Tiny Alice Study Guide

Tiny Alice by Edward Albee

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Introduction

Tiny Alice first opened to audiences in New York in 1964. Almost immediately, the play spurred intense controversy and sparked a debate that was played out almost daily in newspapers and magazines. What did the play mean? demanded critics and viewers alike. Albee claimed in a press conference, and in his Author's Note when the text was published in 1965, that the play was quite clear, even simple, and thus did not need his explication. Despite Albee's assertions, people continued to have a hard time deciphering the play, in which characters are symbols, words and actions have multiple dimensions, and religious expression mixes with sexual fantasy.

Fortunately, a large body of work helps the current reader understand many important parts of the play, including symbolism, imagery, and underlying assumptions about religion. Critics have also been interested in how Tiny Alice fits in with the body of Albee's work. They have examined such specific aspects of the play as language, theme, and genre. Many scholars, however, maintain that *Tiny Alice* remains one of Albee's most difficult but ultimately satisfying plays.

Author Biography

Edward Albee was born in 1928 somewhere in Virginia. Two weeks after his birth, Reed and Frances Albee, who lived in Larchmont, New York, adopted him. The Albees were wealthy, and Reed Albee was part owner of a chain of theaters his father started. Albee grew up in the lap of luxury, and as a child, often attended matinees in New York City. Many show business personalities also visited the Albee home. Albee began writing poetry as a young child.

When Albee was eleven years old, he was sent to the first of a series of boarding schools. His academic record was poor. His teachers at Choate, however, encouraged his writing, and he worked in every genre poetry, short stories, plays, and even the novel. One of his poems appeared in a literary magazine in Texas.

In 1946, Albee attended Trinity College in Connecticut. He left school a year and a half year later, returning home, where he worked as a writer for a radio station. In 1950, with the financial assistance of a trust fund left to him by his grandmother, Albee moved to Greenwich Village. He supplemented his income by working in various jobs. He also spent six months in Italy, where he wrote a novel.

Albee came into contact with literary luminaries such as W. H. Auden and Thornton Wilder, who gave him advice on his writing. At this point, Albee mainly worked on his poetry. Immediately following his thirtieth birthday, however, Albee started work on a play, *The Zoo Story*, which he completed in three weeks. *The Zoo Story* premiered in September 1959 in Berlin. Four months later, Albee's play shared a double bill with one of Samuel Beckett's at the Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village. It was generally received as the creation of a formidable talent. The following year, Albee won the Vernon Rice Memorial Award for the work.

Albee continued to achieve critical and popular acclaim for his one-act dramas, and his work was compared to that of Tennessee Williams whose work Albee greatly admired and French writer Eugene lonesco. In 1959, he published The American Dreams and *The Sandbox*, both of which, along with *The Zoo Story,* established Albee as an astute critic of American values and of human interaction.

The production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1962, however, catapulted Albee from avant-garde attention to public notoriety. Many critics still continue to find this play his most important work, and it was made into a film four years later. Albee followed up this success with a number of full-length works, including *Tiny Alice* (1964). Three of Albee's plays have won the Pulitzer Prize: *A Delicate Balance* (1966), *Seascape* (1975), and *Three Tall Women* (1991).

Since his emergence in the theatrical world, Albee has continually produced plays that have been staged both in the United States and abroad. He also established the Edward Albee Foundation, which maintains an artists' colony on Long Island. Albee has

also taught at the University of Houston, and worked at the Alley Theater, where he directed one play a year.

Plot Summary

Act I, Scene 1

The play opens in a garden. Lawyer is talking nonsense to a pair of cardinals in a cage as Cardinal, a cardinal in the Catholic Church, enters. Conversation reveals that the two men went to school together and maintain a lasting dislike for each other. The two men throw around insults. Cardinal says it is fitting that Lawyer, who always was a cheater and a liar, has chosen the legal profession, and Lawyer counters that it is fitting that Cardinal, an arrogant, pompous whore, is in the Church. Eventually, the men turn their attention to the business at hand: Lawyer's employer, Miss Alice, wants to give two billion to the Church. The Cardinal is very excited at the prospect of so much money (though the currency is never named). At Lawyer's request, he agrees to send his secretary, Julian, a lay brother to Miss Alice's house to take care of the "necessary odds and ends."

Act *I*, Scene 2

In Scene Two, Julian has just entered the library of Miss Alice's mansion. The room's most prominent feature is a huge doll house model of the mansion itself. Butler, Miss Alice's butler, comes into the library. He sees Julian looking at the house and points out that it is an exact replica of the mansion. Butler asks if anyone is in the replica, which startles Julian, who ascertains that the model is empty. Lawyer enters the library. He reveals that he knows Julian's history, with the exception of a six-year blank period, which Julian refuses to talk about. Then Lawyer proceeds to slander Cardinal, which causes Julian to protest. Lawyer eventually leaves to get Miss Alice. Once he is gone, Julian tells Butler about those six years. He lost his faith in God, suffered a nervous breakdown, and put himself into a mental institution. His loss of faith stemmed from his inability to reconcile himself with the difference between God and human's representation of God. Julian tells Butler that his faith is his sanity. A chime sounds, indicating that Miss Alice will now see Julian.

Act I, Scene 3

When Julian enters the sitting room, he sees an old lady. He is surprised, for Cardinal had said Miss Alice was young. Lawyer leaves the two alone, and Julian is forced to yell in an effort to be heard, but then Miss Alice takes off a wig and her old lady mask, revealing her own, much younger face. She says she was just playing a game to lighten the mood. Alice asks what Julian thought of Butler and Lawyer. Miss Alice says that Butler was once her lover and that she is the mistress of Lawyer, but that he is a pig. Then she asks Julian about his missing six years, and Julian gives much the same explanation he gave Butler. Alice asks if Julian has slept with many women, but he does not know. Although celibate, as a lay brother must be, while in the asylum, Julian had a

hallucination that he had sex with another patient who believed she was the Virgin Mary. However, he does not know if this really took place. Miss Alice changes the tone of the conversation back to business. She suggests that Julian move into the castle so he will be on hand to take care of the business, and he assents.

Act II, Scene 1

Lawyer chases Miss Alice into the library, while she is yelling at him to stay away. Lawyer is angry that Julian is at the house all the time. He tells Miss Alice that she should "get it done with." He thinks that she is sleeping with Julian. Miss Alice talks of her loathing for Lawyer but at the same time, lets him fondle her. Butler and Julian return from their tour around the mansion. Julian notices that the model is on fire. Butler looks out the windows and he sees that the chapel is burning. The men run off to put out the fire, and Miss Alice stays in the library. Alternating between a "prayer" voice and a natural voice, she asks that the fire be put out and the mansion be saved. Julian returns with news that the fire is out. He wants to know why the real chapel and the model chapel were both in flames, but Miss Alice says she doesn't know why.

Act II, Scene 2

Butler and Lawyer are in the library. Butler says the fire in the chapel helped bring Miss Alice and Julian together. Lawyer expresses his distaste of them sleeping together, but Butler reminds him that the situation will not last long. Lawyer has to go see Cardinal again, so they decide to play act; Butler takes the role of Lawyer and Lawyer plays Cardinal. Butler, as Lawyer, tells Cardinal that Julian will be taken from the Church in return for the 2 billion. The men slip in and out of their roles, discussing what Lawyer will say. Butler suggests that Cardinal marry Miss Alice and Julian. Then Butler takes the role of Julian, while Lawyer stays in the role of Cardinal. The men discuss what God is. Butler/ Julian contends that God is an abstract ideal, but Lawyer/Cardinal asserts that while there is an abstract God, that God cannot be understood or worshipped. Lawyer says that Alice can be understood, however.

Act II, Scene 3

Julian and Miss Alice are in the sitting room. Miss Alice speaks of sex, asking Julian about his body hair. Miss Alice continues to tease him. Julian makes a slip of the tongue and says that she is tempting him. He speaks of his desire, when he was younger, to serve humanity, but Miss Alice tells him that he has done great service to the Church through his interactions with her. He speaks of his dreams of sacrifice and martyrdom. Alice asks him to marry her and to sacrifice himself to her. She engulfs him within the winglike arms of her dressing gown.

Act III

Julian and Miss Alice have just married. Julian enters the library where Butler is covering all the furniture with sheets. Julian wonders where everyone, including Miss Alice, has disappeared. Julian wonders why Miss Alice did not invite friends to the ceremony, but Butler says that she does not have friends. Then Miss Alice comes in the room, but when she sees Julian, she immediately leaves again. Then Cardinal comes in the room, and Butler leaves. Julian speaks to Cardinal excitedly about doing service for God through his marriage to Miss Alice. Cardinal advises Julian to accept what may happen in the future as part of his service and part of God's will. After Lawyer comes into the room, Julian exits to look for Alice. Cardinal looks at the model, asking obliquely if it is really true. Lawyer says it is. He opens a drawer and takes out a loaded pistol. When Cardinal questions this, Lawyers say they may have to shot Julian. Soon enough, everyone is gathered in the library. Butler opens the champagne and Lawyer starts a toast to the "ceremony of Alice." As Lawyer toasts Alice and Julian and their house, lights begin to flicker on in the model. Julian makes his own toast to his love for Miss Alice. As soon as he is done, Lawyer announces it is time to go. Julian realizes that something is going on that he does not understand. Lawyer tells Julian that they are going, while he will stay behind with Alice. Miss Alice tells Julian that she has done her best to imitate her, meaning Alice in the model, but Julian, who has fought his entire life against "the symbol," does not want to stay behind with Alice. He believes that he has married Miss Alice, but she informs him that he has married Alice through Miss Alice. Julian charges that "there is no one there," meaning in the model, but everyone else tells him to accept that Alice is there. Julian resists, declaring that he is "done with hallucination," but Miss Alice proclaims that she, not Alice, is the illusion. Julian refuses to do as they ask and declares his intention of going back to the asylum, so Lawyer shoots him. Julian sinks to the floor in front of the model. Miss Alice holds him while he bleeds. Cardinal leaves, after agreeing to send his new secretary to pick up the money. Miss Alice asks Lawyer how long they must do this, implying that they have acted out this drama before and will continue to do so again and again. Julian is in great pain, and Miss Alice talks to Alice in the model, asking her to take him in. Then the three say goodbye to Julian and leave him alone.

Julian begins his final soliloquy. He talks about his abandonment by Miss Alice. He finds it hard to believe that he is dying. He remembers a boyhood accident that parallels his current situation. He also addresses Alice in the model, asking if she has forsaken him like all the others. He looks in the model at "his chapel," but starts with fear when the light suddenly goes out. He begins to speak to the phrenological head that wears Miss Alice's wig, asking if she is his bride, he wonders if this is his priesthood and demands that his bride Alice, God show herself. He begins to hear the sounds of heartbeats and breathing, growing louder and louder. A great shadow fills the room, darkening the stage. His final words are that he accepts God's, Alice's will. Julian dies with his arms spread wide like the crucifixion.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

The play opens in the garden of a Cardinal of the Catholic Church. There are two chairs, one obviously larger for His Eminence. Off to the side is a birdcage with some foliage and two bright red cardinals. A man, who we come to soon know as a lawyer, is cooing and talking to the birds, trying to engage them to interact with him. Unbeknownst to him, however, the Cardinal enters the courtyard through an iron gate and moves quietly toward the man and watches him with mild amusement.

"Saint Francis?" the Cardinal finally says as he addresses the man from behind. The lawyer turns around, sees the Cardinal and is flustered and a bit embarrassed at having been discovered cooing to the caged birds. The Cardinal ignores his discomfort and explains that Saint Francis was a friend to all animals and often talked to creatures, even birds of the sky. In an attempt to fend off his embarrassment, the lawyer overcompensates with his behavior toward the Cardinal, kneeling to kiss his ring and addressing him in the third person to keep the situation and conversation impersonal. The Cardinal, however, delights in the lawyer's discomfort.

The lawyer turns the conversation to the cardinals in the cage saying how it somehow seems appropriate that there should be two cardinals in such close quarters in that particular location. The Cardinal counters that it is appropriate because the birds understand each other so much better than would birds of any other kind.

The conversation shifts again and it becomes evident that the two men have known each other since childhood. They continue to rib each other about their school yard nicknames, but it is evident that it is not a good-natured dialogue. The animosity becomes clearer, as the lawyer becomes more verbal and forthright about the Cardinal, even to the point of calling him overstuffed, arrogant, pompous and a whore of the Church.

Not to be outdone, the Cardinal slings back the name the school children had for the lawyer. Hyena. He draws it out in his speech dramatically as if his words could show the exaggerated sneer of the animal in question. Hy - eeee - na. The conversation gets even uglier when each man begins to question the intimate relations of the other's mother and their resulting parentage.

Then, at last, a break in this ugly dialogue. The lawyer says that his client, Miss Alice, would like to give a huge donation to the church. One hundred million dollars a year for twenty years. She is not ill, or old, merely burdened with too much wealth. The Cardinal's skepticism is apparent through his reaction: "... but shall I just go to the house and pick it up in a truck?" The two men banter a while longer over the vice that money can be, but it is clear that the Cardinal's appetite has been whetted and offers his assistant, Julian, to take care of the menial details of this philanthropic bargain. The

lawyer leaves, but not without a snide comment or two insinuating an inappropriate relationship between the Cardinal and his assistant. The scene ends as the Cardinal coos to the birds, asking if they are able to comfort each other.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

There is immediate antagonism between the lawyer and the Cardinal that goes much deeper than their lifelong acquaintance, although some of the hostility may have to do with the division of Church and State, as evidenced by each man challenging the other's life purpose and choice of career.

The symbolism of the two cardinals in the cage is very clear as the implication of the relationships of religious Cardinals kept in the cage of the Church. Because of the isolation and intimate quarters of the male birds, we're led to infer that this will be a major theme throughout the play. The homoerotic undertones are subtle at first and become stronger as the two men take their verbal jabs.

The disdain between the two is the undercurrent as they are forced to come to grips with each other's value. The Cardinal clearly has prominence spiritually and socially, yet the lawyer possesses the gift from his benevolent client. They each have something that the other wants, yet they are compelled to thrust and parry in their respective positions.

There is a definite foreboding of good versus evil, yet it's not clear who, or if, there will be a hero.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

This scene opens in a library of a mansion; its architecture is what one would expect in a castle, complete with pillared walls and floor-to-ceiling bookcases filled with leather-bound books. The room is massive in scale with a great arched doorway and the furnishings are of the expected variety in a library of this grandeur.

The most intriguing element in the room, however, is a huge dollhouse model of the mansion of which the library is a part. It is as tall as a man as compared to Julian, the Cardinal's assistant, who is studying the model from all angles. His amazement is interrupted by the butler, who enters and agrees that the model is an extraordinary piece of work.

The two discuss the merits of the model, as well as the intention and purpose of having such a work created. The Butler points out that if Julian were to look into the window of the model, an exact duplicate of the room in which they stand can be seen with every detail intact, even down to the brass candlesticks. Julian's amazement is further increased as the two discuss whether or not there might be another model of the room inside the model's library, and so on and so on.

Julian is not comfortable with this conceptual style of conversation and asks whether or not someone will soon be available to see him for his appointment. The butler has not quite finished with the unsuspecting Julian as he continues his verbal bantering, sharing that his name, as well as his occupation, is Butler. Julian is intrigued by the coincidence of the man's name predetermining his profession, but the butler is nonplussed about this and about almost everything.

The lawyer enters the room to join in the dialogue, and it's established that Julian is not ordained; he is a lay brother. Both the butler and the lawyer, who have known each other for some time, are quite eager to pry, and prey on this fresh specimen. They relentlessly question him about his background until Julian admits that he has nothing to hide but six years of his life that are merely blank, not black. But that's all he'll say about it now.

Finally satisfied with that information, the lawyer initiates a discussion of his animosity for the Cardinal. In fact, the only reason Julian is part of this trio is that the lawyer has such disdain for the Cardinal that the lawyer does not want the Cardinal's personal participation in the activities related to Miss Alice's grant to the Church.

It is only after the lawyer leaves the library that Julian admits to the butler that the blank six years of his life were spent in an insane asylum. He struggled mentally and spiritually over the nature of God and how men use God. "It is God the mover, not God the puppet; God the creator, not the God created by man," he says.

He believes that in order to make it easier for men, they create a false God in their own image. He also believes that his faith and his sanity are one in the same. The butler is bored by now and moves to escort Julian to see Miss Alice at the sound of a chime.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The second scene explores the idea of things not being what they seem on the surface. The setting of the library seems particularly appropriate as a room filled with knowledge, floor to ceiling, so that when these characters enter the room equipped with their vulnerabilities and facades, the whole scenario of stability disappears. What we think we know may not necessarily be true, whether that's about a person, place, or a concept, especially religion and God.

The doll's house model of the mansion with the tiny replica of the library intact just reinforces the concept that we really don't delve into things enough--that we need to look more closely and carefully at everything, even minute details. The key, though, is not to get too familiar with the intimate discovery so that we don't see it anymore. For example, Julian is fascinated with the replica, while the butler is merely mildly amused and sees it as just another fixture to dust in an already-overworked household.

Is what is in the replica, and the replica within a replica, etc. more real than what we actually see? Is it just a surrogate for a concept - God - or is it the ultimate reality? The butler is weary and a bit jaded, but Julian's curiosity has been aroused and his struggle for knowledge is about to enter another realm. We can only hope his journey will not overwhelm his already-vulnerable nature. The exploration of good versus evil is about to take another turn.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

This scene takes place in an upstairs sitting room of the castle. It is feminine, but not frilly, decorated in shades of blue. The fireplace is in scale with the rest of the mansion, and the appointments are rich and comfortable. Our attention is drawn to Miss Alice, who is sitting in a wing chair facing a set of windows. She is engaged in conversation with the lawyer, who is talking to her about the concept of giving.

With a knock at the door, he comments to Miss Alice, "that will be our bird of prey. Pray. P-R-A-Y. What a pun I could make on that; bird of pray."

The butler escorts Julian into the room and excuses himself amid sarcastic pleasantries. The lawyer then proceeds to introduce Julian to Miss Alice for the first time. Getting no response from the woman whose back is to the room, the lawyer repeats the introduction and tells Julian that she is hard of hearing. He tells Julian that given her age and condition, sometimes twenty minutes can go by for her to assimilate a sentence and reply to it.

Julian doesn't understand because he was told by the Cardinal that the woman was neither ill nor old. The lawyer quiets him and their attention is glued to Miss Alice who slowly rises from her chair and comes around it to face them. Her face is that of a withered crone, her hair gray and white and matted. She is bent and moves stiffly with the aid of two canes.

Finally, she speaks in a cracked and ancient voice and says hello to the incredulous Julian. The lawyer cautions Julian not to come too close to her as he hesitantly moves forward to greet her.

Miss Alice says hello to Julian once again and the lawyer prompts him to respond. The lawyer chides him to speak louder, and the trio enter into a conversation of mixed messages and misunderstandings. After a few minutes of this stilted dialogue, the lawyer moves to take his leave. This startles the completely baffled Julian who makes a whispered plea for the lawyer to remain. But the lawyer is intent on leaving, and Miss Alice jokingly tells him not to steal anything.

Julian makes a move to help Miss Alice sit down, but she either doesn't hear or incorrectly hears everything he says and every move he makes. His frustration is almost tangible as he tells himself that the situation is turning out to be quite impossible. Miss Alice challenges him as to why he is a lay brother and not a priest. And then she quickly changes the conversation to ask what Julian had to drink in the library and chides him for not bringing her a glass of the port he had enjoyed. And just at that point, when Julian's frustration is about to make him bolt from the room, Miss Alice straightens up, rids herself of the canes and assumes a normal, youthful voice.

Julian, of course, is astonished but the game is not over yet. Miss Alice removes her wig, takes off a mask, and becomes the beautiful woman that she really is as Julian watches astonished. She acts as if the whole charade has been perfectly normal and tells him that he needn't raise his voice to speak to her. Her hearing is perfectly fine.

Julian questions the purpose of the game that has been played at his expense, and she asks him to indulge them; that it was because of the importance of their meeting that she felt compelled to do it. She is laughing now and tells Julian that she merely wanted a little lightness to counter the gravity of their encounter, for the transfer of millions is indeed a weighty matter.

Her mood visibly brightened, she asks Julian to swing her chair around and he moves to do so. She tells him that she has chairs in every room of the mansion and starts to call out their locations: at the head of the dining room table, in the drawing rooms, the library, etc. Whatever room you mention, there is a chair that is hers and hers alone.

Julian counters with a little amusement at the reference to the ownership of the chairs in light of the fact that she owns the complete estate. But she tells him that it is the magnitude of the mansion that dictates this need. Because it is so large, she needs to feel ownership of at least one item in each room. And those items are her chairs. Julian asks how she responds when someone accidentally assumes a seat in one of them. Miss Alice is a bit baffled about how to respond because it has never happened before.

She then invites Julian to talk about himself. He is very self deprecating and defers to the background information they already have on him, complete with the missing six blank years. She is not interested in information in any dossier and would like to know him on a more personal level.

In order to draw him out of himself a bit, she begins a flirtatious conversation asking if he had been intimidated by herself or the lawyer, and if he had liked the butler. She admits that she and the butler had been lovers at one time and that she is currently the lawyer's mistress, even though she thinks he is a pig and says so. She admits that she is bored with him and abruptly switches topics again and asks about Julian's missing six years.

Julian is quite tired of this focus on himself, but breathes deeply and tries to explain one more time that there is nothing much to tell. It's simply a matter of his faith in God leaving him, and he committed himself to an asylum. Nothing much to it. But Miss Alice won't let go of it. She asserts that it seems an odd place to go to look for one's faith. Julian counters that she misunderstands. He didn't go there to *look for* his faith. He went because *it* had left him. Miss Alice seems pleased that Julian would have shared this distinction with her and not with her lawyer.

Julian is brought up short again by her next question: "Have you slept with many women?" He's not sure. His uncertain, ambiguous answer just fuels Miss Alice, and she won't relent on the topic. For Julian, the answer is not in black and white. While he is a

lay brother and not ordained, he has still taken the vow of chastity and lives by it. However, there was an occurrence at the asylum that leaves some doubt in his mind.

This is all the intrigue that Miss Alice needs. Her money will keep for a few minutes more. Besides, she wants to hear this story more than anything. And so Julian begins.

He tells her that the institution to which he committed himself was deep inland and was a good one. There were sections - buildings, or floors of buildings - for patients in various conditions... some for violent cases, for example, others for children. Julian continues to tell her that his section was for people who were only mildly troubled, which he finds ironic because he never considered the fleeing of faith a mild matter. There were no bars on the windows. He was allowed utensils and his own clothes. Escape was not a matter of urgency because it was a section for only mildly-troubled people, who had committed themselves, and, should escape occur, it was not a matter of danger to anyone in the outside world.

He confides that there was a period during his stay when he began to hallucinate and withdraw to a point where he wasn't certain when his mind was tricking him or when it wasn't. He believes that his grasp on reality was shaky occasionally. At about that time, there was a woman living in his section of the asylum who believed that she was the Virgin Mary.

Miss Alice is only mildly surprised by this revelation.

He describes her as a quiet, plain woman with soft features; one year or so on either side of forty, married to the owner of a dry goods store. She was someone you would never look twice at on the street. He pauses long enough to comment that that would never be the case with a woman such as Miss Alice. She tells him to continue.

He tells her that more than being frightened by the hallucinations, he is saddened by them because they were provoked in the first place by the departure of his faith, which had been brought on by the manner in which people mock God. Miss Alice again challenges him on the distinction of losing his faith versus abandoning it. He concedes that he had been confused and intimidated by the world around him and just let contact with his faith slip away, seeding a deep sadness.

Miss Alice understands, and he continues with the description of his hallucinations.

"The periods of hallucination would be announced by a ringing in the ears, which produced, or was accompanied by, a loss of hearing. I would hear people's voices from a great distance and through the roaring of... surf. And my body would feel light, and not mine, and I would float - no, glide.

And when I was away from myself - never far enough, you know, to... blank, just to... fog over - when I was away from myself I could not sort out my imaginings from what was real. Oh, sometimes I would say to a nurse or one of the attendants, 'Could you tell me, did I preach last night? To the patients? A fire-and-brimstone lesson? Did I do that, or did I imagine it?' And they would tell me, if they knew."

Julian tries to explain to Miss Alice that he wondered if he imagined so many things or whether so many things he thought had come to play in his imagination. Miss Alice suggests that he may just be describing what passes for sanity. But Julian was anxious to get to the climax of his story of the night with the "Virgin Mary" and continued.

"One night... now, there! You see? I said 'one night' and I'm not sure, even now, whether or not this thing happened or, if it did not happen, it did or did not happen at noon, or in the morning, much less at night... yet I say night. Doubtless one will do as well as another. So. One *night* the following either happened or did not happen. I was walking in the gardens - or I imagined I was walking in the gardens, and I heard a sound... sounds from near where a small pool stood, with rosebushes, rather overgrown, a formal garden once, the... the place had been an estate, I remember being told. Sounds... sobbing? Low cries. And there was, as well, the ringing in my ears, and... and fog, a... milkiness, between myself and... everything. I went toward the cries, the sounds..."

Julian pauses, not wanting to offend Miss Alice. She urges him to go on.

"The woman who believed she was the Virgin Mary was on a grassy space by the pool - or this is what I imagined - on the ground, and she was in her... a nightdress, a... gossamer, filmy thing, or perhaps she was not, but there she was, on the ground, on an incline, a slight incline, and when she saw me - or sensed me there - she raised her head, and put her arms... out, in a ... supplication, and cried, 'Help me, help me... help me, oh God, God, help me... oh help, help.'

This, over and over, and with the sounds in her throat between. I... I came closer, and the sounds, her sounds, her words, the roaring in my ears, the gossamer and the milk film, I... a roar, an ocean! Saliva, perfume, sweat, the taste of blood and rich earth in the mouth, sweet sweaty slipping... ejaculation. The sound cascading away, the rhythms breaking, everything slowly, limpid, quieter, damper, soft... soft, quiet... done."

Miss Alice interjects that she herself is a very beautiful and very rich woman. Julian is unmoved by her tone and continues with the completion of his story.

"As I mentioned to you, the woman was given to hallucinations as well, but perhaps I should have said that being the Virgin Mary was merely the strongest of her... delusions; she... hallucinated... as well as the next person, about perfectly mundane matters too. So it may be that now we come to coincidence, or it may not. Shortly - several days - after the encounter I have described to you - the encounter which did or did not happen - the woman... I do not know which word to use here, either descended or ascended into an ecstasy, the substance of which was that she was with child... that she was pregnant with the Son of God."

Julian tells her that he shared his concern over his participation in what may, or may not have, happened, with his doctor who informed him that the woman in question had been diagnosed with uterine cancer and had died after only a month after the evening in question.

Miss Alice challenges Julian on whether or not his doctor exists, let alone the whole experience with the woman. An odd ending to an odd discussion that began with her asking Julian whether or not he had slept with any women.

Miss Alice again flirtatiously tells Julian that she is rich and beautiful and that she lives alone in the mansion with no relatives, just an occasional companion and a secret for company. Of course, this intrigues Julian but Miss Alice is not sure she wants to share it with him just yet. She immediately changes the tone of the conversation once again to the original business at hand.

It is decided that Julian will need to spend much time with her over the course of the grant transfer and that he should probably move into the mansion. He acquiesces to this idea as he does to most everything in his life.

He gets up to leave now that their first meeting has concluded and Miss Alice surprises him by taking his head in her hands and kissing him on the forehead. She delights in his apparent embarrassment and toys with him as he tries in vain to steer the conversation to the setting of the next appointment date. Finally, he realizes she is waiting for him to kiss her hand, and he does so after kneeling as if she were a Cardinal. Miss Alice finds this most amusing and chides him for it and for the fact that he has never even kissed a woman's hand before.

Julian gains his composure and leaves. Miss Alice again turns to gaze out the windows and that is how the lawyer finds her. He asks when she will have Julian again and she wants him to clarify whether he means for business or for personal reasons. He lets this taunting remark pass. She asks whether they are acting wisely and the lawyer doesn't know yet, but can see nothing standing in the way that can't be destroyed if they are not.

Miss Alice agrees.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

The feminine appointments and interior design of the sitting room for this scene do not belie the impending snatching up of the unsuspecting, napve Julian. The lawyer's comments as Julian is about to enter the room tell us everything. "Our bird of prey is here. Pray. P-R-A-Y. What a pun I could make on that; bird of pray."

We are about to find out what that really means as Miss Alice sets out to seduce Julian. It's just not clear yet what their intentions are and why they have singled him out. Why is it necessary to toy with his fragile state of mind? What can they hope to accomplish by doing so?

Julian's sense of frustration at the game of deception is almost palpable as he wants one thing in his life that is straightforward and without attachments. We soon see that this is not to happen, and sympathy builds for his character, and we want to help him

escape from his predicament, and his life in general. Why are these people adding to his emotional torment?

But there is a spiritual and emotional crisis building as the scene progresses as evidenced by the build up and climax of his encounter with the Virgin Mary character. He wants so desperately to believe in his religion again. But is emotional trauma a spiritual episode? He is still left unfulfilled, both physically and spiritually, but continues to strive within the bounds of his life to find the passions he knows must come out.

It's easy to see that Miss Alice and the lawyer know this and are about to help him along. They are the birds of prey on this fragile bird of pray, and we await his capture with an impending sense of doom.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

This Scene 1s set in the mansion's library and opens with no one on stage. Abruptly, there are voices offstage, and suddenly Miss Alice hurls into the room, her movements abrupt as if she had broken away from the lawyer who is pursuing her. Her voice is agitated and her pleas for him to keep away from her are ignored by the slowly-pursuing lawyer. He tries to placate her but continues to invade her space to touch and caress her.

It's obvious that she despises him but for some reason is unable to get him to leave. He throws out that maybe she would rather be with her precious Julian, who by this time, has been living in the mansion, spending most of his time in the gardens, the chapel and wine cellar.

The lawyer relentlessly pursues Miss Alice and backs her against a wall. Finally he is able to calmly kiss her neck and fondle her. She is also calm now and seems a bit amused at his advances. As his amorous attentions continue, she begins to belittle him for his physical characteristics that she finds revolting: the hair on his back, the fat between his shoulder blades, even his genitalia which she considers quite ugly. But most of all, she hates his cold, selfish attitudes and the way he approaches everything with that same coldness.

The lawyer, of course, needs to respond to her attacks and taunts her with accusations that she is sleeping with the precious Julian, that there must be a sexual relationship between the two. And isn't that the true source of her private donation to the church, not her millions? Just as he is accusing her of turning into a charitable, educational foundation for Julian, the butler enters and announces that Julian has left the wine cellar and would be joining them presently.

The butler is amused by the encounter he has stumbled upon and banters with the two but keeps his distance. He is unmoved even when Miss Alice challenges that the lawyer wants her to be intimate with the lay brother, and she had better play her part in this game and not mess it up.

The butler remarks that the wine cellar is going to ruin with bursting bottles and rotten corks and essentially they are making some very expensive vinegar. Of course, Miss Alice wants it restored and knows that they can count on Julian's consummate talents to help. Because they all agree that Julian has become a tremendous help during his stay at the mansion. The conversation turns to discussion of moving him into quarters over the chapel, and it is at this point that he enters the library to join the others.

Their conversation steers to Julian's methods of helping around the estate when suddenly he notices that the model of the mansion is on fire. There is a flurry of activity

as they all peer into the windows of the model to see the location of the flames. The butler is the first to cry out that it is the chapel that is engulfed in flames, and he and Julian run out of the library toward the chapel.

The lawyer doesn't move from the room and violently grabs Miss Alice by the wrist and forces her to the floor. He hisses at her to watch her step after she cries that they're burning down. He finally leaves her and she assumes a more comfortable position on the floor, where she goes into a mantra alternating with a prayer-like, and then a more natural voice.

Her monologue goes from saying that she has tried to be careful and watch her step... to resignation that the whole place should just burn down... to asking that the chapel be saved. She says that she has tried to obey, tried to understand... she has tried!... and she will continue to try to hold on.

Julian is back in the room now and asks Miss Alice how they could have seen flames in the mansion's model at the same time there were real flames in the actual chapel. How could it happen in both dimensions? He pleads with Miss Alice to explain it to him, but she wearily responds that she doesn't know.

She asks him to move into the mansion with her, that the Cardinal will agree to it. She prods him to share any fears he may have about being there, and he indicates the model still sitting so prominently in the room. He asks her if there is anything to fear. "Always," she said.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

It's clear now that Miss Alice is controlled by, rather than in control of, the lawyer. We also come to see that, although she seems to sincerely like Julian, she, along with the lawyer and butler, is conspiring against him. We still don't know what their plans are for him, and we are a bit disappointed to find out that she is part of the conspiracy because she seems to be the only one who has shown any compassion up to this point.

Religious symbolism also becomes more prominent at this point. The transformation of wine into the Blood of Christ during the Catholic mass is insinuated as it is pointed out that the wine cellar in the mansion is going to ruin. And, of course they all agree that Julian's residence at the estate is appropriate and that he is the one who has the knowledge and experience to restore the wine cellar.

Also there is the emphasis on the word "up" as there was earlier in the play when Julian will be brought "up" to see Miss Alice. Again, after dinner, and after his visit to the wine cellar, the butler was to bring Julian "up" to join the others. Miss Alice makes a point of emphasizing the word, and we're led to believe that "up" is not merely another floor in an ordinary home. Concern grows for the lay brother as the real intentions of the estate's trio grow increasingly counter to their outward actions and words. We're left feeling that "up" may not be an ascension at all, but rather a descent into what we're not quite sure.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

Again, the Scene 1s set in the library of the mansion, and the butler is alone until the lawyer enters angrily and impatiently demanding to know where Miss Alice and Julian are. The butler pretends he doesn't know, and his indifference infuriates the lawyer even further. He chastises the butler and demands that he keep an eye on Miss Alice and Julian at all times. The lawyer is personally and professionally outraged by the relationship that has developed by the wealthy woman and the lay brother.

The butler at last softens and tells the lawyer that they will have Julian very soon now, and that Miss Alice will rise above her human qualities and do her job. She will do what needs to be done.

The butler suggests that it's probably time for the lawyer to visit the Cardinal again and inform him of their plans to have Julian. The two men then engage in a role-playing exercise with the butler playing the lawyer, and the lawyer playing the Cardinal. They relish the idea of telling His Eminence that the precious Julian will soon be taken from him. But surely a hundred-million dollars a year should be enough for one man; after all, he's not even a priest.

They then explore the idea of telling him even more than that. That Julian has found what he had been searching for: intimacy and love. And wouldn't it be a perfect twist if the Cardinal were to marry Julian and Miss Alice? That's amusing enough, but they wonder if the Cardinal shouldn't also be told about the model of the mansion. Can he take being told the full truth? He is, after all, a man of God, even though he seems to worship the symbol and not the substance.

The debate and role playing continue as they explore whether Julian can take it as well. Can he reconcile his faith with the use that other men make of God: God as older brother or scout leader? Julian's agony is that men take comfort in God in these very roles. They all know Julian continues to walk on the edge - will he fall on the side of his faith or the asylum?

The scene ends as the two men are wondering if Julian will survive. They hope he can, but if not, they are willing to cast him out. Their ultimate goal is to have his soul, and it doesn't really matter how they get it. But does something have to be destroyed in order to save a man's soul?

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

Julian's soul is at stake. The discussion between the two men leaves no doubt that there has been a conspiracy between the Cardinal, Lawyer, Butler and Miss Alice to strip him of his beliefs and his soul. Perhaps the four of them represent the Church, the

State, the act of serving, and emotional release and feel that certainly one of them is the way to this man's core.

It's clear now that the Cardinal was in on the deception from the beginning, and that he is willing to deliberately sacrifice Julian to both gain the Miss Alice's millions and also dispose of the insipid Julian and his self-righteous behavior.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

Julian is in Miss Alice's sitting room, near the fireplace, carrying a riding crop. He is talking to Miss Alice, who is in her bedroom with the door ajar. They are discussing how much fun they had riding horses today, which leads Julian to the memory of a Welsh caretaker at the farm of a childhood friend.

The main memory he has of the man are the incredible tufts of black hair on his fingers and how he was entranced by that as a boy. Miss Alice says that it is like D.H. Lawrence's *Love on the Farm* and begins to recite it to him as she mock-stalks him. The poem leads to their conversation of early erotic musings and mental imagery of sex play. Miss Alice delights in Julian's embarrassment and continues by grilling him about the amount and location of his body hair. After Julian reveals this personal information, Miss Alice continues his humiliation with a discussion of riding crops and whipping and asks if he has ever whipped anyone.

Clearly, Julian wants out of this conversation and moves to the topic of his discomfort of the excess found in his new life at the estate. The gluttony and temptation are almost too much for him to avoid any longer. He clearly wonders why he is there, what is his real purpose there, and why is he being tempted and tested.

He does liken the resistance to temptation to that of the tests of the saints and launches into another one of his religious, hallucinatory states as he describes in intimate detail the experience of a Christian being fed to a lion. However, all he wants is to serve in some way and be forgotten.

Miss Alice reminds him that he is serving. He is serving her and ultimately, the Church, in the money that she has promised. He is still in his dreamlike state, musing on the greatness of sacrifice, as Miss Alice moves behind him, her arms around his neck, and then on his chest, urging him to come to her in his sacrifice. He begs her to please stay away from him. She asks him to marry her, to come to her; she wants him. He pleads for sacrifice.

Julian begins to weaken as Miss Alice spreads her arms, the folds of her negligee mimicking the unfurling of great wings. He continues to plead for sacrifice as she beckons him to come to her. With a sort of dying cry, he moves to her; she enfolds him, telling him "You will be hers; you will sacrifice yourself to her..."

As Julian kneels within the folds of her wing-like gown, she drops her head back and calls out... "He will be yours! He will be yours! ALICE!"

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

Julian has no more strength to resist temptation. He knows he should leave the estate, but he is, after all, still a man, and his weakness for all the excesses he has been denied for so long ultimately overtakes him. His frenetic attempts to resist launch him into a semi-trance reciting all the sensory aspects of the deaths experienced by the Christian martyrs. Clearly he has likened himself to martyrdom before because the images are so realistic and so easily brought to mind. But maybe spirituality at that level does have many dimensions to it, and he just doesn't realize the power that he already holds.

His attempts at resistance are futile, though, as Miss Alice stalks him, enticing him, begging him to come to her in the name of his sacrifice. She spreads her magnificent wings and he is enfolded. His soul is caught at last. The bird of prey has caught the bird of pray.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

The final scene of the play takes place in the library, which is empty until the butler enters carrying a pile of gray sheets. They are clearly quite heavy. He sets them down on a table, straightens his shoulders from the effort, looks at various chairs, and begins to count the sheets as Julian enters, dressed now in a suit, not clerical garments.

Julian is confused because he is unable to find anyone in the mansion to celebrate his marriage to Miss Alice, which has just taken place. He's even further baffled because she is nowhere to be found either. He and the butler talk for awhile on the merits of marriage and faith, and suddenly Miss Alice enters the room. She sees Julian and turns abruptly to leave. This further solidifies Julian's irritation, and he demands that the butler prepare the champagne for the wedding guests, who must surely show up at any minute.

The Cardinal, who had performed the wedding ceremony, comes into the room and they launch into a discussion of Julian's faith and how everything is now resolved. The grant has been arranged through his marriage and his ultimate service. The Cardinal encourages Julian to accept what must come next and offers his blessing. Unprepared for anything so ominous on such a glorious day, Julian enters into an argument with the Cardinal and accepts the Cardinal's final blessing.

The Lawyer enters and begins another sarcastic commentary on the napve Julian, a simple farm boy no longer wearing cassocks trailing in the mud, but now clothed in city clothes, banker's clothes... somehow dressed appropriately for the sacrifice. Julian is clearly perplexed and leaves to find his bride.

The Cardinal and the Lawyer are left to discuss the intricacies of their deception on the long-suffering Julian. The Lawyer then moves to a desk and removes a gun from one of its drawers. Incredulous, the Cardinal doesn't see the need for it, but the Lawyer contends that they may have to shoot Julian... literally making him a martyr for his faith.

Julian re-enters the room, still alone. Shortly after, Miss Alice's voice is heard as she resists entering the library because she doesn't want to encounter Julian once again. The butler pulls her in with one hand while holding champagne in the other. She has changed out of her wedding dress, and the discussion begins that they should depart.

Julian realizes too late that what he thought was to be a honeymoon departure for Miss Alice and himself is actually the departure of the Cardinal, the Lawyer, the Butler and Miss Alice. Unbelievably, he comes to realize that he is to stay behind as the ultimate act of his faith. He has become the groom of the "tiny" Alice living in the model, not the real Miss Alice he thought he loved. They are leaving because everything has been accomplished: his marriage, his wife, and his special priesthood.

As Miss Alice reveals to him, she has been the human form of the abstraction of the Tiny Alice, who is his real bride. He must stay with her. He must not resist. He must stay and serve as the ultimate act of faith. Julian is almost wild with outrage at this point because he has given up everything he has sworn and followed and cherished and will not allow another deception or hallucination. He wants something real.

He declares that he will go back to his former life, to the asylum if he has to, but he will not accept what they are forcing on him. The Lawyer must bring an end to it all and raises the gun and shoots the unsuspecting Julian. He collapses to the floor, where eventually, Miss Alice moves to cradle him. They all agree that no doctor should be called, that Julian will bleed to death as the ultimate act of sacrifice.

Eventually, the four conspirators leave Julian in the library to die. He is propped up against the doll house model, where he begins the solitary musings of a betrayed man. He finally comes to the realization that Tiny Alice is God and surrenders to that fact.

"O Lord, my God, I have awaited thee, have served thee in thy... Alice?" Lying prostrate, his arms outstretched resembling a crucifixion, he continues, "I accept thee, Alice, for thou art come to me. God, Alice... I accept thy will."

With that, he slips out of his hallucinatory state for the very last time and the stage goes black.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

In this life, there are many gods to worship; money, power and eternal life are the big three. Julian has been tormented his whole life by the temptation of all these and cannot determine a sure, certain path. And so one is determined for him. He is lured in by the physical and emotional bonds offered by the real Alice in order to provide the financial prize to the Church. But what was the price he ultimately paid? Will his everlasting soul be enough? He never had a firm grasp on his direction and his sacrifice is that of all men; he did the best that he could, mere mortal that he was. Probably he struggled more than most, and as in most things, the sacrifice is greater for those who strive the hardest.

Characters

Miss Alice

Miss Alice is a young, beautiful, wealthy woman. She manifests several contradictions, for instance, vacillating between being flirtatious and being businesslike, or despising Lawyer but being his lover. She intends to donate billions to different charitable institutions such as Jewish organizations, hospitals, universities, and the Catholic Church. It is this gift that brings her in contact with Cardinal, and thus, Julian, his secretary. Though she seems to sincerely like Julian, she, along with the other members of her household, are plotting against him. She seduces and marries Julian in order to sacrifice him to Tiny Alice. Despite the affection she shows for him, she matter of factly leaves him when the time comes.

Butler

Butler is Miss Alice's butler and her former lover. He claims to derive his name from his job, which gives him the function of serving the others. Butler demonstrates some empathy and liking for Julian. The two men seem to forge an immediate bond, and it is only with Butler that Julian shares the more complete story of why he went into the asylum.

Cardinal

Cardinal is a cardinal in the Catholic Church. Lawyer approaches him with Miss Alice's gift, but the two men already are acquainted and heartily dislike each other through their boyhood school. As Lawyer asserts, Cardinal is pompous and full of self-importance. He is also a hypocrite, "selling" his personal secretary a man of faith to Alice's agents for a vast sum of money. He is complicit in the plan against Julian, as indicated in Act III. He even knows that this action might end in Julian's death because Lawyer tells him so but he does not protest.

Julian

Julian (also known as Brother Julian) is the middle-aged secretary of Cardinal. He is a lay person, but he never became a priest because he experienced a crisis of faith years ago. He came to believe that people were worshipping the image of God they created, not God himself; they were worshipping the symbol of God. When this happened, he checked himself into a mental asylum for six years. While in the asylum, he had difficulties telling the difference between hallucination and reality, as demonstrated by his lack of knowledge of whether he had sex with another patient or simply imagined it. Throughout his life, however, his fantasies of martyrdom all of which are heavily tinged with sexuality are so vivid as to become almost real to him. At the time that the play

takes place, Julian allows himself to be drawn to Miss Alice. He succumbs to her seduction and agrees to marry her. After the wedding, however, Miss Alice leaves him to die of a gunshot wound. Through his final soliloquy and death, he comes to accept what either is a hallucination or a personification of an abstract force, both of which go against his belief system.

Brother Julian

See Julian

Lawyer

Lawyer is the lawyer who handles the transfer of Miss Alice's money to the church. He is also Miss Alice's lover, but he disgusts her. He is a cruel, crude, and thoughtless man. He dislikes Cardinal, calling him the son of a whore and profiteer, and he is jealous of Miss Alice's affections for Julian. He kills Julian at the end of the play, though Miss Alice believes that such an action was not necessary. He remains completely unaffected by Julian's impending death as he leaves the mansion.

Themes

Illusion and Reality

Julian is torn between conflicting desires for truth and illusion. He claims to respect only that which is real, but at the same time, he is drawn to the world of his imagination. He wants to worship God in the abstract form and he rails against those people who create God in their own image for their own purpose. This incompatibility of illusion and reality caused him to lose his faith, and thus his sanity, forcing him into the asylum. While in the asylum, he experienced even greater confusion about what was real and what was illusion. To the present day, he is never sure whether or not the sexual experience that he remembers did happen. When he tells Miss Alice about this, she wonders, "Is the memory of something having happened the same as it having happened?" vocally illustrating the sometimes unavoidable merging of illusion and reality. Julian's leave-taking of the asylum also illustrates this principle: he was persuaded that hallucination was inevitable and even desirable.

By the end of the play, however, Julian has been thrown into such a state of confusion that he questions whether he was actually sane during the time he spent in the asylum. He cannot accept Miss Alice's assertion that she, not Alice, is the illusion. He realizes that he has "given up everything... For hallucination." He declares his intention to return to the asylum, his "refuge... in the world, from all the demons waking," at which point Lawyer shoots him. In his dying soliloquy, Julian becomes enmeshed in his debate between truth and reality. Earlier, while looking at the model he had shouted, "THERE IS NOTHING THERE!," but now, even while continuing to deny the physical representation of the abstract, he calls for Alice-God to come to him, and he begins to hear heartbeats and breathing that grows increasingly louder. These sounds continue after his death. Albee has said that he intended the audience to think of these sounds as either Julian's hallucination or as the personification of an abstract force. Either way, Julian is submitting to an illusion instead of the reality the pure abstraction of God that he claimed he wanted.

The mutable nature of illusion and reality is underscored by many other elements in the play. Miss Alice convincingly appears as an old woman it takes only a face mask and a wig to turn a young beauty into a crone. Cardinal also demonstrates that how something or someone appears is not fixed. He speaks in the royal "we," but excited about the amount of money Miss Alice is going to give to the Church, he slips into the more informal "I." The model, which has the power to signify what happens in the mansion, is another example of the overlap between illusion and reality. What happens in the model happens in the mansion, such as the fire in the chapel. "It is exact," says Butler, but that is not true, for in the model Alice resides and in the mansion Miss Alice, Butler, and Lawyer reside. Further, he and Julian question whether the model is an accurate model of the mansion does it have a model within the model? Trying to answer this question would prove the impossibility of discerning with utter certainty the distinction between

illusion and reality, for if the model is an accurate replica of the mansion, the smaller models within would extend into infinity.

God and Faith

Julian's primary struggle has centered on the limits of his faith. He is a lay person, thus, in Butler's words, Julian is "o/the cloth but [he has] .. . not taken it." This position indicates Julian's indecision and his inability to accept the human-made institution of religion. Alone with Butler again, he clarifies his position: he fled to the asylum because he had lost his faith in God. He could not accept that humans made God into a "false God in their own image." Julian's rejection of this representation shows his distaste for making God into a symbol for worship; instead, he thinks, people should merely worship God. Julian says of the asylum, "I did not go there to *look* for my faith, but because it had left me." His faith and his sanity, "they are one and the same." The implication is that without his faith, he is insane, so in leaving the asylum, he was affirming his faith. However, one significant change took place during the asylum: he came to accept that hallucinations were inevitable and *not* the mark of insanity.

The idea of faith arises again at the end of the play. Faced with Lawyer, Butler, Miss Alice, and Cardinal, all of whom want him to stay with Alice all of whom want him to accept the representation of God Julian says he is unable to do so. Lawyer tells him to accept this "act of faith." Cardinal seconds Lawyer's suggestion, declaring it to be "God's will." Julian visibly recoils at this suggestion. Having fought so hard to regain his faith, he knows that acknowledging Alice as the personification of God will leave him empty.

Sexuality

Tiny Alice ripples with both heterosexual and homosexual energy. The opening scene of the play, acted out between Cardinal and Lawyer, is filled with hostility, yet it makes numerous references to sexual tensions that have existed over the years between the men. Lawyer speaks of the "obeisance " that he used to demand from Cardinal, who in turn reminds his enemy that Lawyer's nickname, Hyena, derived from the animal's habit of eating its prey through the anus. Lawyer counters by implying in a manner that is "too offhand" that Cardinal may have sexual relations with other cardinals. Lawyer muses on the "vaunted celibacy" of priests. When he was young, he and Cardinal attended a Catholic boys' school where "everyone diddled everyone else," and they naturally assumed that the priests did the same. The homosexual tension extends beyond these men. Lawyer calls Butler "Darling" and "Dearest." Butler, too, when he kisses Julian goodbye on the forehead gives him "not a quick kiss." Julian describes his attraction to a Welsh stableman with hairy hands.

Despite his vow of celibacy, Julian has numerous and intense sexual fantasies for both men and women. His description of his hallucination of his sexual encounter with the fellow patient is vivid, mimicking orgasm, but it is not as sexually evocative as his

homosexual fantasies. In his dreams of martyrdom, the entrance of the gladiator's fork is simultaneous with his sexual mounting by the lion. He relishes the "bathing" of his groin with his own blood and the press of the lion's belly, which changes into the gladiator's belly, against him. While retelling this fantasy, Julian works himself into a trancelike state which ends in him giving himself to Miss Alice, who opens her gown wide so he can enter within "the great wings." Thus, he has transforms his homosexual fantasies into heterosexual carnal desire.

Style

Symbolism

Of the five characters, three bear the title of their profession. Lawyer, Miss Alice's lawyer, represents civil law, and Cardinal, a cardinal in the Catholic Church, represents divine law. Instead of standing for justice and God's love, respectively, each man symbolizes the perversion of power and hypocrisy. Cardinal acts as Julian's pimp, willingly selling his secretary to Miss Alice and her cohorts. The papers transferring the money are signed on the day of the wedding. "[T]he grant is accomplished;" Cardinal tells Julian, "through your marriage .. . your service." Lawyer arranges for this transaction, obtaining a human under the guise of making a donation. As Cardinal points out, though, Lawyer was a "cheat in your examinations, a liar in all things of any matter." Further, the two men are made increasingly powerful through Miss Alice's money, a symbol here of corruption. Butler, whose actual name signifies his position, is frequently seen serving wine, which is the Christian metaphor for blood. Julian has a symbolic profession. He is a lay brother of the cloth but not fully a priest. In his relationship with Miss Alice, Julian escapes this celibacy without priesthood and unknowingly replaces it with priesthood without celibacy a position denied by the Church.

The model house is the most important symbol in the play. The house in which Tiny Alice lives where Julian will join her is sealed tightly. In this respect, it is like the "glass dome" that "descended " on Julian before he entered the asylum. The sealed world of the model also represents the unrealistic world Julian has tried to create for himself since then. He had sought safety in the Church but that institution turns out to be his greatest enemy. The model, which captivates Julian, ends in symbolizing his death.

Imagery

Religious imagery abounds in the play. After Lawyer has shot Julian, Miss Alice takes him in her arms so that "they create something of a Pieta." Julian dies with his arms wide spread, forming himself into a figure suggests that suggests Jesus on the cross. Cardinal's cardinals cause him and Lawyer to reference Saint Francis and also draw improbable likenesses between these men and the saint. Both Cardinal and Lawyer also engage in nonsense talk to the birds, demonstrating a more tender side but one that never reveals itself to humanity.

This vulnerability is echoed in other images of birds throughout the play. Miss Alice's gown has arms that resemble great wings to enfold Julian. Alternately, Julian is described as Lawyer and Miss Alice asa "bird of prey," "a drab fledgling," anda "little bird, pecking away." Like a bird, he is trapped in a cage, ready to be destroyed by Alice. For her part, Alice has been first compared to a mouse in Lawyer's effort to demean

God, and then she has been likened to a hungry cat, one ready to dally with and destroy her prey.

Allegory

Many readers have perceived *Tiny Alice* as an allegory. An allegory is a narrative technique in which characters representing objects or abstract ideas are used to convey a message, which is most often moral, religious, or ethical. Julian represents pureness in the world; that pureness is murdered by the impurities in the world, which are represented by the other characters. On a more complex level, Butler, Cardinal, and Lawyer have been seen as forming an "unholy trinity" who pervert traditional religious faith. In the final scene, each man becomes his function. Cardinal serves the greed of the Church, not the souls it is supposed to care for. Lawyer efficiently finishes negotiations of the unholy barter in front of Julian's dying eyes, attempting to give the 2 billion to Cardinal. Butler completes his last task of service for Julian, fetching a cushion to place behind his back. And Julian, the layperson, the nonpriest who still practices celibacy, becomes a priest wed to Alice he becomes a son of God despite the shaking of his faith.

Setting

The setting is significant in its very indistinctness. Time and place are not specified in the play. The sums of money talked about are in the millions and billions but no currency is named. The only references to the outside world come as inconsequential details: the temperature in Cardinal's garden is 96 degrees; the port that Julian drinks was bottled in 1806; Miss Alice's mansion was brought over stone by stone from England. The generality of these facts gives the play a universal quality, reinforcing the idea that what happens in the play could happen anywhere and to anyone. At the end of the play, as well, Miss Alice makes specific yet vague references to future plans. She, Lawyer, and Butler will move to "the city" before they embark on "the train trip south." They will have a "house on the ocean" and a Rolls Royce that takes them "twice weekly into the shopping strip." Clearly, the three agents of Alice have enacted this drama before and will do so again. They will use the same props to lure their prey: wealth, beauty, and mystery.

Theater of the Absurd

The Theater of the Absurd was a post-World War II dramatic trend characterized by radical theatrical innovations. In these works, nontraditional characterizations, plots, and stage sets reveal a meaningless universe in which human values are irrelevant. Absurdist drama features a vision of bewildered and anxious humanity struggling to find a purpose. Traditional aspects of support, such as religion and society, have often collapsed. By the mid-1960s, many absurdist innovations had been absorbed into mainstream theater.

Some critics find *Tiny Alice* an absurdist drama. Albee first was categorized with the major absurdist playwrights Eugene lonesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter after the staging of his first play, *Zoo Story.* Like these European absurdists, Albee has also tried to dramatize the reality of humanity's condition. Albee differs from them in that he focuses on the illusions that screen humans from reality instead of on life's alogical absurdity. Julian, for example, uses his belief in God to shield him from the hypocrisy of religion and his own repressed sexuality.

Historical Context

The Sixties

The 1960s was a decade that ushered in great change in the United States. The decade began with voters electing John F. Kennedy as president. At that time, he was the youngest man ever to hold the office, and he brought a spirit of youth and hope to the nation. After his assassination, Kennedy was succeeded by Lyndon Johnson, whose administration effected great change in tax cuts, civil rights, and the war on poverty. By the middle of the decade, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act had been passed, which barred discrimination and led to a mass registration of African American voters in the South, respectively.

Many young people rebelled against mainstream America. These members of the counterculture questioned conformity and societal institutions, such as churches. The enrollment in college courses in religion grew dramatically as students searched for alternative answers. The women's movement also experienced a widespread revival, which forced the government to reconsider women's rights.

Changes in Religious Expression

In 1962, Pope John XXIII attended the Second Vatican Council to discuss what would become historical changes to Church practices. The pope and the other delegates decided that mass should be performed in local languages instead of in Latin. Laypeople also began to acquire a larger role in determining Church affairs.

The U.S. Supreme Court also handed down a historic decision in response to *Engel v. Vitale.* The Court's decision brought an end to religious worship in public schools. In 1962, twenty-four states either permitted or required school prayer, but the Supreme Court stated that special time designated for prayer violated citizens' First Amendment right to freedom of religion. This decision sparked widespread controversy. In the ensuing years, there were 144 proposed constitutional amendments to allow prayer and Bible reading in school; none of them passed. However, the Court's decision seemed to reflect the growing consensus of the American population that religion was losing its influence on American life; a poll conducted in 1969 showed that 70 percent of the respondents agreed with such a statement.

The Art World

Drama and dramatists have moved to the forefront of the arts. Tennessee Williams, Archibald McLeish, Frank Gilroy, and Edward Albee were among the most respected playwrights of the period. Plays by these writers and others were performed regularly on college campuses and by amateur theater groups throughout the country. Unconventional theater also grew in popularity. Plays such as "Hair," about members of

the counterculture living under the cloud of the Vietnam War generally opened off-Broadway, but many became enormous hits.

In literature, novels that had previously been censored were becoming hits in the bookstores. D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* and Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* were published in inexpensive paperback editions. College students studied novels that had previously been considered too risque, such as James Baldwin's *Another Country*, which featured a homosexual character. Other authors portrayed their heroes as victims of an inhumane, insane, and authoritarian society. Joseph Heller's *Catch 22,* which takes places against a mad backdrop of war, and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* whose protagonist was an inmate in an insane asylum, were popular novels that were made into movies.

Critical Overview

Tiny Alice first opened in New York in 1964 and soon appeared, with the inclusion of material that had been deleted for the stage, in book form. Albee's publisher asked him to provide a preface to the published play. Albee instead wrote an Author's Note in which he explained that many had hoped that he would clarify "obscure points in the play explaining my intention, in other words. I have decided against creating such a guide because I find after reading the play over that I share the view of even more people: that the play is quite clear." Despite Albee's affirmative words, many contemporary audiences and critics were unsure what to make of *Tiny Alice* or what the play, in fact, meant. Within a month after its opening, the play had already garnered a mass of reviews, many enthusiastic, that awarded kudos to Albee for his literary technique, language, and audacity. The controversy over *Tiny Alice,* however, which continues to the present day, had begun. Contradictory statements often in the same review were rampant. Theater critics ran the gamut of calling Albee's work "a masterpiece" that "established Albee as the most distinguished American playwright to date" to "pretentious" and "willfully obscure" to "a set trap that has no bait." The reviewer for *Newsweek,* for example, while admitting that *Tiny Alice* was a "thoroughly confused play," also found that it contained unique "scenes that break down the walls of reticence and safety ... [of] the commercial theater."

One element that many reviews had in common was a noticeable refusal to attempt to explicate the drama they had witnessed. Henry Hewes, writing for the *Saturday Review,* was a notable exception. Hewes openly interpreted action and character in the play and even boldly stated what he believed to be misinterpretations on the part of other reviewers. In the same issue *of Saturday Review* was a psychiatrist' s "look" at *Tiny Alice* by Abraham N. Franzblau. Franzblau asserted that the reason viewers were so "disturbed," "puzzled," and "fascinated" by the play, simultaneously, was that "Albee penetrates the superficial layers of our conscious personality and, using the mysterious escalators of the unconscious, reaches the citadels of our private certainties and shoots them full of questions marks."

Reviewers certainly understood that Albee raised issues of the nature of faith and evil, but they immediately engaged in controversial debates over the play's meaning. Some reviewers contended that it was an allegory. Others advised to look for deeply embedded clues, such oblique references to homosexuality as Julian the Apostate and even *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* Albee biographer and scholar Richard E. Amacher wrote in his study of the author, *Edward Albee,* that the play was "subjected to a confusion of interpretation by the critics " because they "refused to accept it on its own surrealistic terms."

Certainly, the body of Albee's work up to the production of *Tiny Alice* included works that challenged the audience with authorial messages about social relationships, the connection between love and aggression, loss and isolation, illusion and reality, and the concept of God. In the words of Leonard Casper, writing in 1983 almost twenty years

after the play was first staged *"Tiny Alice* has continued to be considered exceptionally difficult."

Scholars have often looked at the play as an allegory. Harold Clurman was one of the earliest critics to make a definitive statement about *Tiny Alice;* he was cited in Caspar's *"Tiny Alice:* The Expense of Joy in the Persistence of Mystery," as calling it an allegory in which "the pure person in our world is betrayed by all parties," who are themselves corrupt. "Isolated and bereft of every hope, he must die murdered." Later, Anne Paolucci, again cited in Caspar, worked out a more intricate allegory in which Butler, Cardinal, and lawyer compose an unholy trinity who act out a parodic ritual of faith. Michael Rutenberg (cited in Caspar) saw the play as an allegory of diabolic forces eager to trade a billion ordinary souls for one soul who is particularly sensitive and thus worth corrupting.

Other critics have focused on specific aspects of the play. Leonard Casper denied the play was an allegory at all, contending that *Tiny Alice* resists such treatment "because its meaning lies in the persistence, rather than the resolution, of mystery." Ruby Cohn called it a "modern mystery play" in which the mystery is twofold: the mystery of what is happening on stage, and the mystery of what happens in the "realm of ultimate reality." Julian N. Wasserman focused on Albee's use of language in *Tiny Alice* and how this illustrates the confusion of illusion and reality. For instance, Wasserman equated Julian's descent into madness with his loss of the ability to hear and comprehend language. Katharine Worth asserted that the play "trumpets its symbolism from the start and indeed could hardly be interpreted on any but a symbolic level" and that the players in the drama are play-acting in order to achieve a significant "psychic change." Other critics have even proposed that the whole play takes place in Julian's mind.

More recently Foster Hirsch proposed an interpretation of *Tiny Alice* as a "multi-focus drama, which is at once a busy religious allegory about one man's loss and recovery of faith; a satire on the worldliness, the corruption, and greed of the Church; a parable about appearance and reality, the symbol and the substance, the abstract and the concrete; a morality play about man's inevitable defeat in reaching for the Platonic Ideal." Hirsch's reading of the play is perhaps most in keeping with Casper's assertions that the prevailing body of criticism about the play "ignored the possibility that any definitive reading is too narrow for Albee."

Criticism

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Critical Essay #1

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publishers. In the following essay, she discusses why Julian was chosen as the sacrifice and how it changes his views on God.

When *Tiny Alice* opened in New York in December 1964, the theatergoing world was immediately abuzz. At once complex and simple, graphic and understated, abstract and concrete, the play challenged viewers to find a true meaning, but for the most part, they were unsuccessful at this task. In defense of his play, in March 1965, Albee addressed the press to share his thoughts and ideas.

A lay brother, a man who would have become a priest except that he could not reconcile his idea of 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 ... 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... 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... and in the end ... 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.

Albee asserted that his play was "perfectly straightforward," adding "it is the very simplicity of the play, I think, that has confused so many," but he also noted that in order for the play to be "not at all unclear," the audience needs to "approach it on its own terms."

Indeed, the plot sequence progresses carefully along a preordained script. The agents of Alice Miss Alice, Butler, and Lawyer clearly have played their parts before and will do so again. Everything has been planned, especially the selection of Julian as their sacrifice. That they have investigated him and actually chosen him is apparent in Lawyer's reference to the report that they have on Julian. On one level, Julian has been chosen because he occupies an intermediate space he is neither secular citizen nor religious body yet he has excelled in the church hierarchy, becoming "the only lay brother in the history of Christendom" to serve as a cardinal's secretary. Julian's role as a layperson one who takes on the priest's vow of celibacy without being a priest indicates his extraordinary faith; and his position within the church further shows the Church's recognition of him. It is for these reasons that Lawyer picks Julian as the sacrifice. He wants to strike out at Cardinal, an enemy from childhood. When Lawyer reminds Julian of his duty to the Church and to Miss Alice's household, he points out, that Julian has "this present job *because* I cannot stand your Cardinal."

But Lawyer also wants to strike out at the "august and revered" Church. Though Lawyer early in the play insists that he has learned "never to confuse the representative of a ... thing with the thing itself," he still finds Cardinal's acceptance of money in exchange for Julian's soul to exemplify the hypocrisy of the Church. Lawyer calls the Church "wily" and mocks its "inscrutable wisdom" in appointing "that wreckage [Cardinal] as its representative." He holds no respect for institutionalized religion and enjoys holding power via Miss Alice's money over it.

Not only does Lawyer succeed in gaining control of his childhood foe (and the Church), he also perverts him by making him become an agent of Alice, for Cardinal is complicit in the sacrifice of Julian. Although Cardinal understands right away that something important is at stake when Lawyer asks that Julian be given the assignment, the first certain indication of his knowledge comes in Act III when he points at the model and asks Lawyer, "Then it is... really true? Lawyer knows exactly what is the "this" to which Cardinal refers, and he responds in the affirmative. A few moments later, Lawyer tells Cardinal, "About... *this ?"* You know we may have to shoot him; you know that may be necessary." Although the Cardinal reacts with sadness to this news, he makes no attempt to put a halt to the plot. He initially tries to delay the inevitable, but once Lawyer announces that Julian will stay behind to his "special priesthood," Cardinal goes along with everyone else. Because of all people, he knows Julian best, he is even able to remind the secretary that "it has been your desire always to serve; your sense of mission." He further draws on his knowledge of Julian's past when he tells Julian to "be glad, yes, be glad ... our ecstasy," thus referencing Julian's ecstatic sexual fantasies of martyrdom. It is also Cardinal who initiates the chorus of voices telling Julian to "accept" Alice. Perhaps without Cardinal's involvement, Julian may have escaped the plot against him. Lawyer never unearths the truth about those missing six years of Julian's life, which indicates that he is neither infallible nor omnipotent. This secret further demonstrates that Julian has exercised choice with whom he will share his story even though by the end of the play his right to freely choose has been taken from him.

Miss Alice and the rest do more than take away Julian's free choice: they take away his very belief system. Julian chose not to become a priest because he was "not wholly reconciled" to the use people make of God. As he tells Miss Alice, "Man's God and mine are not ... close friends." He rebels against people's personification of God in their own image, making a God "created by man" instead of allowing God to be the creator. Lawyer and Butler role-play a conversation Lawyer would like to have with Julian. Butler/Julian declares that there is "a *true* God."

Lawyer: "There is an abstraction, Julian, but it cannot be understood. You cannot worship it. Butler: There is more. Lawyer: There is Alice, Julian. That can be understood. Only the mouse in the model. Just that. Butler: There must be more. Lawyer: The mouse. Believe it. Don't personify the abstraction. Julian, limit it, demean it. Only the mouse, the toy. And that does not exist... but is all that can be worshipped.

Lawyer is essentially describing a world without God. God is an abstraction, but since you cannot worship an abstraction, you cannot worship God. Unlike others, Lawyer does not "personify" God into his own image, but instead makes of God something

insignificant and worthless, and even a pest: he makes God a mouse. At the end of the scene, however, Lawyer transforms God/Tiny Alice/Mouse into a cat. "Rest easy;" he says to the model, "you'll have him . .. Hum; purr; breathe; rest. You will have your Julian. Wait for him. He will be yours." With the transformation of the mouse into a cat, Lawyer intimates that God/Tiny Alice/Cat is hungrily awaiting the feast of Julian.

This transformation further recalls Julian's dreams of martyrdom in which a gladiator's trident enters him at the same time that a lion climbs on top of him and sinks in its teeth. This fantasy is so powerful that when Julian recalls it for Miss Alice, he falls into a trance, but his fantasy inevitably merges into the sexual hallucination he had when he was in the asylum. This lapse of Julian's consciousness demonstrates how closely linked are his religious urges and his sexual urges. Having this knowledge makes it easy to understand why Julian's hallucinations "were saddening to him." Although he says that they were "provoked, brought on by the departure of my faith," thus intimating that his sadness stemmed from his lack of faith, on a more suppressed level, they also represent his inability to subdue his sexuality despite his religious calling. As such, they indicate a personal failure. Julian's failure is only made greater when he can't help but give himself to Miss Alice and even decide to leave the laity in order to marry her.

The betrayal on Miss Alice's part and her ability to make Julian change his mind about something so important to him foreshadows the end of the play. Left alone and dying, Julian is forced to confront and question his most basic religious tenet: that humans should not personify God in their own image. Who was real, he wonders, Miss Alice with "warm flesh" or Tiny Alice "THE ABSTRACT." He understands that if Tiny Alice is real and Miss Alice is the illusion, as she claimed, he has betrayed himself. He looks at the phrenological head that wears Miss Alice's wig, but since it is not real, it represents Tiny Alice and not Miss Alice. He speaks to the head as if it were Alice. "Is thy stare the true look? ... And her eyes ... warm, accepting, were they ... not real? Art thou my bride?" He realizes that he has brought this lonely situation upon himself: "It is what I have wanted, have insisted on. Have nagged ... for." He at last understands the human need to create something solid and graspable out of something that is wholly abstract.

Julian makes his final demand: "IS THIS MY PRIESTHOOD, THEN? THIS WORLD? THEN COME AND SHOW THYSELF! BRIDE? GOD?" The heartbeats and breathing become louder. The light in the bedroom of the model goes out and begins to move across the upper story, indicating that someone or something is moving across the upper story of the mansion at that very time. Julian becomes fearful. "You ... thou ... art... coming to me? ... ABSTRACTION? ABSTRACTION!" Julian is "sad" and "defeated," for he now actively seeks the personification of God to save him from his solitude. "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? ... Consider and hear me, O Lord, my God," he cries, desperate for a God who can share this moment. Right before Julian's death, a momentous occurrence happens: he sees "a great presence filling the room." It is either the personified God or Julian's hallucination of a personified God. Either way, Julian's ending shows his rejection of his earlier contentions. What could be seen as defeat, however, has a positive twist, for in losing his former faith, Julian has gained a new, more sustaining faith.

Source: Rena Korb, in an essay for *Drama for Students,* Gale, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Krukman describes Albee's career by taking a look into a variety of his productions.

The much-besieged playwright defies conventional critical wisdom with a dazzling new play and a Broadway revival.

This oblique aphorism, about obliquity, was first uttered on a Berlin stage in 1959. One year later, when *The Zoo Story* came home to inaugurate the new Off-Broadway, the New York Post trumpeted Edward Albee as the "next Eugene O'Neill." For decades afterward, critics scorned him for trying to live up to the title. Jerry's insight proved to be an uncanny forecast of Albee's career in the American theatre. Albee has gone a long distance out of the way from that two-character one-act over the past four decades; his short-distance, four-year "comeback" seems, at age 70, correctly on track. Albee's 1994 *Three Tall Women* earned him his third Pulitzer; a fine-tuned revival of A *Delicate Balance* won three Tony awards in 1996; and now, after his 1964 *Tiny Alice* was widely praised last year at Connecticut's Hartford Stage Company (and is currently gearing up for a Broadway stint this spring), it seems that, in typically indirect fashion, Albee is asserting himself as one of the greatest living American playwrights. Suddenly, it seems, everyone's asking: "Where has he been for so long?"

Of course, Albee's been here the whole time, but Americans had gotten used to treating him like the unwelcome guests that populate so many of his plays. After a long career that began with a burst of breathless praise, followed by denunciations and even downright excoriation, we may now be ready to sit up, take notice and, as Albee once implored in an interview with the Dramatists Guild Quarterly, bypass our "conscious barriers" and let the plays seep into our unconscious minds, uncensored.

I, too recently traveled a long distance to London to see the world premiere of *The Play About the Baby,* Albee's newest, consistently funniest and, to my mind, best play yet. Without giving too much away, the plot concerns as Albee explained it to me "a baby who ceases to exist." Even more than in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wool/?*, the baby (to be more accurate we might call this absent presence "the baby") is endowed with a powerful symbolic valence. In fact, George and Martha's illusory baby from Virginia Woolf almost seems to haunt the new play's opening moments: The character named the Girl announces to the Boy, "I'm going to have the baby now," and we hear an otherworldly Lamaze class of heavy breathing, then water breaking. The "baby" is born, and the frisky young couple goes on to tickle, taunt and play (note the pun) with their bundled-up offspring. *The Play About the Baby* is a pared down, more perfect Virginia Woolf as well as its onstage deconstruction: Two intruders, named the Man and the Woman, arrive to take away both the baby and the younger couple's rose-hued view of the future.

As he did with *Zoo Story,* Albee has taken the showbiz tradition of opening out of town to trans-Atlantic extremes. No matter: He is busy making plans to produce his short,

sharp shock of a play stateside. When that happens, *The Play About the Baby* should go a long distance to erase any doubt that Albee has always been one of this country's greatest playwrights.

Last summer Albee and I discussed the European dramatists who are often cited as his influences. I asked him to name his favorites. He rarely hesitates when asked a question (there's none of Jerry's obliquity in his conversational manner), and the answered directly: "Beckett, Genet, lonesco. In that order."

Those three words "in that order" intrigued me more than the three names, which any barely attentive undergrad could have guessed. Following the success of his early one-acts, Albee was often called the "American lonesco." He explained: "I intentionally made *The American Dream* an homage to lonesco. And anybody who's bright enough could realize what I was doing. But critics were saying, 'Oh, he's just imitating lonesco.' Idiots!"

It occurred to me that this was when the trouble all began for Edward Albee in America a country that likes its fourth wall left intact. The label of absurdist stuck too soon and too well. If this fresh-from Europe arriviste was not going to write realism, most Americans felt, he should stick to doing lonesco: Keep us laughing with nonsensical language, with incontinent old people and babbling bourgeois couples, a la Bald Soprano. Martin Esslin's embrace of Albee in the 1968 second edition of his landmark book *The Theatre of the Absurd* tying Albee's assault on the "foundations of American optimism" to lonesco's lampooning of the French middle class only exacerbated the problem.

Critics took their brickbats to *Tiny Alice* for not providing the easy earmarks of lonesco-styled Ab-surdism. But it wasn' t meant to be clear-cut Absurd-ism. Nor was the 1966 *A Delicate Balance* (which Albee calls "naturalism") Gerald Gutierrez's realistically nuanced production, winner of the 1996 Tony for best revival, proved that the play is in fact a "delicate balance" of the real and the symbolic. When Agnes and Tobias are visited by their frightened longtime friends, Harry and Edna, they are met by terror that is not only metaphysical but also mundane, the existential anguish of life's prosaic moments like when we are shooing out guests, not when we are reading Cainus. Clearly, Albee was moving in new directions.

Or trying to. For many, Albee's move up that three-tiered ladder of playwrights he mentioned had him breathing air too rarefied. Early on, when critics noticed that *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* may actually have been the beginning of something else when they detected French whiffs of (gulp) Jean Genet's game-like rituals a handful of them begrudgingly allowed him this dalliance. It soon became clear, though, that Americans simply do not do Genet on Broadway; perverted rituals were fine as Greenwich Village fare, but they were not serious mainstream theatre. Virginia Woolf became famous for, among other things, not winning the Pulitzer prize in 1962, when committee member W. D. Maxwell deemed it "filthy," causing a flurry of protests and resignations.

And what of Beckett, the first name on Albee's list? Beckett was usually mentioned as a writer he should not emulate, lest he embarrass himself. (One noteworthy exception

was Clive Barnes's review of *Seascape,* a rare instance of a favorable comparison between Albee and Beckett in the popular press.) Even Esslin's lapidary study, generous enough to mention Genet vis-a-vis Virginia Woolf, resisted calling Albee and Beckett theatrical bedfellows (despite noting that *The Zoo Story* and Krapp' s *Last Tape* shared a bill at Provincetown Playhouse in 1959).

So what has Albee been up to all these years, and how do Americans usually make a narrative out of his remarkable career? Until his sudden reappearance in 1994 with *Three Tall Women,* the story often went like this: After *The Zoo Story* and his absurdist one-acts *(The American Dream, The Sandbox)*, Albee dipped into social protest with *The Death of Bessie Smith.* Then, despite a blip (albeit a revolutionary blip for American theatre) called *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?,* it was a steady slope downward. There were occasional successes *Tiny Alice* and A *Delicate Balance* were generally perceived as last gasps but mostly a mess of half-baked adaptations of other authors' work. He got a lot of bad reviews for his 1975 *Seascape*, yet, despite the critical carping, managed to put Frank Langella in a lizard suit and walk away with his second Pulitzer. The '70s were the beginning of the end, mostly: plays like *Counting the Ways, All Over* and *Listening* are all but forgotten. And the '80s? Well, John Simon called The Lady from Dubuque "one of the worst plays about anything, ever." Albee was either experimenting too wildly or repeating himself too cravenly. His last desperate experiments *The Man Who Had Three Arms* (1983), for example only proved that he was a charlatan from the start, and that he had merely capitalized on a wave of Sartre-struck sentiment in this country in the early '60s. If he exists at all, he's a mere shadow of his former Woolf.

To anyone doing the math, however, this account would never add up. After all, Albee is mentioned, without hesitation, by American playwrights Terrence McNally, Christopher Durang and Tina Howe as a primary influence, and several up-and-comers of the next generation Nicky Silver and David Ives jump immediately to mind have also sung his praises. The roster of dramatists Albee has assisted financially includes Adrienne Kennedy, Sam Shepard and John Guare. And his years of teaching at the University of Houston, where he was named distinguished professor of drama in 1988, have turned out a profusion of Albee-mentored one-acts and full-length plays. Still, even though his presence in American drama is redoubtable, the trajectory of his career has been narrated as a gradual diminution, Beckettian only in its slouching toward absence.

Some might say that Albee has been Protean to a fault, refashioning his style so much that his imprint keeps disappearing. The problem has been that critics have not kept up with him. While other major American playwrights have been allowed room to grow, granted laissez passer to mix genres within plays or jump from genre to genre as they develop, Albee was issued a moving violation. Suspicious of his every move, critics kept up a weary and wary vigilance throughout the years, responding to Albee's dramaturgical gauntlets as if they were deceptive gambits.

In language typical of so many reviews, Robert Brustein lamented of *Virginia Woolf, "*Albee is a highly accomplished stage magician, but he fails to convince us that there's nothing up his sleeve." Albee, it seems, was only out to dupe us.

One explanation for critics seeing chicanery instead of innovation may rest on Albee's own explication or lack thereof of his own work. As one of three regnant living American playwrights Miller and Mamet being the only others with similar stature and longevity Albee is the member of this troika who resists theorizing about himself. He has written cogently about art, including an excellent 1980 article on Louise Nevelson in *Art News,* and, not content to merely adapt their works for the stage, penned critical essays on Carson McCullers and James Purdy; his early poetry relied as much on philosophy as it did on musicality. But there has never been Albee's version of Miller's *Tragedy and the Common Man* or even Mamet's *Uses of the Knife* or *True and False.* (Even O'Neill, never a great theoretical mind, hashed out his own confused aesthetic project in *Memorandum on Masks.)* While these authors have written their separate works to (even if only on the strategic level) justify the plays they like to write, Albee has rarely been more programmatic than to ask us with his typically acerbic wit not to think about where we parked the car upon leaving the theatre.

A rare defense came after *Tiny Alice*, when, at a press conference, he was just beginning to fight charges of obfuscation that would dog him for decades.' *'Tiny Alice* is a fairly simple play, and not at all unclear, once you approach it on its own terms," he said, following with a step-by-step plot development, no more, no less. Albee didn't quote Kierkegaard or offer any apologia for his new type of drama. He didn't dub Julian the existential Loman though he certainly could have. Instead, he concluded: "It is, you see, a perfectly straightforward story. It is the very simplicity of the play, I think, that has confused so many." Albee was in effect telling the audience to stay awake and pay attention.

The question audiences seemed to throw back was: Pay attention how? Without the clues and confines of a single genre, we don't know whether we're watching a doomed love story about a defrocked priest and an heiress, or a Pirandellian puzzle about Platonic forms. The characters seem to be real well, most of the time. Still, they're named Butler, Lawyer, Cardinal earthly symbols for the abstract forces they represent, right?

But *Tiny Alice* had already been the last straw in many critics' long-suffering wait for Albee to come clean. Now he was not only playing tricks with an audience's enjoyment, he was offending their psy-chosexual values. Deviously, he was floating gay content past unsuspecting men and women. Philip Roth's outraged review of *Tiny Alice* ended by asking: "How long before a play is produced on Broadway in which the homosexual hero is presented as homosexual, and not disguised as an angst-ridden priest, or an angry Negro, or an aging actress, or worst of all, Everyman?"

Of course, Albee had heard a lot of that before, especially around Who's Afraid of Virginia Wool/?, the play where he first supposedly bamboozled Broadway houses by smuggling in a covert homosexual relationship. As Stanley Kauffmann complained in a 1966 *New York Times* Arts and Leisure article that became notorious, Albee's first play about "the baby" reeked of "disguised homosexual influence." Albee who is never directly named by Kauffmann but is called one of those "reputed homosexuals [whose] plays often treat of women and marriage" was "streaked with vindictiveness toward the

society that constricts and, theatrically, discriminates against them." In that article, the unnamed Albee was compared to Genet, but unfavorably, as Genet "is a homosexual who has never had to disguise his nature." (Albee told me with a rueful laugh that he was never in the closet and, since boarding school, has always been very happy being gay a point that evaded Kauffmann's analysis.) Not only the journalists but the academics were lifting the veil: In *The Drama Review,* Richard Schechner inveighed against *Virginia Woolfs* "morbidity and sexual perversity, which are there only to titillate an impotent and homosexual theatre and audience." Already, a mere three years into this wunderkind's career, Schechner was "tired of Albee."

And Georges-Michel Sarotte, in the book *Like a Brother, Like a Lover,* wrote that Virginia Woolf "is a homosexual play from every point of view, in all its situations and symbols. It is a heterosexual play only in outward appearance, since in 1962 it had to reach the mass public, and also because Albee does not want to write a homosexual work.".

This attack on Albee did some damage. Coupled with his infuriating genre-bending, people began to think he was now pulling one over on us because he was sick and couldn't admit it. It has taken 25 years to see the irony in the fact that it was disguised homophobia that accused Albee of disguising homosexuality.

Autobiography is the last refuge of a baffled critic. In 1978, Foster Hirsch wrote a book-length study of the "evasions" of Edward Albee's personal life (titled *Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?)*, which the author believed to be the question to pursue now "at this diminished moment in the career of an enormously gifted writer." Albee couldn't pull the wool over Hirsch's eyes: "The answer, in the evidence of his progressively claustrophobic and indirect plays, from which his biography is carefully omitted, is Albee himself."

After all these critical jabs with kidney punches outnumbering the fair hits it's small wonder that Albee seemed down for the count through the '80s. In one respect, he was on the mat for a while, spending a lot of time directing including a Los Angeles revival of *Virginia Woolf* with Glenda Jackson and John Lithgow in 1989 and plays by Shepard, Mamet and Lanford Wilson at the English Theatre in Vienna in 1985. But his career was resuscitated. He premiered two of his own new plays, again way out of town, in Vienna: *The Marriage Play* in 1987 and an intriguing play in 1991 that was frankly autobiographical *Three Tall Women.* When it made its U.S. premiere in 1994, *Three Tall Women* won not only the Pulitzer but a spate of other awards. Even Albee was surprised. He told me that Three Tall Women was, after 35 years of writing plays, his first ever to receive unanimous critical praise, adding, "Just wait. I'll be out of fashion again soon enough."

But I'm not so sure. In 1994, he was the featured playwright at New York's Signature Theatre and won an Obie award for sustained achievement, and in 1996 he received Kennedy Center honors for his lifetime contribution to the nation's culture.

Albee recently showed me a notebook that included his new play, *The Goat* (he claims to never use a computer because he delivers plays nearly complete in longhand, direct, it seems, from the unconscious storing fragements on a hard drive would defeat this method). Albee calls the play the most "politically involved" he's ever written, and he may finish another he's "threatened to unleash for several years now, about Attila the Hun." So, in fashion or not, Albee has more to write.

"Define your terms. Honestly, the imprecision!" Leslie in *Seascape*

What many have perceived as Albee's long disappearance from the stage, a vanishing act akin to, well, that darned "baby" in the play, may be a signal to critics that he will not follow their directions. But *The Play About the Baby* may finally force us to acknowledge Albee's presence, even adopt him as our own. By evoking what must be by now his invisible theatrical signature the nonexistent baby Albee answers back to the charges of subterfuge that have followed him since *Virginia Woolf.* At the end of the new play, the Man, who has threatened to take "the baby" away, performs a bit of legerdemain: He unrolls the blanket to reveal presto! there's no baby there. The moment is terrifying, an absurd coup de theatre and, at the same time, Albee's showing of his hand to the critics. You see, Albee might be saying, you believed in the illusory baby, despite the fact that I told you it doesn't exist. The trick, in other words, is no trick at all. There was never anything up my sleeve.

More than hocus-pocus, though, Albee has written a harrowing and hilarious four-character play, pristine in structure, pure in intent, even Beckettian maybe his Godot. *The Play About the Baby* combines playful self-reflexive commentary with wicked humor while tapping the existential terror of lost youth and passion's inevitable demise. Imagine the demons of *Rosemary's Baby* enacting their rituals in the manner of Vladimir and Estragon, and you begin to get a sense of the vaudevillian theatre of cruelty that surrounds the play's action.

At one point in *The Play About the Baby,* the Man asks the audience if we've ever noticed that, when we take a trip, the journey back always seems much shorter than the time spent headed to our destination. The moment, of course, echoes Jerry's insight in *Zoo Story*, but it's classic Albee for other reasons, too: a question about home and belonging, delivered across the footlights to an uneasy-be-cause-they're implicated audience, fusing mundane speculation with metaphysical possibility. It's that possibility that Albee has teased us with for decades now - the possibility suggested by the first playwright on his favorites list, Beckett, when Endgame's Hamm speculates, "We're not beginning to ... to .. . mean something?"

As this 70-year-old comeback kid keeps writing, will American audiences finally believe that Albee means something, and isn't just up to something? Even if they don't, let's hope the pedants and pundits have him to kick around for many more years. The "next Eugene O'Neill" doesn't show up every day.

Source: Steven Drukman, "Won't you come home, Edward Albee?," in *American Theatre,* Vol. 15, Issue 10, Dec, 1998, p. 16.

Critical Essay #3

In the following review, Taylor depicts that the success of the production lies within its "coruscating dialogue."

Hartford Stage continues to carry the flame for Edward Albee's rarely produced 1964 enigma Tiny Alice, its current re visitation being the play's first major revival since Hartford Stage mounted it in 1972. It was well worth a second visit, for no matter how much of a puzzlement the play may be, there's no denying that it contains some of Albee's most gleamingly coruscating dialogue. Has Albee ever written anything more brilliantly, bitingly vicious than this play's opening scene between a lawyer and a cardinal who have utterly loathed each other since they were at school together?

And since one of the greatest pleasures of theatergoing is hearing and seeing accomplished actors exploring and reveling in splendid dialogue, this production is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the New England theater season, not the least because of its excellent cast, direction and setting.

If the play's third act (to which the playwright has restored some cut material) doesn't truly deliver on the promises of its two preceding acts, *Tiny Alice* is still one of Albee's most endlessly fascinating creations, not the least because it is such a tantalizing puzzle.

As the play's central character, a lay brother who has survived a major loss of faith, Richard Thomas gives one of his most admirable performances. Robed and bespectacled, he performs with tremendous technical skill in the service of a portrayal of potent simplicity and humility. He's superb.

But so is the rest of the cast, beginning with Gerry Bamman and Tom Lacy as the opening scene's antagonists. They are glorious sparring partners, Bamman a viciously cruel lawyer, Lacy a plumply pompous prelate. And in what is in a sense the play's comic-relief role (except for the fact that the whole play is shot through with comedy), John Michael Higgins is deliciously sly and wry as the butler named Butler whose casual insolence is so playful.

In the difficult title role of Miss Alice, apparently a multibillionairess offering a gift of multibillions to the Catholic Church who may or may not be a stand-in for God Sharon Scruggs performs with considerable panache and does not let the production's high acting standards down. She is not, however, helped by Constance Hoffman's costumes, and she may not be ideally cast, lacking the cool, ladylike elegance Irene Worth gave the role in its original Broadway production.

Thomas, on the other hand, may be better cast than John Gielgud was originally as Brother Julian. In any case, Scruggs and Thomas work wonderfully together, especially in the second act's still-shocking seduction finale.

Mark Lamos, in a return to the theater of which he was artistic director for so many years, has directed at the top of his form. And set designer John Arnone has given the play's various locales a chilly minimalist grandeur that suits Albee down to the ground. The model of the elaborate castle in which Miss Alice lives (shipped stone by stone from England by her father) dominates the stage as it should, and there very well might be a *Tiny Alice* living in it. Or is it a mouse?

Much of the play could well be said to be a comedy of manners, its dialogue quite up to the quality of Shaw and Wilde. There are also suggestions of theater of the absurd, notably Beckett, of T. S. Eliot and even of Tennessee Williams in his lush *Suddenly Last Summer* mode as it explores "the relationship between sexual hysteria and religious ecstasy," to quote Albee.

But at the same time, *Tiny Alice* is pure Albee, and at the Hartford Stage it's receiving a production that really should be seen beyond Hartford in order for the play to be seen and reassessed more widely.

Source: Markland Taylor, "Tiny Alice," (review) in *Variety,* Vol. 371, no. 4, June 1, 1998, p. 52.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Valgemae provides a parallel between The Great God Brown and Tiny Alice.

Critics who have grappled with Edward Albee's *Tiny Alice* have conjectured about its possible sources. These range from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to the plays of Noel Coward, T. S. Eliot, Jean Genet, and several other European playwrights. Surprisingly, no one has mentioned Eugene O'Neill. Albee himself has repeatedly admitted being "an enormous admirer" of "late O'Neill." "By late O'Neill, do you mean *Long Day's Journey Into Night?"* asked an interviewer. "Yes," replied Albee, "and *The Iceman Cometh* and those of that period when he started writing good plays." The interviewer: "Do you mean after he got over his gimmicky period?" Albee: "Yes." Yet it is precisely the O'Neill of the "gimmicky period" who seems to have influenced the Albee of *Tiny Alice.*

Tiny Alice, said Albee at a press conference, was "something of a metaphysical dream play which must be entered into and experienced without predetermination of how a play is supposed to go." Since Albee was not so much explicating his play as lecturing the New York critics, his warning about "predetermination" in all probability referred to thinking conditioned by the conventions of theatrical realism. For by calling *Tiny Alice* "a metaphysical dream play," Albee placed his own play in the tradition of dramatic expressionism that goes back to Strindberg's dream plays and eventually became naturalized, as it were, with the experiments of O'Neill. Thus we are justified, I think, in approaching *Tiny Alice* as an expressionistic objectification of Brother Julian's nightmare or hallucination. Further external evidence to support this contention is found in Albee's statement that "Brother Julian is in the same position as the audience. He's the innocent. If you see things through his eyes, you won't have any trouble at all."

"Things" are seen through the eyes of the protagonist also in O'Neill's expressionistic plays, where the action on the stage is distorted in order to capture a character's subjective view of the world. In *The Great God Brown,* the most complex and imaginative of O'Neill's experimental plays, the most salient expressionistic device is the mask. Masks are worn by all the major characters, thus objectifying the duality between their outer and inner selves, between illusion and reality. Most of the characters in *Tiny Alice* from time to time don metaphoric masks, Butler refers to the Cardinal as having to "wear a face," and when Julian first meets Miss Alice, she appears in a matted wig as well as the mask of an old hag. By removing both mask and wig, Miss Alice is suddenly transformed into an attractive woman. Yet this is not her real identity, either. For as we discover later in the play, she is the symbol of the abstraction Tiny Alice. The transformation of Miss Alice from an old crone into an attractive woman an action that has puzzled critics suggests that all is not as it appears to be on the surface and foreshadows the stripping away of illusions that Julian must undergo in order to confront the abstraction, or Alice, which derives from the Greek word for truth.

Miss Alice's seemingly surreal transformation brings to mind Strindberg's "expressionist manifesto " his preface to *A Dream Play* in which he proclaims that in a play governed solely by dream logic, "Characters divide, double, redouble, evaporate, condense, float out of each other, converge." Albee's debt to Strindberg has been investigated by Marion A. Taylor and Robert Brustein, in his *New Republic review* of *Tiny Alice*, has suggested parallels between that play and Strindberg's *A Dream Play.* Yet Miss Alice's unmasking is also reminiscent of the action in scene ten of O'Neill's *The Fountain,* where an old woman appears to Juan. "In a flash," read the stage directions, *"her mask of age disappears"* and the beautiful Beatriz stands before the hero. More indirectly, Miss Alice, masked and unmasked, brings to mind the objectification of the split personality of John and the masked Loving in O'Neill's Days *Without End.* And like Billy Brown in *The Great God Brown*, who at times wears the mask of Dion Anthony, Butler and the Lawyer in *Tiny Alice* assume for a while the personae of Julian and the Cardinal.

Related to the mask as an expressionistic device in *Tiny Alice* is the castle, which contains an infinite number of proportionately smaller models of itself. The castle can easily be related to the more traditional House of God, thus forming yet another link with *The Great God Brown*. In *Tiny Alice* the Lawyer suggests that the very foundation of the castle is "a wreck". As Butler phrases it, "Something *should* be done about the wine cellar. I've noticed it as a passerby would but Brother Julian pointed out the extent of it to me: bottles have burst, are bursting, corks rotting. . . something to do with the temperature or the dampness. It's a shame, you know". The connection between the house of mouse-god Alice and a more conventional if similarly metaphorical House of God is established by the Lawyer, who says: "When Christ told Peter so legends tell that he would found his church upon that rock. He must have had in mind an island in a sea of wine. How firm a foundation in the vintage years." The parallels between the rock of Peter in a sea of wine and Dion's cathedral, into which he has concealed a blasphemous, wine-loving Silenus, are equally apparent.

Dion's cathedral, argues Doris Falk in her study of O'Neill's plays, "is a metaphor of the neurotic process ... which O'Neill seems to have understood thoroughly throughout the play. Man's normal need to transcend himself, to build spires toward the infinite, is blasphemed and travestied when its energies are all diverted inward to the struggle with masks of self." Professor Falk's observation suggests an interesting point of comparison between the two plays, especially in the light of Brother Julian's erotic hallucinations. For the castle, like the cathedral in *The Great God Brown,* has certain affinities with the neurotic process occurring within Julian's mind. Hence the fire in the chapel serves as an objectification of Julian's physical passion for Miss Alice, which threatens to destroy the tenuous order he has established for himself as a lay brother. The scene opens with Miss Alice running away from the Lawyer, telling him to "KEEP OFF ME!" To the Lawyer's "Don't be hysterical, now," shereplies, "I' 11 *show* you hysteria. I' 11 give you *fireworks!,"* thus linking *fire* and the Greek *hysteria* for *womb.* When the actual fire breaks out in the chapel, it guts the altar area, just as Brother Julian's sexual fantasies destroy his attempts to come to grips with religious experience. For Brother Julian's road to religious ecstasy is paved with sexual hysteria (to use Albee's own terminology), and before he can embrace his God in a not so metaphoric marriage, Julian must be

seduced. As Butler remarks at the beginning of the next scene, referring to Julian and Miss Alice, "the fire in the chapel ... brought them closer," after which the lovers go picnicking and partake of an almost O'Neillian "Montrachet under an elm." (Also decidedly O'Neillian is a conversation between Brother Julian and Butler. The former states that he dislikes being left alone. "Like a little boy?" questions Butler, "When the closet door swings shut after him? Locking him in the dark?" In *The Great God Brown* Dion Anthony speaks similar words about his mother: "I remember a sweet, strange girl, with affectionate, bewildered eyes as if God had locked her in a dark closet....")

The union of Brother Julian and Miss Alice is consummated in the flesh, but the fusion of their bodies is merely a further concretization of abstract states. For as in *The Great God Brown*, the characters in *Tiny Alice* are not merely individuals but rather expressionistic types: the Cardinal, the Lawyer, and Butler, the butler. The parallels between the protagonists of both plays are fairly obvious. In Dion Anthony, as his name implies, struggle "the creative pagan acceptance of life" and "the masochistic life-denying spirit of Christianity." Brother Julian, who narrates at length his erotic experiences, has a Christian martyr complex: he has "dreamed of sacrifice". O'Neill's protagonist experiences a four-way tug of war between the Christian, pagan, aesthetic, and materialistic forces within him (and within society). So Julian's soul is at the mercy of the Cardinal, the Lawyer, Butler, and Miss Alice. Julian, like "Dion Brown" (as Cybel calls the composite of the Dion Anthony-Billy Brown multiple personality in *The Great God Brown),* who is shot by a police officer, is killed by a representative of law and order, in his case, the Lawyer. Similarly, O'Neill's statement to the press about Brown: "in the end out of this anguish his soul is born, a tortured Christian soul such as the dying Dion's, begging for belief, and at the last finding it on the lips of Cybele" could almost describe Julian's death scene. He, too, is a "tortured Christian soul" begging for affirmation of his belief.

Miss Alice, in turn, displays similarities not only to Cybel but also to Margaret, both of whom represent aspects of the *Ewig-Weibliche* in the O'Neill play. In the fire scene in *Tiny Alice,* where she speaks in her *"little-girl tone",* Miss Alice approaches O'Neill's "girl-woman" Margaret. When Julian is dying, Miss Alice cradles him in her arms, the two forming "something of a Pieta", which is one way of describing Cybel's and Brown's relationship at the end of *The Great God Brown.* And just as Brown gratefully snuggles against Cybel as he dies, saying, "The earth is warm," so the dying Julian finds comfort in Miss Alice: "Closer .. . please. Warmth...."

The constant putting on and removing of masks in *The Great God Brown* not only objectifies the characters' inner states but also creates a ritualistic pattern. In *Tiny Alice* the "ceremony of Alice" concretizes Julian's distorted view of the Eucharist and combines it with a sinister *rite de passage* that portends Julian's death and links him to Alice. Against a background of carefully positioned characters and considerable patterned movement, Butler, whose name derives from the Old French cupbearer, serves Julian his symbolic Last Supper. But since the God of Wrath has become literally mousy, the more substantial traditional red wine has now been diluted into a quickly staling, though deceptively bubbly, champagne.

In this scene Albee throws a little more light on the basic allegory in *Tiny Alice.* While Miss Alice is trying to tell Julian that she is merely an agent of the mouse that lives in the model of the castle, Butler links the mouse to God: "Do you understand, Julian?" asks Miss Alice. "Of course not!" replies Julian. 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?" *"Play* God," says Butler. Miss Alice continues: "We must ... represent, draw pictures, reduce or enlarge to ... to what we can understand." Julian's next speech returns us to his basic metaphysical dilemma: "But I have fought against it... all my life. When they said, 'Bring the wonders down to me, closer; I cannot see them, touch; nor can I believe.' I have fought against it... all my life . . . All my life. In and out of ... confinement, fought against the symbol"....

In *The Great God Brown* Dion Anthony dies unmasked at the feet of his alter ego, the crass, materialist Billy Brown. With his last breath, Dion speaks the first two words of the Lord's Prayer. Julian also dies at the mercy of materialistic forces. He, too, struggles to accept the god in the model while the Lawyer and the Cardinal banter over the two billion in the briefcase. And here, in the final scene of *Tiny Alice,* we once more encounter the mask. Dying, Julian asks of God, "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" A few moments later the Lawyer enters with Miss Alice's wig and places it on a phrenological head. (In William Ball's highly acclaimed American Conservatory Theatre production of Tiny Alice the mask was used more extensively than the published text warrants, and it remained attached to the wig throughout the play.) Phrenology is supposed to tell us something about the mind inside the skull, but here is an empty mannequin. To the accompaniment of the gradual crescendo of the audible heartbeat, an effective borrowing from O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones,* Julian notices the wig on the phrenological head, crawls toward it, and half kneels in front of it. He is alone with this inscrutable dummy, and he addresses it as if it were the mouse-god Alice:

Thou art my bride? Thou? For thee have I done my life? Grown to love, entered in, bent... accepted? For thee? is that the... awful humor? Art thou the true arms, when the warm flesh I touched... rested against, was... nothing? And *she...* was not real? Is thy stare the true look? Unblinking, outward, through, to some horizon? And her eyes... warm, accepting, were they... not real? Art thou my bride?...

It is ironic that Julian, who has "fought against the symbol" all his life, should now turn to the mask, as does Margaret in the final moments of O'Neill's "gimmicky" *Great God Brown:* having never really understood Dion, she worships his mask even in death.

Both Albee and O'Neill, like most modern writers, grapple with the meaning of life and religion in a materialistic world. Albee has said that *Tiny Alice* "is essentially an attack on modern institutions, modern materialism, and the illusory nature of modern life, indicating much of the evil caused by the misuse and misunderstanding of the institutions." Albee's statement brings to mind O'Neill's widely quoted remark to George Jean Nathan about the playwright's having to "dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with." These fears are comforted in both plays.

Dion Brown dies, *"exultantly"* repeating the words of Cybel: "Our Father ?... Who art!" Julian accepts Tiny Alice. Albee has said that "Once Julian accepts the existence of what does not exist, his concept (his faith) exists for him. Or, if one does not accept God, then, there is nothing. Since Julian accepts Tiny Alice, his God becomes real." O'Neill would probably have agreed.

O'Neill would certainly have agreed with Albee's discarding the old implements of dramatic realism in his attempt to dig at the roots of the sickness of today. For most serious playwrights have by now grasped the more imaginative tools of expressionistic dramaturgy in order to hack through "the banality of surfaces," as O'Neill put it, and penetrate into "the characteristic spiritual conflicts which constitute the drama the blood of our lives today." The parallels between *Tiny Alice* and *The Great God Brown* suggest that in breaking away from the realistic mode, Albee has been influenced not only by Strindberg and recent European playwrights but also by Eugene O'Neill.

Source: Mardi Valgemae, "Albee's Great God Alice," in *Critical Essays on Edward Albee,* ed. Philip C. Kolin and J. Madison Davis, G. K. Hall & Co., 1986, p. 101.

Critical Essay #5

In the following essay, Stark claims that Tiny Alice *should be "considered an experiment" due to its considerable amount of obscurities.*

The best way to begin clarifying *Tiny Alice* is to consider the one point about which the critics agree: that it is obscure. This condition, rather than ending analysis of the play, should begin it. After all, readers have come to accept the creation of obscurity as a literary technique, especially in poetry. One should not be bothered, for instance, by the deliberate ambiguity of the stage directions, which are like those in the Theater of the Absurd. (At one point Albee describes one setting and then another that is "an alternative and perhaps more practical," and later he says that "maybe" some noise should be made. After one accepts this kind of obscurity he can concentrate on Albee's reasons for creating it.)

Some explanation for this obscurity can be found in Sontag's work. Although she has not written about *Tiny Alice,* her two major essays, "AgainstInterpretation" and "Notes on 'Camp'," appeared in 1964, just before *Tiny Alice* was first produced. Albee had read Sontag; when an interviewer mentioned that a critic's ideas about *Tiny Alice* seemed similar to some of Sontag's ideas, Albee replied, "this critic ... what he has done is to misinterpret my attitudes, Miss Sontag's attitudes." So, there is a possibility of influence. But even if there were no influence, the similarity between Sontag's and Albee's ideas is worth exploring because it sheds light on the play.

Three of Miss Sontag's essays are relevant to this play. One is her definitive description of Camp in "Against Interpretation." Robert Brustein has noticed Camp's influence on Albee's play (and undoubtedly is the critic about whom Albee and his interviewer were talking); *"Tiny Alice* is a much more ambitious work than the usual variety of 'Camp,' but it shares the same ambiguity of motive." Brustein, however, does not pursue his insight. It is necessary to go to Sontag's essay and look for ideas that will clarify *Tiny Alice.* She writes that Camp was originally created by homosexuals, and homosexuality at least in mock form is evident in *Tiny Alice.* The Lawyer, in the rough and tumble conversation that opens the play, imputes homosexuality to the Cardinal and to Catholic clergymen in general. He refers sarcastically to "their vaunted celibacy ... among one another," and to the Cardinal's supposed desire for "some good-looking young novice, all freshly scrubbed, with big working-class hands." He also jokingly exchanges a "dearest" and "darling" with Butler....

According to Sontag, Camp joking eventually became self-conscious and began mocking modern culture. Much of Tiny Alice's obscurity results from the jocular attitude Albee takes toward some of his most important themes, like sex and religion. The sexual theme provides the play's most spectacular moment, the second act curtain, when Miss Alice opens her cloak, reveals her body to Julian and then enfolds him in the cloak. But sex is also sometimes treated comically in a Camp manner in, for example, the erotic puns. Brustein mentions the pun about the unused organ; other puns concern Julian's status as a lay brother and the Lawyer's British title of Solicitor. In her essay "On

Style," Sontag explains the attitude of writers who recognize the potential seriousness of certain themes yet treat them comically. This ambivalent point of view will almost inevitably cause obscurity: "'Stylization in a work of art, as distinct from style, reflects an ambivalence (affection contradicted by irony) toward the subject-matter. This ambivalence is handled by maintaining, through the rhetorical overlay that is stylization, a special distance from the subject."

Albee also treats religion in the ambivalent and obfuscating manner Sontag describes. An example is his failure to clarify the source of Julian's name. It is not clear which of two very different religious persons he is named after: Julian the Apostate, an emperor who abandoned Christianity and later persecuted its followers, or Julian of Norwich, a female medieval mystic and author of Revelations. Religion is also important in the play's ending, when Julian assumes a crucifixion pose, but even this is burlesqued. He asks for "the sacramental wine" but also for his "cookie," not a wafer. The frequent comic reference to wine, especially to the exploding bottles in the cellar, make this image far from serious in the play. The most ironic part of the religious theme is a macabre joke about a woman at the insane asylum who believed her womb contained Christ when it really contained cancer. Finally, inside the model and purporting to be a kind of god is Tiny Alice: a mouse, a comic kind of god indeed.

Another essay of Sontag's that is relevant to *Tiny Alice* is "Against Interpretation." In it she argues that art should not be mimetic and that interpretation is therefore an improper response to art: "the modern style of interpretation excavates, as it excavates, destroys; it digs 'behind' the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one." She argues against interpretation because "in a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art. Even more, it is the revenge of the intellect upon the world." These ideas help explain the play's most baffling feature, the model. It is a Chinese box, representing the house, and inside it is a model of the model and so on *ad infinitum*. Art, according to Plato, is just such an indirect representation of reality: "the tragic poet, too, is an artist who represents things; ... he and all other artists are, as it were, third in succession from the throne of truth." Thus, according to Plato, works of art are part of a Chinese box system. But Sontag and probably Albee disagree with Plato because his theory states that art is mimetic. Albee seems to mock mimetic theories of art by using a schematization of them (the model) as part of his scenery and by placing inside it, as its ultimate representation of reality, a mouse.

In *Tiny Alice* Albee's complaint with the mimetic theories of art is that it argues that art is related to the world, rather than holding that art is self-contained and cut off from external reality. Albee makes his point by presenting a change in Julian's conception of the relation between art and reality. Before the main action of the play Julian had experiences hallucinations that should have warned him to be skeptical about believing in a simple relation between reality and representations of it, with the latter mirroring the former. These hallucinations should have suggested to him that it is not always easy to determine precisely what is reality and what is something else, but Julian remains secure in his orthodox conceptions about reality; in fact, he holds to these conceptions throughout most of the play. Near the end he affirms the Lawyer's statement that he,

Julian, is dedicated to reality, not to appearance. It is the Lawyer who has occasionally been insinuating into Julian's mind another possibility: that non-real things purporting merely to copy reality are not related to everyday reality at all but are themselves an ultimate perhaps the only reality. For example, early in the play the Lawyer says: "I have learned ... Brother Julian ... never to confuse the representative of a .. . thing with the thing itself." "Representative" is of course a pun on "representation." By the end of the play the Lawyer, with help from other influences, prevails, and Julian decides to forsake other realities for the reality of the model, the representation.

Rather than merely copying part of the everyday world, this play itself, like the model, is in some important respects "about" itself. To be specific, it is a play that examines the validity of representing reality by means of plays. The first thing Miss Alice does is assume the role of an old crone. This role-playing, according to Sontag, is characteristic of Camp: "to perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role." Another involution is the play within the play, in which the Lawyer and Butler act out new identities. In fact, Julian along with the more perceptive members of the audience senses that he is the victim of a troupe of highly skilled actors. Thus the actors in *Tiny Alice* play characters who are actors playing roles. The result is indeed a Chinese box system, with the play moving inward toward a core of dramatic "reality" rather than toward a copy of reality.

Tiny Alice also has the effect of being self-enclosed and separate from external reality because it stresses that to a large extent reality is linguistic. In this it resembles the story of another Alice: *Alice in Wonderland.* In Carroll's book Alice leaves the world of external reality and goes to a world that seems to be linguistically composed (i.e., figures of speech, such as "mad as a hatter," are made manifest). Albee's Alice is reminiscent of Carroll's, particularly late in the play, when her actions become very childish and Albee says that her reaction to Julian is *"surprisingly little-girl fright."* The many puns in the play also emphasize language's role in forming conceptions of reality. Butler indirectly suggests to Julian that this is so when he claims that it was a semantic problem that caused Julian's mental illness. Julian's final acceptance of Alice is, among other things, an acceptance of the power of language; he is convinced more by assertion than by evidence. His acceptance is also his validation of drama as not only a representation of reality but as reality.

In short, both Albee and Miss Sontag are interested in Camp sensibility and the nature of art. Another way to demonstrate Albee's interest in these matters is to set *Tiny Alice* into its chronological place in his work. The relevant works are *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), *Tiny Alice* (1964), andMa/co/m (1965). *Balladofthe Sad Cafe* (1963), a dramatization of a novella by Carson MacCullers, deals with other themes.) The first of these plays develops the themes of reality, representation and the creation of fictitional alternatives to reality, particularly in its treatment of the fiction about George and Martha's "child." Albee himself mentioned this aspect of *Virginia Woolf to* an interviewer: "and of course, who's afraid of the big bad wolf ... who's afraid of living life without false illusions." *Malcolm* is an adaptation of James JAirdy' s novel, which is a classic of Camp literature, a peculiar *Bildungsroman* that describes a boy becoming a Camp object, and it is full of Camp characters, rooms, clothes and other trappings. Its Camp theme is

recapitulated in the motto of Malcolm's first wife. "Texture is all, substance nothing," which recalls Susan Sontag's statement that "Camp art is often decorative art, emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content." Albee's decision to adapt I'urdy's novel immediately upon finishing *Tiny Alice* shows his continuing interest in Camp.

One can speculate about Albee's reasons for creating art about art and for treating his in a Camp manner. A probable cause is the large number of critics who turn their attention on the work of contemporary writers. The most striking feature of the interview with Albee in *Paris Review* is his knowledge of the criticism written about him. At one point he says, "about four years ago I made a list, for my own amusement, of the playwrights, the contemporary playwrights, by whom critics said I'd been influenced. I listed twenty-five." Note, too, the strained and uneasy irony of "for my own amusement." His response is certainly understandable, because too much criticism can make any writer uneasy about his work and can even encourage him to fashion what Brustein called a "huge joke on the American culture industry." Once again Sontag has a relevant comment: "a great deal of today's art may be understood as motivated by a flight from interpretation. To avoid interpretation, art becomes parody. Or it becomes abstract. Or it may become ('merely') decorative. Or it may become non-art."

Tiny Alice exemplifies some of the alternatives for art that Sontag proposes. Albee's treatment of the themes of sex and religion is parodic rather than profound, and his development of the theme of art is not immediately clear. The ending, especially in the longer printed version, is ludicrous, probably deliberately so. Julian takes longer to die than a villain in a bad western movie, and his final speech is extremely over-blown. Nigel Dennis' complaint about some other playwrights at first seems to apply also to Albee: "when [Beckett, lonesco and Genet] got into difficulties ... they filled up the void with make-believe of meaningless words and stage 'business.' This now has become the approved way, with the difference that as the tradition grows more and more decadent, the firmness of grasp becomes feebler and feebler, and the accumulation of meaninglessness greater and greater." Dennis' complaint is over-stated, but he does sound a useful warning. This criticism should not be applied to Albee, however, since he has artistic reasons for the apparent flaws in *Tiny Alice.*

Tiny Alice should be considered an experiment. As many examples demonstrate, art about art can be great but unfortunately the obscurities and complexities inherent in Camp art-about-art seem to make complete success impossible. Even more unfortunate, this experiment seems to have tainted Albee, for never again has he risen to the heights of his early one-act plays and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* But the fad of the Camp sensibility has waned since T*iny Alice,* which leaves hope that Albee (and the other writers who were affected by it) will return to his previous level of accomplishment.

Source: John Stark, "Camping Out: Tiny Alice and Susan Sontag," in *Critical Essays on Edward Albee,* ed. Philip C. Kolin and J. Madison Davis, G. K. Hall & Co., 1986, p. 162.

Topics for Further Study

Imagine that you are a theater critic who has just attended a performance of *Tiny Alice*. Write the review to run in your local paper. Consider the essential message of the play in your article.

Find out more about the Theater of the Absurd. Read plays from this school, such as Eugene lonesco's *The Bald Soprano* or Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot.* Based on your research and your readings, do you think Tiny Alice is Absurdist drama. Why or why not?

Read another of Albee' s plays. Compare the play to *Tiny Alice*. Consider themes, characterization, symbolism, and philosophical underpinnings.

Conduct research to find out about some major controversies that have existed in the belief system within the Church. What are different ways in which people have regarded God and faith over the years?

The Catholic Church and its rituals are filled with many symbols. Find out what some of these symbols are. How many religious symbols do you find in the play?

The 1960s were a time of great change in the way Americans regarded religion. To many people, religion had lost its influence. How has religion been regarded in the 1990s? Has there been many changes in the way people have used religion and religious thoughts and ideals?

Find out more about Albee's works. How would you categorize his body of work? What issues were of greatest concern to him? How do his early plays differ from his later plays?

Compare and Contrast

1960s: In 1965, advanced degrees in theology are awarded to 1,739 Americans, out of a total U.S. population of close to 194 million.

1990s: In 1996, advanced degrees in theology are awarded to 8,479 Americans, out of a total U.S. population of close to 266 million.

1960s: By the end of the decade, there are 145 institutions conferring degrees in legal studies. In 1970,14,916L.L.B.orJ.D.degreesareawarded to students.

1990s: By the middle of the decade, there are 183 institutions conferring degrees in legal studies. In 1996, 39,828 L.L.B. or J.D. degrees are awarded to students.

1960s: In 1965, a bit over $12 million (in 1965 dollars) is donated to charities. Individuals donate about $9.3 million of this sum. Close to $6 million is given to religious interests.

1990s: In 1997, almost $144 billion (in 1997 dollars) is donated to charities. Individuals donate just over $109 billion. In 1995, 31.5 percent of American households give some money to charity. Just over 15 percent donate more than $1,000. Forty-eight percent of people give money to religious interests, and the average donation is!

1960s: In 1965,24.9 percent of American households have an income of $10,000 or higher.

1990s: In 1997,18.4 percent of American households have and income of $75,000 or higher.

1960s: In 1965, there are just over 46 million American members of the Roman Catholic Church, which is about 24 percent of the U.S. population.

1990s: In 1998, 27 percent of the American population are Roman Catholic. Forty percent of all Americans attend church or synagogue each week.

What Do I Read Next?

Jean Genet's *The Balcony* (1956), influenced by the Theater of Cruelty (the theater philosophy of Antonin Artaud) takes place in a contemporary European city in the midst of a revolution. The protagonists of the play recreate a world of illusion, which they convince the revolutionaries is better than reality.

Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1950), called an "antiplay," by the author, is an important example of the Theater of the Absurd. It consists mainly of a series of meaningless conversation between two couples.

Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wool/?*, also made into a popular movie, remains the author's most well-known work. It centers on two married couples who reveal their secrets in one, long evening. By the end of the play, the middle-aged couple decides to face realities and stop living in their fantasy world.

Suddenly Last Summer (1958) is a two-act play by Tennessee Williams. The play circles around disturbing and violent themes: insanity, lobotomy, pederasty, and cannibalism. It was also made into a movie.

Further Study

Bloom, Harold, ed., *Edward Albee,* Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.

This is a collection of critical essays on Albee's most significant plays.

Gussow, Mel, *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey: A Biography,* Simon & Schuster, 1999.

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Cohn, Ruby, article, in *American Writers,* Vol. 1, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974, pp. 71-96.

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Wasserman, Julian, "'The Pitfalls of Drama': The Idea of Language in the Plays of Edward Albee," in *Edward Albee: An Interview and Essays,* edited by Julian N. Wasserman, University of St. Thomas, 1983, pp. 29-53.

Worth, Katharine, "Edward Albee: Playwright of Evolution," in *Essays on Contemporary American Drama,* edited by Hedwig Bock and Albert Wertheim, Max Hueber Verlag, 1981, pp. 33-53.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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