome reality that humans must face in a corrupt society. However, Albee accepts illusion and ideals as a positive force throughout Tiny Alice because Julian, the hero of the play, is able to distinguish this imaginary world from the real one that surrounds him.

In The Zoo Story, Peter, the image of a self-satisfied man, is sheltered from the discomfort of basic human emotions. He is aware of the human condition only in the abstract.⁽¹⁰⁾ As

Peter sits on "his" bench and reads, he is unconcerned by his lack of freedom. He has fulfilled the requirements of the status that society imposes on the average man. He is the Everyman of the "ideal capitalist citizen"⁽¹¹⁾. Peter escapes facing the reality of a useless human existence and inevitable death by "not-living"⁽¹²⁾ and having his "non-being". He is content with his wife, two daughters, two cats, and two parakeets.

Jerry is introduced as an antagonist. His careless dress and weariness show that he is a wanderer. Jerry lives in an old "brownstone rooming house in a run-down neighborhood"⁽¹³⁾ in which his daily hell consists of escaping the landlady's dog.

Jerry is conscious of his human condition and knows he lives in an empty world where there is little human communication. He approaches Peter in search of this communication. He tries to transmit the parallel between man's isolated life and what he has seen at the zoo: the animals are put into cages to be separated from each other as man is restricted in his social set-up. Peter refuses to comprehend. Jerry then continues with "The Story of Jerry and the Dog" and explains how he tried to come closer to the landlady's dog. His first effort consisted of being nice to the dog and making friends with him. When this failed, Jerry tried offering the dog a poisoned hamburger. Through his experience, he learned that the only way to some understanding was a mixture of kindness and love.

We walk past each other safely; we have an understanding. It's very sad, but you'll have to admit that it is an understanding. We had made many attempts at contact, and we had failed. The dog has returned to garbage, and I to solitary but free passage, if that such further loss can be said to be gain. I have learned that neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates any effect beyond themselves; I have learned that the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotion.

(14)

Peter again refuses to understand, but Jerry has already intruded upon his world, an intrusion that reaches its climax when Jerry throws himself upon the knife. From then on Peter's life will change, not so much because he laments Jerry's death but because he is aware that he will never be able to live in peace with himself. Jerry has made Peter face up to his true identity and thus discover his own inanity.

(15)

In this play, the only alternatives Albee presents are Jerry's lonesome and unprotected world or Peter's empty, conventional and absurd one. They are both a product of the social setting they live in. As almost all of Albee's characters,

they are lonesome figures, the result of a "collapse of the values in the Western World."⁽¹⁶⁾

The American Dream represents this collapse more than any other play. It attacks the misplaced hero worship, the values based on the "crassest commercialism", the flabby unthinking complacency, and the brutal destruction of human emotions.⁽¹⁷⁾ Each character in the play represents a specific stereotype of the North American society. Mommy, who had already been presented in The Sandbox, is the head of a middleclass family. She is aggressive and domineering; she prefers appearance to feelings and emotions. Through Mommy, the sterility of modern society is presented.

Daddy is the passive "money supplier", whose only concern is the economic stability of the family. He never questions his own existence. His attitude toward life can be compared to Peter's in The Zoo Story.

Grandma represents the principle of freedom and individuality. She is the "solid pioneer stock out of which the American Dream might have come had it not been corrupted instead".⁽¹⁸⁾ Grandma is the one that realizes the absurdity of the American ideals and she is aware of society's insensibility. However, she is old and does not fight for her ideals, nor does she stand up to her principles. She evades them by leaving the house.

Mommy, Daddy, and Mrs. Baker prefer the good-looking young man -- the American dream-- to the other "bumble" they had received before. They prefer appearance to reality, for reality is too dangerous. (19) The Van, mentioned throughout the play, is Mommy and Daddy's threat; they are not sure it exists, but use it to scare Grandma:

Mommy: Why... where's Grandma? Grandma's not here Where's Grandma? And look! The boxes are gone, Too. Grandma's gone, and so are the boxes. She's taken off, and she's stolen something Daddy!

Mrs. Baker: Why Mommy, the van man was here.

Mommy: The what?

Mrs. Baker: The van man. The van man was here.

Mommy: No, no, that's impossible. No. There's no such thing as the van man. There is no such thing as the van man. We....we made him up. (20)
Grandma? Grandma?

The van man links Grandma's past values with the modern emptiness: he takes Grandma away, and at the same time the young American dream arrives. This dream boy is the Western world's

new promise. He is beautiful in appearance but senseless. The emotions belonged to his twin brother, who was mutilated. Both would have formed one complete being. The "bumble" was killed because he sought satisfaction; ever since then the good-looking, but absurd young man, had been Mommy and Daddy's hope. The dream appears as a response to the illusion they had wanted. They do not care that he is empty and therefore incomplete. His physiognomy is what counts, not his inner feelings that could give him life. He represents the substitution of false values for real ones. (21)

The theme in The American Dream is not illusion and reality, but rather one of illusion as a false value of North American society. As James Baldwin says, "It is hardly a dream anymore: Its vision of the antiseptic passivity of American life, and the resulting death of the masculine sensibility makes it more close to resemble a nightmare". (22)

In The American Dream Albee allows some sort of illusion as necessary in order to live: Grandma lives with the hope that the van man will come and he does. However illusion should not become the governing principle and motive of life. Like Grandma, man should be a combination of reality, illusion and emotions. If any one is missing, man becomes a mere empty and senseless appearance.

In Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Albee presents two

couples. Nick and Honey remain passive while they watch George and Martha play their games, into which they slowly become involved. They are horrified at seeing the result of George and Martha's marriage, and yet at the same time they identify with them. Nick as a young instructor, newly arrived at the university, is anxious to know a professor who has had some years of experience. However Nick soon realizes that George is not interested in teaching and that he is becoming the object of George's attacks. Tom F. Driver cannot determine "why Peter or Nick would remain present in the face of such irrational behavior as that of Jerry or George;"⁽²³⁾ but they do stay because they are faced with the combination of a real and illusory world of which they had never been fully aware. Nick and Honey witness the other couple's games and do not know that the son exists only as a fantasy, a fantasy that has become part of George and Martha's everyday life.

George and Martha are able to communicate in the same language. They know each other's clichés and games. On the other hand Nick and Honey have nothing in common. They live an empty, absurd world. The older couple's relationship can also be labeled as empty, since they need this evasion -- the imaginary child-- in order to exist. Again Albee presents the substitution of an artificial value for a real one.

However, the fact that they can create something

together and live with it already represents some sort of human communication. They re-create their life-lie each instant. Debusscher interprets this life-lie as follows:

It (is) the predicament of modern man,
solitary and isolated, obliged to secure
himself against himself, against his
neighbor and against the world he
contributed to building, which now
(24)
threatens to destroy him.

George and Martha have created a child illusion, but it is Martha who "violates the pact she has with George --never to mention the imaginary son to any one". George revenges himself for this and kills the son --their illusion. Martha falls into a hysterical fit because her world has been destroyed, and they are left with no illusion. They have destroyed the "comforting little teddy-bear secret they have been hugging together for so long"
(25)

Nick and Honey are present throughout the scene and they feel the loneliness; but they are more isolated than ever because they find that they are unable to create and live with a fantasy such as George and Martha's. The older couple has evaded the moral, religious and political structures society imposes on man, and have created their individual illusion; they have

gripped unto this child fantasy in an effort to find some substance for existence, but they are conscious of the emptiness that surrounds them in the world and the need to build a dream.

In Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Albee allows the characters to recognize that they live with an illusion, but the author exorcises it from them. This does not happen in The American Dream, where Mommy and Daddy get what they want but are ridiculed for it because they lack the dignity to accept it as a mere dream.

(26)

Tiny Alice offers something more than the former plays. In this senseless, absurd world, Albee stresses that human beings live under the spell of an illusion, one of the social forces that is imposed on man. It can be found as a moral, political or religious structure. In this play he re-evaluates the need for illusion in order to survive and be able to face death. But the author also assumes that emotional sensitivity is a necessary part of human beings well. It is in Tiny Alice that Albee combines both sensitivity and a searching need for illusion to create a character that is more transcendental than any he had created before. Through his sensitivity we are able to accept Julian as he is, though he represents the establishment Albee had so criticized in his former plays.

Most critics have found Tiny Alice an absurd play, in the sense that it is ridiculous. Gerald Weales has gone as far

(27)
as to say that Tiny Alice is all amorphousness. He believes the play is full of symbolism (which it is) and that it might be reduced to an "intellectual formulation"; Weales does not find any functional use in the play of either symbolism or characters.

Other critics, like Philip Roth, accuse Albee of writing "a homosexual daydream about the martyrdom of the celibate male and disguising it as a metaphysical drama".
(28)
But few critics have found the real value of Tiny Alice: the development of the illusion reality theme in which the hero is an idealist who is fully conscious of the conflict of his idealism with the emptiness of the materialistic world.

Tiny Alice is no longer presented on the realistic level of the former plays. There is no New England campus or Central Park where the action takes place. Tiny Alice is set in a castle that was once in England, but the audience never learns where it is now. Albee was also attacked for this because "a situation cannot function well as allegory unless it is a believable situation", says Bazandall.
(29)
Tiny Alice is believable as a mystical play in which no one expects the characters to be real human beings. The audience is immediately aware that the world of the play is not their own.
(30)
A Cardinal's garden is not a place where the audience could easily have penetrated. The conversation between the Lawyer and the Cardinal already sets a sinister atmosphere. The audience learns

of their past lives and the hatred that exists between them. When the Cardinal discloses the Lawyer's childhood nickname, Hyena, the atmosphere of the play changes from sinister to supernatural. The description of the animal can be compared to the attack the Devil sometimes performed on his prey:

Cardinal: Yun-yun. Did we not discover about
the Hyena that it was a most
resourceful scavenger? That, failing
all other food, it would dine on offal...
...and that it devoured the wounded
and the dead? We found that the last
the most shocking: the dead. But we
are young. And what horrified us
most fitting for yourself--
.....was that to devour its dead,
scavenged prey, it would often chew
into it.....
...chew into it THROUGH THE ANNUS????? (31)

Thus the Lawyer (whom the Cardinal is referring to) is placed on much the same level as Satan, especially because he continually attacks the Cardinal as an institution.

In the second scene, the audience is presented with a model castle within the room of the castle where the action takes

place. The implication that someone, even they themselves, might be in that model, brings the play to a more complex allegorical level:

Butler: Look over here. There; right here.

(Referring to the room in the model)

Julian: It's...it's this room! This room
we're in!

Butler: Yes.

Julian: Extraordinary.

Butler: Is there anyone there? Are we
there?

Julian: (Briefly startled, then laughs, looks
back into the model)

Uh...no. It seems to be quite empty.

Butler: (A quiet smile) One feels one should
(32)
see one's self...almost.

We do not know where the characters come from or where they go; we just know that finally they depart. We are sometimes baffled as to the physical nature of the setting, particularly when the chapel catches fire and is put out off-stage. (33)

Albee's intention was not to disguise the central theme of his former plays. (34) Once again dealing with the truth-illusion theme and letting the play "happen" to the audience, he

has taken a step forward. He establishes first that the Church is an institution that it is as corrupt as any other, and second that in this institution there are human beings who seek a dogmatic illusory solution in order to find a reason for living. However, throughout the development of the play, the author also presents love and an existential self-awareness as part of human existence; it is through the combination of these that Julian is able to keep his individuality and be distinguished from any of the protagonists in Albee's former plays.

In Tiny Alice, Albee deals with more than just a confrontation of reality; he allows Julian to achieve a transcendent self-awareness by which he becomes conscious of the mystical illusion, as such, that rules his life. He finds that this illusion forms part of his existence and that he needs it in order to give meaning to an otherwise empty world. As C.W. Bigsby says:

Albee accepts Camus' suggested progression from absurdity to love, and his plays, starting with The Zoo Story and progressing to Tiny Alice and A Delicate Balance are directly concerned with that 'momentous enlightenment' which leads to a real companionship, founded on truth and purged of all falsehood".

Before the opening of the play at the Billy Rose Theater, on December 30th, 1964, Albee said the following about Tiny Alice in an interview:

Tiny Alice is a fairly simple play and not at all unclear once you approach it on its own terms. The story is simply this: A lay brother, a man that would have been a priest except that he could not reconcile his idea of a God with the God which men create in their own image, is sent by his superior to tie up loose ends of a business matter between the Church and a wealthy woman. The lay brother becomes enmeshed in an environment which, at its core and shifting surface, contains all the elements which have confused and bothered him throughout his life: the relationship between sexual hysteria and religious ecstasy; the conflict between selflessness of service and the conspicuous splendor of martyrdom. The lay brother is brought to the point, finally, of having to accept what he had insisted he wanted... union with the abstraction, rather than (a) man made image of it, its substitution. He is left with pure abstraction

-whatever it be called: God, or Alice-- and in the end, according to your faith, one of two things happens: either the abstraction personifies itself, is proved real, or the dying man, in the last necessary effort of self-delusion, creates and believes in what he knows does not exist. (36)

The play presents the lay brother's world and the reality that is forced upon him. It also points out the abstraction he clings on to and how, through his sensibility, he resists the pressure the other characters try to impose on him.

In addition to Julian, there are four characters: Lawyer, Butler, Miss Alice and the Cardinal, who from now on will be called the metaphysical characters, just to give the group a name.

The metaphysical characters are supernatural beings, they are something beyond this world. They talk of the past in terms of "over 200 years". They allude to a plan they are going to carry out by which they intend to trap Julian, but the audience never gets a full account of it.

The Lawyer is as sarcastic and full of wit as the Devil. Miss Alice describes his devilish appearance:

Is it the hair? Is it the hair on your back I
loathe most? Where the fat lies, on your
shoulder baldes, the hair on your back...back,
ugly?

But I think it is most the feel of your skin...
that you can't sweat. That your body is as
impersonal as your... selfdry, uncaring,
rubbery...dead. Ah... there that is what I
loathe about you most: you're dead. Moving
pushing selfish dry dead.

Does that hurt? Does something finally,
beautifully hurt? Have I finally gotten into
(37)
you?

Butler remains a butler all through the play. Like a
butler he remains impassive; he never expresses any sign of joy
or resentment. He deals with all the other characters on equal
terms; he agrees with what they say and never states his own
opinions. Julian is praised for his knowledge of the wine cellar,
the Lawyer for his shrewdness in handling Julian. He treats Miss
Alice with a fatherly attitude, trying to prevent arguments
between the Lawyer and her. Sometimes the Butler seems to
resemble death. He carries "gray sheets" and says there are

covers rather than sheets. He even goes as far as to try one on
Julian:

(Takes one of the sheets, opens it with a
cracking sound, holds it in front of him
(38)
(Julian), a hand on each shoulder)

On the other hand, Miss Alice --who should not be
confused with Tiny Alice-- seems to be human at moments:

Lawyer: You should watch them, We don't want...
error. She is...

Butler: Human? Yes, and clever too... isn't she.
Good at it, wrapping around fingers,
enticing. I recall.

(39)
Lawyer: Too human; not playing it straight.

She changes and shows emotions. There are times when
she is frightened and others when she is really concerned about
Julian. She is presented as a rich, dominant and influential
woman. However, we soon learn that she is allowed to give orders
only after receiving them from the Lawyer. She wants to comfort
Julian in his last moments, but the Lawyer snaps at her and tells
her they must leave and repeat the plotting:

Lawyer: A... Are you ready to go?

Miss Alice: Am I ready to go on with it, do you mean? To move to the city now before the train trip south? The private car? The house on the Ocean, the... same removed residence, the Rolls twice weekly into the shopping strip... all of it?

(40)

Lawyer: Yes. All of it.

At times she becomes a little girl and at others she plays along with the other metaphysical characters. However, she always seems to want to come out of the metaphysical role. It is as if she were trapped and must obey. The Lawyer wants her to play her part straight, without enjoying it. She admits that it is an obligation but there are moments when she asks Julian to help her because there is "always something to be afraid of".

Whenever she is presented with emotions, she becomes human; when she is handled as a puppet, she becomes lifeless. Miss Alice says that she herself is the illusion, and that Julian has married the abstract, Tiny Alice, through her. Miss Alice lives under a constant threat. She wishes she could come out of the world she is immersed in. The fear in which she lives is increased with the possibility of her being consumed by the supernatural powers. It is, as Ronald Hayman mentioned, as

though Alice is giving, in to the weaker part of her nature and "genuinely falling in love with Julian"(41)

Lawyer: (comes to her, grabs her by the wrist, forces her to the ground, keeps hold)
Burning down? Consumed? WHY NOT?
Remember what I told you. Watch...
your...step.

Miss Alice: (She alternates between a kind of incantation-prayer and a natural tone)
(Prayer) Let the fire be put out.
Let the chapel be saved; let the fire not spread; let us not be consumed.
(Natural) He hurt me. My wrist hurts. Who was the the boy when I was little hurt my wrist? I don't remember.
(Prayer) Let the fire not be spread; let them be quick.
(Natural) YOU PIG.
(Softly, almost a whine) You hurt my wrist.

(Imitates the Lawyer's tone) Watch...
your...step.

(Prayer) Oh God, I have watched my
step. I have ... tread...so carefully.

(Natural and weary) Let it all come
down-let the whole place... go.

(She must now, when using a natural
tone, almost give the suggestion of
talking to someone in the model.

Natural.)

I don't mean that. I don't remember
his name... or his face; merely the
hurt... and that continues, the hurt
the same, the name and the face
changing, but it doesn't matter. Let
them save it.

(Prayer) Let them save it. Don't
destroy. Let them save the resonance.

(Natural) Increase it. Julian says
there is no resonance, and it's not
right.

(Prayer) Let the resonance increase.

(Natural; a little girl-tone) I have
tried hard to be careful, to obey, to

with hold my... nature? I have
tried so hard to be good, but I'm...
such a stranger...here.

(Prayer) I have tried to obey what
I have not understood, understanding
that I must obey. Don't destroy I
(42)
have tried! TRIED!

Miss Alice plays along in the metaphysical character's
game of reality but is not fully convinced of it. There is
still something inside that makes her doubt but yet evoke God.
With this intermingling of prayerful and natural speech she
checks herself and goes back into the role she is playing. She
pretends she is talking to someone in the model, yet she is
afraid and prays to a god that does not exist in the character's
world except as a symbol.

Julian is "the innocent coming into this rather extraor
(42)
dinary assemblage of people". Up to the time he is sent by
the Cardinal to Miss Alice's castle, Julian has lived in religious
environment. As a lay brother, he has served as a personal
secretary to the Cardinal; yet his lifelong dream has been to
become a martyr because he believes he must find the real God,
not the "rainin-eyed gingerbread" god most people believe in.
The one time he felt his faith had left him he did doubt God's

existence; he was sent to an asylum. There he lived in a hallucinatory world, but was conscious of it.

Butler: About those six years...

Julian: What of them?

Butler: Yes, what of them?

Julian: Oh...I...lost my faith. In God.

Butler: Ah.

Julian: Is there more?

Butler: Is there More?

Julian: Well, nothing... of matter. I...

declined. I...shriveled into myself; a glass dome... descended, and it seemed I was out of reach, unreachable, finally unreachng, in this... paralysis, of sorts. I put myself in a mental home.

Butler: Ah.

Julian: I could not reconcile myself to the chasm between the nature of God and the use to which man put... God.

Butler: Between your God and others', your view and theirs.

Julian: I said what I intended: It is God the

the never, not God the puppet; God the
creator. Not the God created by man. (43)

Throughout the play, the audience is presented with these two aspects: Julian's human simplicity and his belief in God the creator, the abstract God; and the realistic but lifeless world of the metaphysical characters, in which Julian's God is presented as another puppet created by Julian himself. It is through the pressure of the castle trio that he is forced to confront the reality of his illusion.

When Julian asks why he is being tested Miss Alice answers that he is being used as she herself is by the Lawyer, the Butler and the Cardinal. Their purpose is to make Julian realize he is creating a fantastic God and is too ambitious in trying to find the "Creator" They expect Julian to come into their reality and accept the false God that most people believe in --God the symbol. Julian cannot accept this because he believes in his individuality and his own way of life rather than an imitation life like that led by each of the metaphysical characters. (45) Julian's individuality is based on his sensibiliti, his simplicity to understand the details of the daily routine, and the illusion he has created in order to bear the otherwise empty existence. First he found consolation in religion to (46) confront this emptiness; later he believed that the physical contact with the woman he had met in the asylum could be substitute

ed for his lack of faith; finally he accepts the abstract as an illusion.

During the six years Julian spent in the asylum he believed he once had had sexual relationship with the woman she thought she was pregnant with the son of God. Julian could not remember if there had been a contact with the woman or not and he asks himself whether the memory of something having happened can be the same as the happening itself. (47) The doctors tried to persuade him that he was "overcome by hallucination" (48) and that there was no relationship with the woman; however, Julian felt the physical contact and still does not know whether it was real or it only happened in his imagination.

As Julian gets involved with Miss Alice, his need to find the real God is put aside, and he holds on to the new perspective of something real --his communion with Miss Alice. But he falls into the metaphysical character's trap and believes in a contrived image of Miss Alice, much the same way people create a false God, the symbol which Julian is so much against. He is then forced into realizing that he is living with the illusion of Miss Alice, not the woman herself, for she is only the symbol of Tiny Alice:

Miss Alice: Julian, I have tried to be her. No;
I have tried to be...what I thought

She might, what might make you
happy, what you might use as a...
what?

Butler: **PLAY** God; go on.

Miss Alice: We must represent, draw pictures,
reduce or enlarge to...to what we
can understand.

Julian: But I have fought against it all my
life. All my life. In and out
of...confinement, fought against
(49)
the symbol.

Miss Alice Cannot tear herself away from the Lawyer's
powers. When she fails Julian and leaves him, he again finds
comfort in religion. The Lawyer hints that Julian may be able to
find his God inside the model of the castle, but since there is a
model "within and within and within" to the infinite, the
absolute God cannot be found. The Lawyer also mentions that he
might only find a mouse inside the model.

Julian is a simple and sensitive person who does not
see evil in others. He is able to feel Miss Alice's "love" and
corresponds with earnest emotion. His sensitivity and feelings
make him human; however he is not the empty human being Albee
presented in his former plays. Julian holds on to the comfort of

religion in this empty world, but this illusion does not keep him from accepting the fact that he too has created a God symbol, perhaps not the gingerbread God, like everyone else, but an abstract God that can only be found through illusion.

The metaphysical characters insist that he recognize there is neither salvation nor an abstract and pure God. Julian knows from experience that he is incapable of distinguishing between the illusion of a happening and the happening itself; therefore he cannot be sure whether he has created a God of his own, or whether God truly exists outside his imagination. Julian's lifelong dream has been to find the true God and he cannot now finally subject himself to the thought of holding on to a mere symbol. The Lawyer shoots Julian and tells him he can enter the model where he will find Tiny Alice, a metaphysical abstraction for Julian, but only a name of a meaningless symbol for the castle trio.

R. Cohn says that the Lawyer is the "instrument of the absurd reality which is Tiny Alice". He continues by saying that "Julian is first and last the instrument of his own imagination. He is both Everyman and the victim of the awful humor: of Tiny Alice, precisely because he claims to reject illusion for reality. THAT is his illusion, with which he commits himself to the asylum. And rather than accept the reality of Tiny Alice, he is ready to commit himself again, but is presented with the Lawyer's fatal



(50)
shot".

As Julian dies, he recognizes the reality that the metaphysical characters want to force on to him: that he should accept his illusory world; but he clings on to his illusion and transforms it into a familiar appearance. In his confusion he relives the childhood scene and then experiences the anguish of his grandfather's absence. The idea of abandonment is now further reinforced by the Cardinal's betrayal of him; God does not appear to receive him as a martyr as Julian expected he would.

In a last effort to comfort Julian, Miss Alice comes close to him as he dies; but the Lawyer immediately tears her away from the lay brother. Julian's sense of loss is increased for he realizes as there was no Granpa in his childhood to comfort him, there is now no Miss Alice, and there will probably be no God either. Julian's sense of loss has come to the point where he is about to lose his faith; for a moment he finds that the only certainty for man in his own birth and death, which are inevitable, but immediately he returns to his colloquy with God:

What may we avoid ;Not birth! Growing up?
Yes. Maturing? Oh, God ;Growing old, and?...
Yes, growing old; but not the last; merely
when. But to live again, be born once more,

sure in the sight of... THERE IS NO ONE.
Unless you are listening there. Unless you
have left me, tiptoed off, stood whispering,
smothering giggles, and... silently returned,
your ears pressed against, or.... or one eye
into the crack so that the air snats it sifting
through. HAVE YOU COME BACK/ HAVE YOU NOT
LEFT ME? No. No one. Out in the night....
enjoying. Night? No; what then? IS IT NIGHT...
OR DAY? or does it matter? No. How long
wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long
shall my enemy. I...can....barely feel.
Which is a sign. A change in any rate. I DO
NOT UNDERSTAND, O LORD, MY GOD, WHAT THOU
(51)
WILT HAVE OF ME!

As his agony increases Julian realizes he is entering a
place where he has not yet been and from which he cannot come
back; like the boy who entered the attic and could not come out
because the door had locked. He realizes he is in a "labyrinth
where he is incapable of finding his way because he knows there
is no way out." (52) He has sought for the pure God which can
only be an abstraction, and this abstraction cannot be personified;
he discovers that human destiny leads to an ultimate

(53)
"nothingness", unless there is some illusion to hold on to. First he turns to the metaphysical characters and hopes for an answer there; but since there is no one, he evokes God. Julian holds on to his faith in search of an answer to his loneliness and also because he cannot give up so easily what he has always considered a reality and the basis for his existence. The lay brother turns to the abstraction and no longer cares whether it is God, Alice or anyone else who can comfort him during his agony and help him find a final purpose for living and dying:

Alice?...God? SOMEBODY? Come to Julian as he...
(54)
ebbs.

Julian comprehends that the abstraction can only be found in his own mind, not outside. He accepts that whatever happens in the mind is real and that the rest of the world is a mere appearance and therefore false:

Ah God! Is that the humor? THE ABSTRACT?...

REAL? THE REST?... FALSE?...

It is what I have wanted, have insisted on. Have nagged... for FRIENDSHIP, THEN? THIS WORLD? THEN COME AND SHOW THYSELF BRIDE? GOD?... SHOW THYSELF! FOR THEN I HAVE GAMBLER... MY SOUL? I DEMAND THY PRESENCE. ALICE.
(55)

The humble Julian becomes aggressive and demands a presence, first hoping this presence will be God but then remembering that he has sought for the abstract God, so he calls for Tiny Alice, the abstraction. However, while he doubts God's existence, he at the same time reaffirms his faith in Him; by questioning he confirms God's existence. There are moments when he becomes very demanding and orders God to show Himself; there are others when Julian sees the irony of his whole life. Julian finally feels the presence filling the room. The question raised by some critics is whether Julian really enters God's world or he finds God through his hallucination. Albee answered this question in his interview when he said "it is according to one's faith".⁽⁵⁸⁾

Markson points out that the audience, as participant, is "able to 'feel' the questions Is the hallucinating; or is 'IT' real?"⁽⁵⁷⁾ During the time he spent in the asylum he believed he had sexual relationship with the woman; even after all the years that have passed, Julian is not able to distinguish between what actually had happened and what he felt had happened. Now he is ~~searching~~ for a union with God and he feels the presence; but he is not sure whether it is God or Alice or "no one". Julian's imagination has proved to work as a reality for itself, but it is a reality that only Julian can see. Nevertheless, E.G. Bigsby considers that Julian could not have found the true God because

He does not exist, leaving only an empty world, in which human contact is the sole grasp of our existence:

"At the end of the play the church is compromised and Julian is finally reconciled to his humanity and to reality. For to Albee, belief in an afterlife devalues the present and thus undermines the necessity for human contact in an empty but real world".
(58)

Julian's necessity for human contact is seen through his relationship with the metaphysical characters. He is contrasted with the Cardinal's hypocrisy, the Lawyer's fatalism and Butler's mechanized attitudes. Even Miss Alice shows her coldness by going away instead of falling into the temptation of her feelings. From their viewpoint, Julian has sinned by letting his feelings develop towards others and finding a true God through his imagination, striving against the dictates of the man-made structure of religion.

As Christ on the cross asks why God has forsaken him and shows his human nature, so Julian also questions God. Through his humanity the lay brother falls into the temptation of feeling God's appearance and thus becomes absorbed in the abstraction. He then fulfills his lifelong dream and turns into a martyr precisely because he is able to die for his belief in

God and at the same time maintain his individuality.

Albee has presented a new hero who develops a realistic awareness of his dependence on illusion. Julian accepts this dependency as an essential part of his human nature and thereby reinforces the theory that an individual with a strong conviction is able to survive in his empty world.

NOTES

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5. **Wellwarth, op. cit., p. 325.**
6. **Transatlantic Review, Spring 1963, interview published in Richard E. Anacher, Edward Albee, p. 130.**
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10. **Wellwarth, op. cit., p. 322.**

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33. Markus, op. cit., p. 227.
34. Ibid., p. 225.
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39. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
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45. Weales, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
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52. Debusscher, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
54. Albee, *Tiny Alice*, p. 122.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
56. Anacher, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
57. Markson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
58. Bigsby, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

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