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JOURNEY WITHIN THE UROBOROS:
A STUDY OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL
DEVELOPMENT OF EDWARD ALBEE'S
MALE CHARACTERS IN CONNECTION
WITH THE MOTHER ARCHETYPE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of English

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Barbara Schmitz

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Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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INTRODUCTION

In "Archetype and Signature" Leslie Fiedler discusses the concepts created by I. A. Richards of "staying inside the poem," and regarding the poem as an "essential experience." He further defines Richards' "new criticism" by giving its slogan--"a poem should not mean but be." Ultimately, Fiedler finds both this approach to the work of art and Eliot's "objective correlative" (a poem succeeds only in so far as it is detached from the subjectivity of its maker) wanting. He sees the poet's life as a "focusing glass" through which all aspects of his work must pass and feels that a sense of the life of the writer will raise the meaning of his work to a higher power.¹ Fiedler concludes then, "It is impossible to draw a line between the work the poet writes and the work he lives, between the life he lives, and the life he writes . . . the agile critic, therefore must be prepared to move constantly back and forth between life and poem, not in a pointless circle, but in a meaningful spiraling toward the absolute point."²

¹ Leslie Fiedler, "Archetype and Signature" in Art and Psychoanalysis, ed. William Phillips (Cleveland, 1963), pp. 455-457.

² Ibid., p. 461.

Fiedler's only stipulation in using any aspect other than the work itself is to "connect" it with the work. The critic must "connect" the "sum total of many contexts, all of which must be known to know it and evaluate it."³

Many modern critics are approaching literature in a manner quite similar to Fiedler's. In "Writers and Madness" William Barrett, in his discussion of Swift, tells us that nothing permits us to separate the author's life from his writing. His life, instead, should be used as a background for the work of art.⁴ Erich Neumann, discussing the creative man, says the artist "cannot separate the creative force from his personality."⁵ Therefore, it seems, rather than ignoring the author's life completely as the "new criticism" would have us do, it would be better to "connect" it with the work and utilize it where it can be helpful in the understanding and interpretation of the work. Such will be part of the approach of this study of Edward Albee.

One danger that Fiedler warns of is the poet's talking of "his intentions." Here he agrees with the new critics that the poem may contain more meanings than even its maker is aware of.⁶ Erich Neumann supports this idea also. He says

³Fiedler, p. 460.

⁴William Barrett, "Writers and Madness," in Art and Psychoanalysis, p. 395.

⁵Erich Neumann, Art and the Creative Unconscious, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1951), p. 169.

⁶Fiedler, p. 458.

that the unconscious often breaks through in a work with "a will of its own" which may not coincide with the will of the artist.⁷ So, although it may be profitable to consider what the author states as his "intentions" and purposes in his work, we must remember that there most likely will be unconscious elements present which are very important in understanding the meaning of the work and not even consciously known by the author. Neumann says that consciousness may be overpowered by unconscious contents and archetypal elements which the author cannot understand.⁸

The term "archetype" seems to be the key word in beginning to approach the unconscious content of a work of art.

C. G. Jung, who popularized the term, says we find them (archetypes) repeated in all mythologies, fairy tales, religious traditions, and mysteries.⁹ The sum of the archetypes signifies for Jung "the sum of all the latent potentialities of the human psyche--an enormous, inexhaustible store of ancient knowledge concerning the most profound relations between God, man, and the cosmos."¹⁰

Fiedler's use of the word is quite similar. To him archetype means "any of the immemorial patterns of response

⁷ Neumann, p. 193.

⁸ Ibid., p. 170.

⁹ Jolande Jacobi, The Psychology of Carl Jung, trans. K. W. Bash (New Haven, 1951), p. 62.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

to the human situation in its most permanent aspects: death, love, the biological family, the relationship with the unknown . . . it belongs to the Community at its deepest, preconscious levels of acceptance."¹¹

In giving us some examples of archetypes Jung lists "the forms of the snake, the fish, the sphinx, the helpful animals, the World Trees, the Great Mother, as well as the enchanted prince, the puer aeternus, the Magi, the Wise Man, Paradise, etc."¹² All these stand for certain figures and contents of the collective unconscious. We find archetypes such as these recurring again and again in literature as themes, images or symbols.¹³ Fiedler, indeed, suggests that the key to analysis of a work of art is "symbolics" and suggests analyzing both the work and the poet's life in those terms.¹⁴ Erich Neumann, too, feels that symbols are one of the most important elements in understanding the creative man and the unconscious content of his work. He contends that the creative man has not assimilated the link between his personal complexes and archetypal images. Rather, he believes, the artist remains

¹¹Fiedler, p. 462.

¹²Jacobi, p. 62.

¹³Stanley Edgar Human, "Maud Bodkin and Psychological Criticism," in Art and Psychoanalysis, p. 474.

¹⁴Fiedler, p. 461.

fixated in childhood never going beyond the prescientific stage of symbolism.¹⁵

Being aware that unconscious archetypes and symbols can, and often do, exhibit themselves in the writer's work without his conscious knowledge, we ought then to explore Neumann's concept of the creative man further. Neumann tells us that the creative individual "returns over and over in childhood to the great hieroglyphic images of archetypal existence."¹⁶ He explains that such a creative person does not adapt to reality and at an early age begins a conflict with his environment. The creative man holds fast to the archetypal world, and his original bisexuality which leaves the maternal instinct in a boy receptive and open to suffering and also to the great and overpowering. Because of this feminine receptiveness, a conflict (with the world, convention, the cultural canon, and the traditional father image) develops in the creative individual. Instead of relations with a real mother, the world, and his fellow man the artist is, instead, caught in a development of the mother archetype blended with the subjective mother imago. This creative individual cannot adapt himself to the reality of his environment or its values and instead of the mother archetype diminishing as it does in normal relationships its hold remains powerfully intact. Neumann feels

¹⁵Neumann, p. 179.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 181.

that the artist's conflict ultimately becomes a conflict with the world of the fathers (or patriarchal authority) because he cannot repress the archetypal world welling up within him. Finally, Neumann tells us that the Great Mother archetype marks the prevalence of the archetypal world and is the foundation of all development of consciousness and of the childhood world.¹⁷

If then we "connect" (as Leslie Fiedler advises) these concepts concerning some of the unconscious motivations of the creative man and the earlier stated ideas dealing with archetypal images with the actual facts of Edward Albee's personal life, we can gain some helpful insights which will aid us in approaching his work. We find Albee exhibiting both his creativity and his conflict with conventions early in his life. He reportedly decided at age five that he was going to be a writer and never wavered from that ambition except for a brief period when he wanted to be a composer. At the age of twelve he wrote his first play--a three-act sex farce called Aliqueen. His school days were spent in transferring from one school to

¹⁷ Neumann, pp. 180-185. Although Neumann goes on to elaborate on the tension existing between the creative man's ego and unconscious and talks of his personal complexes, he ultimately concludes that only a highly developed mind can create. The subject of writers finding their ability to write in their neurosis has received much controversial discussion in recent years. (Lionel Trilling's Art and Neurosis, William Barrett's Writers and Madness, etc.) Although the issue is far from settled, many critics (Trilling, for example) feel that the writer's genius and talent most likely cannot be attributed to his complexes. This subject does not greatly affect our approach to Edward Albee and so will not be discussed at any greater length here.

another, being either expelled or simply leaving. Albee was described by one of his critics as "a bad schoolboy and later a mediocre student."¹⁸ He could not seem to adjust to the traditional concepts of education and left even Trinity College after a year and a half of cutting chapel and classes when the administration suggested that he not come back. Albee then, as a good many artists, appears to have been caught up in such a conflict as Neumann describes in relation to the conventions of society.

In addition, his relationship to his foster parents has been described as poor. Edward was adopted at the age of two weeks by wealthy Reed and Frances Albee. His father presented a weak masculine figure--the marriage being dominated by Frances who was extremely vocal, a foot taller than her husband, and generally able to get her way. Albee's foster father is described as small, silent, and often "jingling the coins in his pocket to announce his presence in the room."¹⁹

Albee rebelled almost entirely against his domineering foster mother. He rejected not only his riding lessons and sports, and failed in schools; but also became disengaged from a debutante of whom his mother approved and left home severing the relationship completely in 1948. Recently, Albee has been

¹⁸ Gilbert Debusscher, Edward Albee: Tradition and Renewal (Brussels, 1967), p. 7.

¹⁹ Jean Gould, Modern American Playwrights (New York, 1966), p. 274.

reunited with his mother but nothing is really known about the present relationship. Neumann's description of the creative man's inability to form real relationships and to be ruled instead by the mother archetype seemingly could be applied to Albee. His personal relationship with his foster mother seems to emphasize the maternal archetypal elements of the unconscious. Neumann describes it thus: "the transpersonal and archetypal are always situated in a personal unity in which the ego and mankind are still one."²⁰

Edward Albee's plays are haunted by the mother archetype. In two of his plays (The Sandbox and The American Dream) the main characters are called Mommy and Daddy. In many of his plays (The American Dream, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Tiny Alice) there are strong suggestions of mother and son being caught up in an incestuous Oedipal situation. We see characterizations of the terrible destructive mother (Martha, the Nurse, Miss Alice) and we can feel an intense longing in Albee for return to the mother or obtaining the ideal of the Great Mother--most of his male characters are employed in such a quest (The American Dream, George, Julian, Tobias, Mao).

Significantly, Jung states that works which are openly symbolic cry out that they mean more than they say. He says we can often put our finger on the symbol at once even though

²⁰Neumann, p. 180.

we can't entirely unravel all of its meanings.²¹ Such is the case with the often negatively presented feminine element in Albee's dramas. We can immediately recognize it as an important symbol which has much more meaning than a simple satirization of the American female but are puzzled as to its total implications.

Jung depicts such a symbolic writer as working in a visionary mode. He effectively explains the typical reader's reaction to the work:

We are astonished, confused, bewildered, put on our guard or even repelled; we demand commentaries and explanations. We are reminded of nothing in everyday life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears, and the dark uncanny recesses of the human mind. The public²² for the most part repudiates this type of literature.

Because of this feeling, Jung says the symbol remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings, gripping us intensely but not really affording us purely aesthetic enjoyment. For these reasons, Jung believes that we must interpret a work of art and find the meaning of it. He feels it is necessary to take this approach to even be able to think about the art.²³

²¹C. G. Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," Collected Works, Vol. 15: The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature (New York, 1966), p. 77.

²²Jung, "Psychology and Literature" in The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature, p. 91.

²³Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," p. 78.

However, like Fiedler, Jung feels it is possible to become carried away with a certain approach. He cautions the critic to remember that he is seeking to better understand the work of art, and being able to recognize certain psychological problems possibly present in the artist's personality does not facilitate that goal.²⁴ Jung emphasizes that a work of art is not a disease and disapproves of Freud's putting art, religion, and philosophy on the level of a neurosis.²⁵ Most importantly Jung says that the "essence of a work of art is not found in its personal idiosyncrasies but in rising above the personal and speaking to the mind and heart of mankind."²⁶ Jung leads us back to Fiedler's concepts in that he feels the creative process elaborates and shapes the archetypal image into the finished work.²⁷

Because of the obvious Mother symbolism, Albee's plays seem to demand such a symbolic interpretation. This paper will approach Albee's drama from a psychological-mythological standpoint in order to explore the omnipresent Mother archetype

²⁴Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," p. 67.

²⁵Jung, "Psychology and Literature," p. 100.

²⁶Ibid., p. 101.

²⁷Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," p. 82.

and her effect on the development of the son or male element. Being aware of Albee's personal trauma with traditional institutions and troubled parental relationships can provide a beginning clue in this approach, knowing that Neumann feels such artists to be dominated by the Mother archetype.

Perhaps a brief consideration of what Albee has to say about his works should be included here. One of the best illustrations of Albee's conscious intentions is the following quoted by Transatlantic Review:

It is the Responsibility of the writer to be a demonic social critic--to present the world and people in it as he sees it and say 'Do you like it? If you don't like it, change it.'²⁸

Another view of his conscious intentions is provided by the following quotation from Life magazine:

The artist is concerned with the self, the self without crutches because so many crutches have been taken away. His concern comes about because the artist feels people are not handling the examination of the self as well as they might.²⁹

Albee consciously, then, has taken up the role of the social critic--determining to portray what he feels is wrong with our society and its people in an attempt to bring about a change of that society by its members. He does successfully ridicule many of our present day ills. He effectively satirizes

²⁸ Digby Diehl, "An Interview with Edward Albee," Transatlantic Review, Summer, (1963), p. 62.

²⁹ Thomas B. Morgan quoting Edward Albee, "Angry Playwright in a Soft Spell," Life, May 26, 1967, p. 93.

the castrating American female, decaying family structures, and the meaninglessness and emptiness in the lives of many of its people. However, there is much more meaning to be found in the works of Edward Albee than these superficial themes. The Mother archetype in all its various aspects and stages of development recurs time and time again within his plays. Albee's unconscious is projecting meaning into his work of which he does not seem to be consciously aware. He does appear to have grasped a glimmer of these deeper meanings, however. He does say that his work often is "meant to be taken into the unconscious almost directly without being filtered through the brain cells."³⁰ He, too, very angrily admonishes critics who criticize the vagueness of his plays (Tiny Alice in particular) and calls on the audience to feel and understand the works innocently. Even in the same interview Albee himself makes a connection between his conscious and unconscious thoughts. While criticizing American society he touches on the unconscious masculine problems of the son and his mother: "Mr. Albee indicates that the reason for his state of being (the American Dream) lies in what most American adults seem subconsciously to want. The women want to castrate the men,

³⁰Tom Prideaux quoting Edward Albee, "Why Must I Worry About Albee?," Life, February 2, 1968, p. 16.

the men want to return to the cozy comfort of the womb, and the whole society is preoccupied with money, status, convenience, and conformity."³¹

As Fiedler states (again reminiscent of Jung) the purely archetypal elements without the writer's "signature" (his persona or personality) imposed is the Myth.³² Only when the writer applies his own personality, thoughts, and style to a myth (or archetype) does it become literature. Using the psychological-mythological approach, based mainly on the ideas of Jung and Neumann, we will explore Edward Albee's signature imposed on the Great Mother archetype and trace the male's search for the Great Mother through his works.³³

³¹Henry Hewes, "On Our Bad Behavior," Saturday Review, February 11, 1961, p. 54.

³²Fiedler, p. 462.

³³Because this paper will deal with archetypes and unconscious themes, only Albee's original plays will be considered--not his adaptations of other writers' works.

GRAFFITI OF THE MONTH

Oedipus Loves
his Mother

Sexual Behavior, April, 1971.

CHAPTER ONE: MOTHER LOVE

"I am descended from those my two mothers, the vulture with long hair and exuberant breasts, up on Mount Sehseh; may she set her breast to my mouth and never wean me."

(Kurt Heinrich Seth (ed.), Die alt - aegyptiochen, Pyramidentexte, Pyr. 1116/19.)

In brief Freud's term "Oedipus Complex" refers to the desire of the child to possess the parent of the opposite sex completely--not exactly as adults understand a sexual possession but in the child's frame of reference. This term, taken from the Sophocles trilogy, usually is applied to the Mother-Son relationship (the Father-Daughter complex being named for Electra). Normally the male would pass through this stage around age five, cease competing with his father and gradually identify with the male parent, using the father's maleness as a model for his own sexual identity. However, sometimes because of an overprotective or seductive mother or a negative father image, the son does not develop beyond this point and remains fixated in an Oedipus complex. Such an individual would indeed be trapped in a dilemma in our culture; he desires mother but that is taboo and he must continually compete with father (society, the business world, etc.) for the prize which he cannot allow himself to have. He sets himself up to fail over and over. This theory has been cited by critics as a popular theme in literature since its exploration by Freud.

Since we have come to recognize this idea as archetypal, it undoubtedly was present in myths, legends and stories from time immemorial but merely not identified by such a term. The theory itself has been much discussed, reaffirmed and even denied by various followers, disciples, and critics of Freud's sexual theories. However, this theory has continued to exist both in the field of psychology and as an archetypal theme recurring in literature--the original Oedipus plays themselves and Hamlet being but two famous literary examples. Even a superficial examination of Edward Albee's plays reveals an almost compulsive dealing with a mother figure. Two of his early plays (The Sandbox and The American Dream) contain a character called Mommy and in both Albee implies a relationship with more emotional significance than that found in a normal mother-son relationship. In the conclusion of The American Dream we find Mommy "sidling" up to her new son telling him, "I'll tell you all about it. Maybe . . . maybe later tonight."¹ We feel that part of the reason for the destruction of her first adopted son was his lack of sexual interest in his mother. Grandma tells Mrs. Barker, "Then it turned out it only had eyes for its Daddy." When Mrs. Barker replies that " . . . any self-respecting woman would have gouged those eyes right out of its head,"² she is assured by Grandma that that is exactly what Mommy did.

¹Edward Albee, The American Dream in The American Dream and the Zoo Story: Two Plays by Edward Albee (New York: A Signet Book, 1961), p. 127.

²Ibid., p. 99.

Although there is no son in The Sandbox, this Mommy is attracted to the "good-looking, well-built boy in a bathing suit."³ As becomes typical of Albee's women, she puts Daddy down by comparing him to the young superman. Replying to Daddy's whining remarks about the cold, Mommy dismisses him "with a little laugh," saying, "Don't be silly: it's as warm as toast. Look at that nice young man over there: he doesn't think it's cold. . . . Hello."⁴

Another obvious mother-son entanglement is evident in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?. George rather graphically describes Martha's actions toward their imaginary son for the benefit of Nick and Honey:

. . .the real reason (spits out the words) our son . . .used to throw up all the time, wife and lover, was nothing more complicated than he couldn't stand you fiddling at him all the time, breaking into his bedroom with your kimono flying, fiddling at him all the time, with your liquor breath on him, and your hands all over his . . . [dots in original]

.
 (Also to the guests) Our son ran away from home all the time because Martha here used to corner him.

.
 He used to run up to me when I'd get home, and he'd⁵ say, 'Mama's always coming at me.' That's what he'd say.

³Edward Albee, The Sandbox in The Sandbox and The Death of Bessie Smith: Two Plays by Edward Albee (New York: A Signet Book, 1960), p. 8.

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵Edward Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (New York: A Pocket Cardinal Edition, 1967), pp. 120-121.

George cannot seem to let this aspect of Martha's relationship with their son drop. Much later in the evening, after insisting that Martha talk about their son in carrying out his threat to "get" her, George introduces the incestuous topic again:

. . .He's a nice kid, really, in spite of his home life. I mean, most kids'd grow up neurotic, what with Martha here carrying on the way she does: sleeping 'till four in the P.M., climbing all over the poor bastard, trying to break the bathroom door down to wash him in the tub when he's sixteen . . .⁶

Besides these obvious examples of Oedipal tendencies in Albee's mothers and their sons there are other more subtle suggestions exhibited in his characters that point to the same problem. For example, Jerry in Albee's first published play, The Zoo Story, appears to be unconsciously plagued by an Oedipal complex but is determined not to recognize it consciously. He seems to have nothing but contempt for "good old Mom" who "embarked on an adulterous turn of our southern states . . . a journey of a year's duration . . .and her most constant companion . . .among others, among many others . . .was a Mr. Barleycorn."⁷ [dots in original]

However, we discover that the contempt most likely is a conscious cover-up for his real feelings for his mother. Jerry relates for Peter his homosexual experience from his adolescence:

" . . .when I was fifteen . . .I was a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l. I mean, I was queer . . .queer, queer, queer, . . .with bells

⁶ Albee, p. 215.

⁷ The Zoo Story, p. 24.

ringing, banners snapping in the wind. And for those eleven days, I met at least twice a day with the park superintendent's son. . . ." ⁸ And, Jerry does not really convince us that such homosexual tendencies are now completely in the past even when he tells Peter, "And now; oh, do I love the little ladies, really I love them. For about an hour." ⁹ Rather, we felt that Jerry would accept almost any kind of a sexual relationship--one-night stands with prostitutes, homosexuality--rather than admit to any kind of an attraction to his mother.

The feeling the reader gets from Jerry's vivid description of his "fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic, cheap, drunken bag of garbage" ¹⁰ landlady coincides quite closely to the impression received from his description of his mother. We cannot help but feel this is at least part of the reason Jerry finds her "foul parody of sexual desire" ¹¹ for him so disgusting.

Finally, Jerry's sad admission that he has "never been able to have sex with, or how is it put? . . . make love to anybody more than once" ¹² confirms the suspicion of such an Oedipal attachment. He cannot totally commit himself to a woman in any

⁸ The Zoo Story, p. 25.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹² Ibid., p. 25.

respect for that would be winning the prize (Mother) which he cannot allow himself to have. Freud termed such actions a "Don Juan complex" and viewed them as an attempt to escape the Oedipus involvement. Jung feels that the conquest of one woman after another suggests that the male unconsciously seeks his mother in every woman he meets.¹³

This look into Jerry's Oedipal problem and the knowledge of his ultimate outcome, death, leads us to ponder the meaning of these Oedipal relationships present in Albee's characters. Another son, Teddy in A Delicate Balance, has already died before the play began. However, both he and his death are remembered several times in the play. His sister Julia suggests that he probably would have grown up to be a "fag." It appears that Teddy's emotional development would have been quite similar to Jerry's suggested by the strong Mother figures in his environment. He also, the dialogue implies, was plagued by an unconscious Oedipal attachment--this perhaps is recognized only by Julia. He, too, sooner than Jerry, meets his end.

Another young man, Julian, in Albee's controversial Tiny Alice, has much in common with Jerry and Teddy. He too becomes embroiled with a Mother-figure and ultimately is destroyed. John Markson writing in American Imago cites Julian as the son

¹³C. G. Jung, "Concerning the Archetypes and the Anima Concept," Collected Works, Vo. 9: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (New York, 1959), p. 85.

and Miss Alice as the mother in this "fascinating and moving representation of the Oedipal conflict--the greatest 'whodunit' in human history."¹⁴ He further describes Julian as a "guileless and innocent" boy who is seduced by a "beautiful and seductive woman . . . a dream-mother [Miss Alice]." He identifies the father as trisociated: "Father Lawyer who screws and hurts mother and is a hated male; the more easily tolerated Father-Butler is a nicer man with whom mother does not have a sexual relationship; Father-Cardinal (spiritual) sells his boy, body and soul."¹⁵

Ultimately he is abandoned and betrayed by both the father and mother figures and, as Markson says, meets "the inevitable Oedipal resolution; . . . left alone (independent) to face the 'death and rebirth' of adolescence and its uncertainties."¹⁶

There are other hints of Oedipal-like relationships in Albee's plays in a lesser degree. In A Delicate Balance, Claire, it is implied, was the girl that both Tobias and Harry cheated on their wives with in the same summer. Although Agnes is the one who definitely "maintains the balance," Claire can be viewed as a mother-figure--rather godlike in her power to see all and understand. Agnes says Claire "was not named for nothing."¹⁷

¹⁴ John W. Markson, "Tiny Alice: Edward Albee's Negative Oedipal Enigma," American Imago, XXXII (1966), 3 and 11.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁷ Edward Albee, A Delicate Balance (New York: Pocket Books, 1966), p. 110.

There are even hints of an incestuous attachment between the Nurse and her father in The Death of Bessie Smith, as Gilbert Debusscher states. He says the Father's reproaches to the Nurse are more than paternal and describes their argument as more like a lover's quarrel with half-tones of incestuous love being present.¹⁸

In order to understand the possible meaning present in all these Oedipal involvements of Albee's characters we need to explore the possible meanings believed to be present in the Oedipal situation by its advocates.

After spending nearly three-fourths of his book, Totem and Taboo, presenting and rejecting various theories concerning the conception of taboo rules, Freud develops his primal horde concept. Working from the two taboo rules 1) not to kill the totem animals and 2) not to use a woman belonging to the same totem for sexual purposes (both crimes of which Oedipus was guilty), he ultimately concludes that the totem animal was really a substitute for the father who kept all the women to himself in the primal horde and drove all the young males away. One day the brothers rebelled, slew and ate the father putting an end to the primal horde. Together they were strong enough to commit the deed which each longed to do individually but yet did not dare to attempt. Also, by devouring him the sons symbolically gained some of his strength. These sons exhibited the ambivalence toward their father that all children have.

¹⁸ Gilbert Debusscher, Edward Albee: Tradition and Renewal (Brussels, 1967), p. 24.

They hated him but, at the same time, loved and admired him. They satisfied their hatred by his removal and in such a manner carried out their need to identify with him.

Now they also felt guilt and the consequent remorse and attempted to undo their deed. In the place of the father they substituted the totem animal which was worshipped and protected. Not stopping here, they denied themselves the women--the fruit of their deed. They had discovered that their sexual needs separated rather than united them, they were now all rivals for the women. In order to live together they originated the incest prohibition in which they would all equally renounce the women.

The totem animal was then given honor and protection from the brothers in exchange for protection, care, and forbearance. This treatment became almost a symbolic illustration to the father that if he had treated them like the totem animal did he would never have perished. Freud believed that it was necessary to symbolically commemorate this triumph over the father through holidays and ritualistic slayings of the totem animal.¹⁹ Gradually, Freud felt, the fatherless society evolved into a patriarchal one and the new family became but a shadow of the old with many fathers. Consequently, the sons were castrated with only the youngest son escaping.

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics, Authorized trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Vintage Books, 1946), pp. 171-187.

The youngest sons occupied an exceptional position. They were protected by their mother's love, and were able to take advantage of their father's increasing age and succeed him in death. Such stories appear in many myths and legends--the favoring of the youngest son.²⁰ (However, by the time of the Middle Ages in the patriarchal society the oldest son had again gained the power--he being the sole inheritant. Perhaps the shadow of the primal father was again reappearing.)

Freud stated that religions eventually developed because the son's sense of guilt and his defiance were never obliterated. The feeling developed that murder could only be atoned by another life; therefore, the sacrificial death of the son was necessary in an attempted reconciliation with the father--especially since woman had been renounced. According to Freud, this concept has developed on down to the Christian belief of the offense against God the Father by mankind being redeemed by the son.²¹ Indeed, in the Moses and Monotheism Freud carried out this idea to the extent that the 'original sin' demanding the death of the son had to be the murder of the primal father who was later deified. He says the murder itself was not remembered but only the "phantasy of its atonement" hailed as a "message of redemption."²² Christ seemed to be the heir to

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Moses and Monotheism," The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Freud, Vol. XXXIII (London, 1964), p. 81.

²¹ Patrick Mullahy, "The Theories of Sigmund Freud and His Disciples," Oedipus--Myth and Complex: A Review of Psycho-analytic Theory (New York, 1948), pp. 65-69.

²² Freud, Moses and Monotheism, p. 87.

the phantasy which may not have been carried out. Freud identifies this concept also as the basis for the tragic hero in the Greek dramas. He parallels the development from the primal horde to brother clan to the change from Judaism (a religion of the Father) to Christianity (a religion of the son). He finally says the Jewish people did indeed "murder" their God and because they have not admitted their guilt (like the Gentiles) have not been absolved.²³

Although Freud began by stressing the basic sexual conflict of the Oedipal problem, he went on to trace its development through mythology and religion and concluded that the Oedipal situation involved other aspects besides pure sexual desire. He is quoted as saying, "The beginnings of religion, ethics, society and art, are said to meet in the Oedipus complex."²⁴ In his writings he went on to elaborate that after man imposed his sexual taboos he created demons to enforce them. The demons gradually developed into gods with primitive humanity assuming that everything that was forbidden to itself was permitted to the gods. In the stage of the demons the hostility which the son felt toward the father and his wish to oust him were evident. In the stage of the gods the love and reverence the son felt toward the father appeared. Gradually, the incest barrier with the mother became so fixed that even impulses of

²³Freud, Moses and Monotheism, pp. 85-87.

²⁴Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 202.

affection were prohibited. Ultimately the thwarted affection found gratification in religious phantasy figures of maternal godheads--Istar, Iris, Rhea, and Mary--and the austere traits of the paternal gods lessened.²⁵

Another Freudian theory is that a matriarchy most likely preceded the re-establishment of a patriarchal order. At the curtailment of this rule the mother goddesses may have been created as a compensation for the slight upon the mother.²⁶

The idea of incestuous unions between the mother-goddess and her husband-son became characteristic of and important to cultistic traditions--the Babylonian Istar and Tammuz, Egyptian Isis and Osiris or Horus, Grecian Kybele and Attis are only three examples. In Christianity the Queen of Heaven alternates between being called the mother of Christ and his bride. This concept, according to Freud, came to be of special importance in the forming of a religion. The youthful son reaches masculine maturity after relations with the mother goddess and then dies an early death. This death after castration, either by his sexual rivals or by his own hand, is his punishment for the

²⁵ Mullahy, pp. 70-101. Not too relevant to our purpose here Freud states in The Future of an Illusion that only cultural prohibitions and the fear of punishment can overcome the strength of the incest wish which can still be perceived. He further attributes the beginnings of families and civilization to genital need--or love and necessity. (pp. 17-48)

²⁶ Freud, Moses and Monotheism, p. 83.

tabooed incest.²⁷ ("Adonis was killed by the boar, the sacred animal of Aphrodite; Attis, the lover of Kybele, died of castration.")

Yet another aspect of this incest phantasy is the symbolism of the earth as the mother of living beings. In many mythologies the husband-son's excised and creative phallus is preserved by the mother-wife (Isis and Osiris for example) and from it rises new vegetation. Likewise from the mother earth where he or his phallus is buried, the god arises to a new life.²⁸ Freud felt, consequently, that resurrection was connected to the incest wish by the old and typical idea of dying viewed as a return to the mother's womb in a continuation of the state before birth. Such a resurrection would be a complete denial of the father who is replaced by the son.²⁹

This aspect of the Oedipus complex--a wish for rebirth perhaps accomplished through the incest--is supported by other psychologists and literary critics. Otto Rank in his study of the birth trauma also stated the same theory. Referring to the original Oedipus plays, he said that Oedipus tried to solve the origin and destiny of man by returning to the mother's womb with his blindness being symbolic of the darkness of the womb. Also, Oedipus' final disappearance through the cleft rock into the Underworld strongly suggests a return to the womb.

²⁷ Mullahy, pp. 99-100.

²⁸ Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 197.

²⁹ Mullahy, p. 101.

Rank further contended that the early primitive dwellings (such as caves) were chosen in instinctive remembrance of the warm, protecting womb. Implements could, then, represent the male sexual organ--an attempt to force one's way into substitute material--derived from the attempt to force the way back into the mother. (Or as Freud believed with every tool man was perfecting his own organs.)³⁰ Rank also agreed with Freud's primal horde concept. He believed the father tried to prevent the son from reentering the mother and was killed for this. The youngest son was the only one who could really make the return because none had occupied the place after him. He, too, agreed with Freud that the death of the father was followed by a period of dominance of the mother or women. When the son finally gained power he was spared the fate of his father and became the leader.³¹

Rank, too, ultimately felt that the idea of rebirth after the punishment of death for the son was an integral part of the Oedipus theory. He stressed the need for the hero (Oedipus) to overcome the birth anxiety encountered on his way back to the mother. The Sphinx was cited as a mother symbol--a "strangler" or giver of birth anxiety representing both the wish to return

³⁰ Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, trans. by W. D. Robson, (New York, 1955), p. 37.

³¹ Rank's concepts about mother dominance vs. father rule will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

into the mother as the danger of being swallowed and parturition itself and the struggle against it. He felt that the Greeks were able to solve the riddle of the Sphinx and thus free themselves from the womb.

Ultimately, Rank stated that to be reborn from the mother the son must fail tragically and it is through incest that the individual tries to recapture his heroic stature--thus, overcoming the fear of death by being reborn through his own mother. This desire for the mother is rather like an attempt to achieve immortality. From the earliest stage of the Oedipal myths the individuals who had made themselves immortal were granted the privilege of incest. (Later, as we will discuss in the next chapter, the immortality wish came to be realized through marriage and children.)³²

While Carl Jung does call the Oedipus myth an archetype, he does not attach much significance to the son's desire for incest with the mother. He argues that cohabitation with an old woman was hardly preferred to that with a young one. For him, the incestuous significance was psychological only. He, too, describes it as a turning back--a coming into the mother to be born again.³³

³²Oedipus--Myth and Complex, pp. 168-205.

³³C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. I: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia, trans. by R. F. C. Hull, (New York, 1956), p. 224.

Jung also disagreed with Freud's concept that symbol-formation could be explained totally as a prevention of the primary incest tendency. The incestuous desire to Jung, once again, was for a return to parental shelter, a return to the mother to be reborn. This goal lies through incest, of finding some way to the mother's body in order to impregnate the mother and beget oneself.

To Jung the incest prohibition acts as an obstacle and makes creative fantasy inventive. The son cannot comprehend himself impregnating the mother so speaks in symbolic terms.³⁴

Edward Albee's plays seem to be dealing with this aspect of the Oedipal problem more than the typical sexual desire for the mother. Here we could "connect" some of the known facts of Albee's life to his work. A knowledge of Albee's luxurious pampered background, the rather weak father influence, and his overpowering mother sheds some insight on his conscious and unconscious motivation for dealing with the mother theme. In fact, Freud said that the Oedipus complex "is nothing else than one of the many forms that appear in the life of the pampered child who is the helpless sport of his excited phantasies."³⁵

³⁴ Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," Collected Works, Vol. 9, pp. 223-226.

³⁵ Oedipus--Myth and Complex, p. 126.

In his early plays (The American Dream, The Zoo Story, The Sandbox) Albee does appear to be consciously dealing with the theme of a mother-son incestuous attachment. In fact, he was often criticized by literary critics for being too personal. Robert Brustein, commenting on The American Dream in The New Republic, calls the play an embarrassing self-exposure. He further contends that Albee cannot transcend his wounded self.³⁶ However, Albee does transcend such a personal problem in his later plays and becomes caught up in the archetype of the Great Mother, leaving behind elements of his personal unconscious and entering into broader archetypes characteristic of the collective unconscious. His dealing with the Oedipal problem in Tiny Alice, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and A Delicate Balance goes much deeper than the basic Oedipal involvement and becomes concerned with the hero's death and rebirth through the Mother figure.

Before exploring this deeper significance in the Oedipal situations in Albee we should also consider possible personal influences from what Jung terms the anima. This "personification of the feminine nature of a man's unconscious" is believed by Jung to be reflection of the biological fact that the contra-sexual genes produce a contrasexual character (in a male--the contrasexual genes would produce a female character and the reverse in a female) which usually remains unconscious. This anima usually is manifested in dreams and fantasies or in the

³⁶ Robert Brustein, "Fragments from a Cultural Explosion," The New Republic, March 27, 1961, p. 29.

inconsistencies of a man's feeling and a woman's thinking.³⁷

Jung further elaborates on the idea of the anima:

Every man carries within him the eternal image of woman, not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definitive feminine image. This image is fundamentally unconscious, an hereditary factor of primordial origin engraved in the living organic system of man, an imprint or 'archetype' of all the ancestral experiences of the female, a deposit, as it were, of all the impressions ever made by woman . . .³⁸

In discussing the anima as an archetype Jung suggests its origin is related to the concepts of the divine syzygies, the male-female pairs of deities, who always balance each other and the concept of a dual God wherein the masculine is always paired with the feminine.³⁹

He further discusses the anima:

The anima is a factor of utmost importance in psychology of man wherever emotions and affects are at work. She intensifies, exaggerates, falsifies, and mythologizes all emotional relations with his work and with other people of both sexes. The resultant fantasies and entanglements are all her doing. When the anima is strongly constellated, she softens the man's three essential aspects of the mother--her cherishing and nourishing goodness, her orgiastic emotionality, her Stygian depths.⁴⁰

³⁷ C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York, 1963), p. 391.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Jung, "Concerning the Archetypes and the Anima Concept," Collected Works, Vol. 9, I, pp. 59-65.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

Jung relates that the anima can appear in many forms-- a young maiden as well as, " . . . a goddess, witch, angel, demon, beggar woman, whore, consort, Amazon."⁴¹ In literature, Beatrice in Dante's Divine Comedy is a good example of an anima figure. The anima can also be a creative productive being--an artist's inspiring muse. Jung says a man gives birth to his work out of his inner femininity as a rounded whole.⁴²

Considering the anima as a possible inspiration for or influence on Albee's female characters we need to consider the elements which contribute to the make-up of the anima. Jung explains that in our present times man counts it as a virtue to repress his feminine traits causing them to accumulate in the unconscious where they become an imago or a "soul-image." This image a man is tempted to project onto the women in his life. Naturally the first bearer of the soul-image would be the mother.⁴³ Not only is this image projected upon the mother but also influenced by the actual mother. Eleanor Bertine, a student of Jung's, feels that the anima is strongly conditioned by a man's mother--either by similarity or contrast--as well as by the social and feeling values of the community in which he grew up.⁴⁴ Jung says that this can leave the son with a sentimental attachment

⁴¹Jolande Jacobi, The Psychology of C. G. Jung, trans. K. W. Bash (New Haven, 1951), p. 152.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 152-160.

⁴³Jung, "The Mana-Personality," Collected Works, Vol. 7: Part Two, Anima and Animus, pp. 187-195.

⁴⁴Eleanor Bertine, Human Relationships: In the Family, In Friendship, In Love (New York, 1958), pp. 108-109.

which lasts throughout his life or at the same time may spur him on to great accomplishments.⁴⁵

Once again then, knowing what we do about Albee's early years and his rather troubled relationship with his foster mother, we can make the "connection" that his anima most probably received a negative influence from his own personal experience. Jung in Man and His Symbols discusses the possible outcome of such negative influences. The negative anima, he feels, may be revealed in waspish, poisonous, effeminate remarks by which everything is devalued; and, ultimately, in a rather fatal destructiveness.⁴⁶ These characteristics can be easily viewed in Albee's domineering destructive women--Martha, in her constant verbal castration of George, Mommy in her verbal and physical destruction of her husband, sons, and even Grandma, Agnes (A Delicate Balance) in her hateful treatment of Claire and her "waspish" insistence on "maintaining the balance," Miss Alice's slow "poisonous" seduction of Julian, the voice's put down of all maternal things in Box and, of course, Albee's general theme belittling the ills of American society in general.

Another aspect of the anima influence on Albee's work is suggested by Bertine. She feels the anima is apt to embody the

⁴⁵ Jung, "Concerning the Archetypes and the Anima Concept," p. 29.

⁴⁶ Carl Jung, Man and His Symbols (London, 1954), p. 179.

psychological function most remote from the one a man consciously adapts by. If he is an intuitive type his anima will be especially earthy, perhaps even coarse or obscene.⁴⁷ Perhaps the best example of Albee's opposite anima figure would be Martha; she is loud, coarse, vulgar, brutal--almost completely opposite from what we know of Edward Albee's character. Almost all of his women exhibit such cruel, obscene characteristics. The reader feels, in fact, that Albee is compelled by his own personal demon (anima) to present his women characters in such an unfavorable light.

One other characteristic of Albee's women which might be attributed to the anima is their castrating will to power. According to Jung, the anima can become a "Mana" personality, "She-who-must-be-obeyed"--"a being full of some occult and bewitching quality (mana), endowed with magical knowledge and power."⁴⁸ It is precisely a being with this kind of force that many of Albee's women become. Martha seems to hold such powers over George as does Agnes over Tobias. Then, of course, Alice ultimately has Julian sacrificed to her. These devouring women characters most likely are powered by such anima characteristics.

Jung suggest also that the unconscious anima figure can develop through four stages. Albee has at least one female

⁴⁷ Bertine, p. 109.

⁴⁸ Jung, "The Mana-Personality," p. 225.

character who fits into each of these stages of development. Indeed, the women figures seem to be moving in such a progression from play to play. Jung symbolizes the lowest anima development by the figure Eve. This woman (anima figure) is purely instinctive and concerned with the biological. Most of the women in Albee's early plays appear to be on this level--the Mommies of both The Sandbox and The American Dream are concerned with their biological female roles of mother (seen in their actions and intentions toward the adopted sons) and daughter (the treatment of Grandma). These women are portrayed as acting rather emotional and instinctively without much thought or reason. The nurse in The Death of Bessie Smith is concerned with the intern's physical passion for her and acts in an illogical emotional way, swearing to "fix" the men who cross her.

The second stage of the anima development is symbolized by Helen (of Troy) who is representative of a romantic aesthetic level but still remains sexual. Miss Alice in Tiny Alice is an excellent example of this kind of anima figure. She is romantic--rich and beautiful, living in her castle--and aesthetic--wishing to bestow her money on the church. However, and most importantly, she becomes a sexual figure who seduces and snares Julian, who is unable to free himself from her control.

The third level of anima development, according to Jung, is best symbolized by the Virgin Mary--a figure who raises love to spiritual devotion. This level is seen in Agnes (A Delicate Balance). She tediously explains her godly role to Julia:

"There is a balance to be maintained, after all, though the rest of you teeter, unconcerned, or uncaring, assuming you're on level ground . . .by divine right, I gather, though that is hardly so. And if I must be the fulcrum . . ." ⁴⁹ And also she lists the duties she performs in her devoted role as wife and mother: "There are many things a woman does; she bears the children . . . She runs the house, for what that's worth; makes sure there's food, and not just anything, and decent linen; looks well; assumes whatever duties are demanded--if she is in love, or loves; and plans." ⁵⁰

The ultimate anima development is represented by Sapientia, wisdom transcending even the most holy and the most pure. ⁵¹ The God Alice seems to reach to this level for Julian in his ultimate sacrifice and acceptance of her: "I accept thee, Alice, for thou art come to me. God, Alice . . .I accept thy will." ⁵²

Albee's women exhibit a definite development when viewed as possible anima projections. Most likely they are influenced by this element of Albee's unconscious. Interestingly enough, Albee's plays also tend to move in such an upward progression--striving toward the ultimate Mother archetype. It is this progression, its implications, and the ultimate outcome that this paper is mainly concerned with.

⁴⁹ A Delicate Balance, p. 89.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

⁵¹ Jung, Man and His Symbols, pp. 185-186.

⁵² Tiny Alice, p. 184.

Returning to the Oedipal theme in Albee, we can refer again to Markson who, considering Albee's Oedipal theme in Tiny Alice, speculates on possible unconscious meanings. His final feeling is that Albee has reversed the classical punishment in his plays--it is the mythical son who is killed. This occurrence he terms the negative Oedipal punishment. Markson arrives at this theory mainly through tracing the feminine sexual development from Harold Stewart's Jocasta's Crime:

Many women, from penis-envy, wish to deny the role of the male penis. Their desire, arising from this denial, is for parthenogenesis, i.e. to procreate without the male penis and sperm. Perhaps incest with the son comes nearest to this desire, since if the son is regarded as a part of the mother, his penis is her penis and mother and son are a phantasy unit. The husband's penis can then be denied and destroyed.⁵³

Working, also, from the original Oedipus plays he recalls that Jocasta dies but Oedipus lives. Markson speculates then that Jocasta may have desired the patricide and may have been aware of her incestuous sexual desire. In any case, she being the responsible adult authority and Oedipus the blameless uninformed child, she is punished. In Albee, because the punishment is reversed and incest and infanticide are present, Markson speculates that positive Oedipal justice is not done.⁵⁴

⁵³Harold Stewart, Jocasta's Crime, Int. J. Psa., XLII, 1961, pp. 424-434. Quoted by Markson, p. 17.

⁵⁴Markson, pp. 17-18.

This theory is but another reason why Albee's characters do not seem to belong to the simple Oedipal pattern. There seems to be much more at work in Albee's plays--a deeper significance. Rather than possibly using characters of his plays merely as a mirror to reflect his own personal Oedipal conflict, Albee (although this may well have been his starting point) becomes embroiled with a much greater and powerful archetype--that of the Great Mother, and his plays seem to be struggling to reach for the ultimate transformation of that archetype. The Oedipal theme of his plays seems to be but the first step in a definite progression toward the perfected Mother archetype. His characters move from a purely Oedipal situation to a dealing with rebirth produced through reentry into the Mother. Here we should consider specific cases. As previously mentioned, both Jerry and Teddy were unconsciously attracted to their mothers and neither of these sons was able to acknowledge his sexual feelings; rather they exerted the greatest possible effort to keep from admitting such feelings even to themselves. Both of these young males, too, are dead at the conclusion of the dramas and a feeling of rather unamendable hopelessness accompanies their deaths. There does not seem to be any positive aspect to their ends: Tobias and Agnes are too old to have another male child (a possible rebirth), and Tobias was afraid to try even when he could. Agnes agonizes, ". . . I think it was a year, when you spilled yourself on my

belly, sir? Please? Please, Tobias? No, you wouldn't even say it out: I don't want another child, another loss."⁵⁵

Jerry dies being "comforted" by Peter with "a combination of scornful mimicry and supplication" in his final "Oh . . . my . . . God."⁵⁶ There is nothing here to indicate a promise or a rebirth.

Julian, however, who both admits and acts upon his sexual desires for the Mother figures in his surroundings (the fellow mental patient who believed herself to be the Blessed Virgin Mary and Miss Alice) also dies in the end, but his end seems to be more positive. The symbolism of a crucifixion with an ultimate resurrection is dominant. The suggestion of death and rebirth accomplished through the Great Mother could hardly be more obvious: "The bridegroom waits for thee, my Alice . . . is thine. O Lord, my God, I have awaited thee, have served thee in thy . . . ALICE? (His arms are wide, should resemble a crucifixion. With his hands on the model, he will raise his body some, backed full up against it.) ALICE? . . . GOD?"⁵⁷

The acceptance of the sexual desire by the son as an ultimate means to achieving rebirth through reentry of the mother provides the difference in the final outcome of the fate of the son in Albee. The son who could accept such a situation, it is suggested, also won his immortality. This concept will be developed extensively in the third chapter. It is sufficient

⁵⁵ A Delicate Balance, p. 143.

⁵⁶ Zoo Story, p. 49.

⁵⁷ Tiny Alice, p. 184.

for our purposes here to understand that the Oedipal theme in Albee's plays has a much deeper meaning than the surface involvement of mother and son in sexual desire for each other. The Oedipal theme is but Albee's first stop on his way in search of the Great Mother. We have the first clues as to the ultimate fate of the son-hero as Jung explains:

"The son of the mother" as a mere mortal, dies young, but as a god he can do that which is forbidden and superhuman: he commits the magical incest and thus obtains immortality.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Jung, "On the Concept of the Archetype," p. 259.



CHAPTER TWO: THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE

Edward Albee's dramas deal not only with the Great Mother archetype with characters and action slowly threading their way through the various aspects and levels present within this archetype, but also extend on from this basic underlying theme to the accompanying concept of the ageless struggle between the matriarchy and patriarchy. This struggle between the masculine and feminine principles can be readily viewed in almost all of Albee's plays--the castrating Mommy of his early works is endlessly belittling and "deballing" Daddy and a physical and verbal battle of the sexes is prominent in almost all of the plays. Although this conflict between the masculine and feminine is not actually an aspect of the Mother archetype, it is directly connected with the idea of maternity, and its presence and importance cannot be ignored.

The best way to approach this male-female conflict found in Albee's work is to first discuss its historical development and determine the meaning and implications of the terms matriarchy and patriarchy. Robert Briffault in The Mothers reminds us, first of all, that "human social groups did not arise out of the relations established in a patriarchal family round the authority of a dominant male," rather that the patriarchal society is a result of advanced social conditions.¹

¹ Robert Briffault, The Mothers (New York, 1931), pp. 148-149.

The first dominant rule in primitive cultures, according to many sociological and psychological theories, was held by the women, particularly the mother.

Elaborating on the concept, we can refer to the theories of Alfred Adler. He, too, says male domination is not an eternal and fixed rule. The men have helped perpetuate their power by legal and institutional devices. There were epochs when women, especially mothers, played the most important role in life. However, Adler states, these days of the matriarchate are in the past with men having wrested the power from women and subjugating them. Adler feels that women have an almost universal dissatisfaction with the feminine role and battle both against the role and the male sex.²

Alexander Lowen in Love and Orgasm explains. He says, "a key factor in the overthrow of the matriarchal system was knowledge of the role played by the male organ in procreation."³ When the male learned that he--not a spirit entering the woman's body--fathered the child, the patriarchy gradually began to come to power. Lowen contends that this struggle then between the masculine and feminine principles is not just a fight between man and woman but a creative conflict between the forces of culture and the unconscious.⁴

²Patrick Mullahy, "The Theories of Alfred Adler," in Oedipus--Myth and Complex: A Review of Psychoanalytic Theory (New York, 1948), pp. 121-122.

³Alexander Lowen, Love and Orgasm (New York: A Signet Book, 1967), p. 258.

⁴Ibid., p. 259.

Erich Neumann, in discussing the matriarchal culture, describes it as static and as being dominated by the unconscious. The Great Mother archetype dominates in this relatively stable situation. He elaborates on the atmosphere in a matriarchal culture:

Such cultures are conservative and even in a certain sense reactionary, because the instinctual aspect of the unconscious, represented by the archetype of the Great Mother--dictates a fixed system of unconscious attitudes, in which there is little room for the initiative and activity of the ego and consciousness, that is of the masculine aspect.⁵

Such a static society is seen in Albee's early plays. There is very little activity of initiative exhibited--especially by the male characters--in The Zoo Story, The American Dream, and The Sandbox. The Zoo Story takes place on a park bench with only a dialogue occurring between Peter and Jerry up until the only and final fatal action--Jerry impaling himself on the knife. Also, Peter does not take kindly to being jarred out of his secure embryonic state and ultimately protests when Jerry attempts to take over the bench: "Great God, I just came here to read and now you want me to give up the bench. You're mad."⁶

Only after Peter has taken up the knife in order to defend his precious bench does Jerry finally admit that perhaps Peter

⁵ Erich Neumann, Art and the Creative Unconscious, trans. Ralph Manheim, (New York, 1951), p. 60.

⁶ Edward Albee, The Zoo Story in The American Dream and The Zoo Story: Two Plays by Edward Albee (New York: A Signet Book, 1961), p. 43.

isn't entirely a vegetable, or that perhaps he does have at least some masculine initiative in his passive, feminine-appearing personality: " . . . And Peter, I'll tell you something now, you're not really a vegetable, it's all right, you're an animal. You're an animal too."⁷

This same type of inactivity and lack of male initiative becomes almost the theme of The American Dream and The Sandbox. Again, both The American Dream and The Sandbox have surprisingly little action for drama. Both plays are comprised mainly of dialogue or, rather, monologue with Mommy rattling on--mostly talking nonsense--and Daddy meekly replying to show that he is listening. Daddy does not even protest against Mommy's statement that it is hopeless for him to try to get satisfaction-- "You can't get satisfaction; just try. I can get satisfaction but you can't."⁸

These early plays, too, are written more in the style of the Theater of the Absurd with the story being played by nameless characters (known only as Mommy, Daddy, the American Dream, etc.), in no particular setting, and with rather absurd language. This rather chaotic situation seems to afford the unconscious elements an opportunity to emerge with the Great Mother archetype in her terrible devouring aspects dominating over all. Albee's

⁷The Zoo Story in The American Dream and The Zoo Story: Two Plays by Edward Albee, p. 49.

⁸Albee, The American Dream, p. 62.

women, indeed, are battling against the typical role imposed on them by the present patriarchal culture and, as Adler stated it, also the male sex. For example, when Daddy meekly replies to Mommy's command (in The Sandbox) with, "Whatever you say, Mommy," Mommy haughtily retorts, "Of course, whatever I say."⁹ The matriarchy is in charge here.

The theories of Otto Rank concerning both the matriarchy and the patriarchy will be helpful here in aiding us to further define such cultures and understand the meaning of this battle between the masculine and the feminine present in Albee. Rank feels, too, that mankind has made a gradual transition from a mother-culture to a father-culture. He feels that in the process of developing from "blind impulse through conscious will to self-conscious knowledge" and in the process of overcoming the birth trauma man has become masculinized.¹⁰

Art, Rank feels, is but one solution to the birth trauma created along the way. In the work of art the artist attempts to recreate the birth and detach himself from the mother. Tragedy, likewise, he feels has grown from the mythical rites concerning this struggle for detachment. As man has striven harder and harder to overcome this initial trauma the masculine aspect has gradually achieved prominence. This gradual gain is

⁹ Edward Albee, The Sandbox in The Sandbox and The Death of Bessie Smith (With Fam and Yam) (New York: A Signet Book, 1965), p. 10.

¹⁰ Mullahy, "The Theories of Otto Rank," in Oedipus - Myth and Complex, p. 177.

illustrated in many religions--for example, in the worship of the moon goddess Isis, the gradual gain in importance of Osiris her brother, son, and husband is obvious.¹¹

Rank's explanation of this shift in power from the feminine to the masculine and thus the creation of the conflict between the sexes is best said in his own words:

The earlier high valuation of woman (her genital) which is still apparent in the ancient worship of goddesses and which has left its traces in the later 'Mother Right', had to be replaced by the social father-organization traced by Freud from the primitive horde. The strict, just, but no longer violent father must again be set up as the 'barrier to incest' against the desire to return to the mother, whereby he assumes once more his original biological function, namely: to sever the sons from the mother. Anxiety of the mother is then transferred as respect to the King and to the inhibiting Ego (ideal) motives which he represents (justice, state, etc.). The sons' (burghers and subjects) attitude toward him is that well-known two-sided Oedipus libido. The systematic social depreciation of woman from her original heights finally results in a reaction against that infantile dependence on her, which the son, now become father, can no longer bear.¹²

If we continue to delve into Rank's theories concerning this conflict, the Oedipus enigma appears again and again. This eternal battle between the masculine and feminine principles seems to be intertwined with the inescapable Oedipal situation. Rank explains that the basic physical difference between men

¹¹Mullahy, Oedipus - Myth and Complex, pp. 173-177.

¹²Rank by Mullahy, p. 170.

and women generates the conflict. The man's strength lies in his creative power while the woman's lies in her sex. Sex represents mortality to man, and he fears this in the female as well as in himself. The woman accepts sex and finds her immortality in the very act of sexual procreation.

Rank illustrates his theory by referring to the Oedipus story. It is from incest with the mother that the children sprang--thus, a compromise was established between the wish to have no children at all (exemplified by Laios) and the necessity to renounce one's own immortality in favor of children. The compromise performed by Oedipus was an attempt to beget himself as his mother's son; and in order to be reborn from his mother Oedipus must fail tragically. Rank says that this, then, is the guilt of Oedipus, not that he slew his father.¹³

Rank believes the Oedipus myth portrays a struggle "between 'individual ego' believing itself immortal and 'racial ego' embodied in sexual ideology which renounces individual immortality in favor of marriage and children."¹⁴ This, in short, appears to be the crux of the whole matriarchal-patriarchal conflict. The ancient myth of Oedipus illustrates beautifully what Rank feels to be the three stages of the problem: 1) the desire for immortality on the part of the male attempted through rebirth via incest; 2) the patriarchal family organization in

¹³Mullahy, pp. 197-202.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 203.

which personal immortality is renounced for immortality through children; and finally 3) the "racial fetter" which emphasizes that only through racial sexuality (marriage and family) can one achieve immortality.¹⁵

Erich Fromm has, in fact, viewed the entire concept of the Oedipus complex more as a struggle against paternal authority rather than an altogether sexual wish. He, like Rank, feels it dates back to the ancient struggle between the patriarchal and matriarchal systems of society.¹⁶

Understanding then the sources of the matriarchal-patriarchal battle, let us further explore this aspect in Albee's work. This theme (similar to the anima idea discussed in the first chapter) seems to be forming a miniature parallel to the odyssey Albee is making through the Great Mother archetype in his plays. As Albee's males in his dramas move through the different levels of the Great Mother, the plays move in turn from a matriarchal atmosphere to a patriarchal one and finally return to matriarchal dominance. As we have already illustrated, Albee's early plays are permeated with matriarchal domination. This dominance is presented as negative and is ridiculed and satirized by Albee's characters, seemingly demanding a change from the early castrating-Mommy, chaotic world where all is stagnant to one of order, logic and male initiative--in other words, a patriarchy.

¹⁵Mullahy, p. 204.

¹⁶Mullahy, "The Theories of Erich Fromm," p. 271.

This masculine-feminine hostility is symbolically emphasized through the human-animal relationships in the plays. In The Zoo Story, the cats and parakeets, of course, represent the matriarchy. Jerry worms the painful truth about the household's pets from Peter:

. . .Who better than a nice married man with two daughters and . . .uh . . .a dog? (Peter shakes his head.) No? Two dogs. (Peter shakes his head again.) Hm. No dogs? (Peter shakes his head, sadly.) Oh, that's a shame. But you look like an animal man. CATS? (Peter nods his head, ruefully.) Cats! But, that can't be your idea. No, sir. Your wife and daughters? (Peter nods his head.) Is there anything else I should know?¹⁷

Peter's sorrowful reply is that "There are . . .there are two parakeets. One . . .uh . . .one for each of my daughters."¹⁸

Jerry exhibits his hostility toward such matriarchal symbols by suggesting that if the birds were diseased Peter could let them loose and the cats "could eat them and die, maybe."¹⁹

However, Jerry's disgust for the maternal represented by the cats seems almost equally matched by his dread of encountering and coming to grips with the patriarchy represented by the dog. In explaining the battle between himself and the dog, Jerry takes pains to relate that animals generally are "indifferent to him--like people."²⁰ Immediately we can see Jerry as attractive to neither male nor female (man or animal) because

¹⁷ Zoo Story, pp. 17-18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

at this point he has formed himself into a rather asexual being with ambivalence toward both the masculine and feminine aspects. The dog forced Jerry into a direct confrontation with the masculine aspect and the patriarchal culture:

But this dog wasn't indifferent. From the very beginning he'd snarl and then go for me, to get one of my legs . . . I still don't know to this day how the other roomers manage it, but you know what I think: I think it had to do only with me.²¹

Once again the Oedipus angle enters the conflict when Jerry decides to solve his conflict with the dog (symbolic of the paternal idea) by killing him: "First, I'll kill the dog with kindness, and if that doesn't work . . . I'll just kill him."²²

This solution to the whole matriarchal-patriarchal conflict is employed also by Tobias in A Delicate Balance in dealing with another symbolic animal. The cat, in this Albee play, also seems to be used as a symbol of the matriarchate. As long as the cat seems to represent the loving, contented nature of the matriarchate all is well; but when the cat withdraws her love for no reason (an aspect of the Terrible Mother) the masculinity in Tobias cannot understand. Seeing that masculine force could

²¹ Zoo Story, p. 30.

²² Ibid., p. 31. The ultimate outcome of Jerry's battle with both the masculine and the feminine will be discussed in the following chapter.

not win a recovery of that unconditional Mother Love, Tobias "had her killed!"²³

Perhaps the best way to view the overall picture of the conflict in Albee's plays is to relate its development from play to play. As we have already seen from the discussions of The Zoo Story and The American Dream, the matriarchate fairly well prevails in Albee's early works--the castrating woman, lack of masculine initiative, chaotic atmosphere and static society. This maternal dominance continues also in The Sandbox and in The Death of Bessie Smith. The masculine aspect in The Sandbox is represented as sterile and empty--both by Daddy and by the Young Man. Daddy is an exaggerated blow-up of a simpering, emasculated husband continually having to ask Mommy in order to know what to do next. For example:

Daddy
(After a pause) Shall we talk to each other?

Mommy
(With that little laugh; picking something off her dress)
Well, you can talk, if you want to . . .if you can think of anything to say . . .if you can think of anything new.

Daddy (thinks)
No . . .I suppose not.

Mommy
(With a triumphant laugh) Of course not!²⁴

²³Edward Albee, A Delicate Balance (New York: Pocket Books, 1966), p. 46.

²⁴The Sandbox, p. 12.

The young or new male is pictured as even worse. He does not even know his name and, like the American Dream, is an empty-headed, unfeeling robot with a nice body being his only asset:

Young Man
(Flexing his muscles) Isn't that something?
(Continues his calisthenics)

Grandma
Boy, oh boy; I'll say. Pretty good.

Young Man (sweetly)
I'll say.²⁵

Albee's male characters in The Death of Bessie Smith likewise are represented as impotent, inert, and inept forces in a matriarchy. The Nurse in her obvious role as the Terrible Mother (to be defined and discussed in the next chapter) or, as Lee Baxandall calls her, "the meanest of the Mommies,"²⁶ attempts to control and emasculate every male in her environment. She belittles her father in another one of their endless arguments (remembering again the overtones of a lover-like relationship discussed in Chapter One):

You going to go down there with that bunch of bums . . . light up one of those expensive cigars, which you have no business smoking, which you can't afford, which I cannot afford, to put it more accurately . . . the same brand His Honor the mayor smokes . . . you going to sit down and talk big, about how you and the

²⁵The Sandbox, p. 14.

²⁶Lee Baxandall, "The Theater of Edward Albee," Tulane Drama Review, IV, (Summer, 1965), 21.

mayor are like this . . .you going to pretend
 you're something more than you really are,
 which is nothing but . . .

: : :
 : : .a hanger-on . . .a flunky. : : :27 . . .

Not only the Nurse's father is represented as an incompetent and ineffective male but also (again as in Albee's other early plays) so are both of the young men, once again blighting any of the reader's hopes of improvement in future generations of males.

Again in an argument which has overtones of a woman belittling her lover the Nurse completely squelches the Orderly:

Tell me, boy . . .is it true that you have Uncle Tom'd yourself right out of the bosom of your family . . .right out of your circle of acquaintances? Is it true, young man, that you are now an inhabitant of no-man's-land, on the one side shunned and disowned by your brethren, and on the other an object of contempt and division to your betters? Is that your problem, son?28

She then sends him out for cigarettes for her.

She next proceeds to expose the Intern as a shallow dreamer who visualizes himself as heroically aiding the victims of the Spanish Civil War but who really is (again, like all of Albee's men so far) impotent and ineffective. The Intern, himself, says he is "probably the only white man under sixty in two countries who has not had the pleasure"²⁹ of having intercourse with the Nurse.

²⁷The Death of Bessie Smith, p. 32.

²⁸Ibid., p. 47.

²⁹Ibid., p. 61.

Finally, the Nurse vows as the Terrible Mother to "fix" the Intern, and we know that this oath applies to all the males she comes in contact with including the unknowing Negro Jack who only comes to the hospital for aid after his accident with Bessie Smith. He, like all the other males she is dominating, is spoken to contemptuously: "Now you listen to me, and you get this straight . . . nigger . . . this is a semiprivate hospital" ³⁰

Slowly, however, we see the masculine aspect in Albee's plays begin to rebel and to fight against their female subjugation. George in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? begins also as a caricature of the American male who is picked-upon, castrated, and rendered totally useless by the female bitch. The play is packed with innumerable examples of poor George being devoured by Martha. Perhaps one of the best symbolic illustrations of the matriarchal-patriarchal battle exemplified in George and Martha is the boxing match. Martha describes it for Nick and Honey:

. . . I don't know why I did it myself . . . you know, I didn't lace 'em up or anything . . . and I snuck up behind George, just kidding, and I yelled "Hey George!" and at the same time I let go sort of a roundhouse right . . . just kidding, you know?

.
 . . . and George wheeled around real quick, and he caught it right in the jaw . . . POW! (Nick laughs) I hadn't meant it . . . honestly. Anyway . . . POW! Right in the jaw . . . and he was off balance . . . he must have

³⁰The Death of Bessie Smith, p. 72.

been . . .and he stumbled back a few steps,
and CRASH, he landed . . .flat . . .in a
huckleberry bush!

. . .I think it's colored our whole life.³¹

Also, George symbolically executes Martha with the toy
shotgun loaded only with a parasol after this recital.

George unlike any of Albee's males up to this point,
begins to resist. He, rather than meekly submitting like
Daddy to Mommy's domination, fights back with every device he
can think of; he attempts a comeback to almost all of Martha's
sadistic humiliating remarks and tops Martha's games with those
of "Getting the Guests" and the ultimate fatal-to-the-matriarchy
game of "Bringing Up Baby."

With the killing of the child George seems to have suddenly
wrested all rule from the matriarchy; and its power, which was
gained from being able to produce a child, is destroyed. In
this play by killing the child George has put the patriarchy
in power. We find Martha in the final scene humble, submissive,
admitting that she is afraid, and looking to George for succor
and protection. She very quietly tells George she "is afraid
of Virginia Woolf."

Ideally, then, Albee's male element in the character of
George has achieved the ideological vital rule by the patriarchy.

³¹Edward Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (New York:
A Pocket Cardinal edition by Pocket Books, 1967), pp. 56-57.

This achievement of patriarchal rule is won again by the male in A Delicate Balance. Tobias begins, much like George, as a weak, submissive male who allows himself to be controlled and abused by the feminine element. In his case this includes Agnes, the wife; Claire, his sister-in-law; and even Julia, his daughter. Rather than exercising masculine initiative he busies himself with small talk and making drinks for everyone. Claire can only laugh when Tobias replies that if he were to shoot everyone it would have to be "an act of passion." Because Tobias is so passionless and inept Claire cannot even imagine him performing an act of passion:

Oh, my; that's funny.

.
Oh, my darling Tobias, I'm sorry, but I just don't see you in the role, that's all-outraged, maddened into action, proceeding by reflex . . . Can you see yourself, though? In front of the judge? Predictable, stolid Tobias?³²

The previous discussion of Tobias' relationship with his cat illustrates his being totally caught up in the matriarchal-patriarchal battle. At first his total unwillingness to father another child after the death of Teddy appears as a complete lack of male initiative; but we see Agnes attempting to exercise her role and power as a mother and trying to force unwilling Tobias to perform the complete sexual act in hopes of creating

³²Edward Albee, A Delicate Balance (New York: A Pocket Book Edition, 1967), pp. 25-26.

another child:

. . .I think it was a year, when you spilled your-
self on my belly, sir? "Please? Please, Tobias?"
No, you wouldn't even say it out: I don't want
another child, another loss. "Please? Please,
Tobias?" And guiding you, trying to hold you in?³³

He does not seem to quite trust her to prevent another concep-
tion, even though Agnes tells him: "Don't leave me then, like
that. Not again, Tobias. Please? I can take care of it. We
won't have another child, but please don't . . .leave me like
that . . ."³⁴ Here then, instead of exhibiting total impotency,
Tobias begins rather his rebellion against the matriarchy. By
denying Agnes a child he is, as George did Martha, draining
her of her power. Tobias' strength often seems to originate
in his fear--illustrated again when he faces the dread issue
of Harry and Edna and the plague they have brought.

The roles of the dominating woman are divided among the
women in this Albee play. Claire, who it is suggested can see
into the future, is an omnipotent goddess figure. Agnes says
she was "not named for nothing." She has been expecting the
plague and rather matter-of-factly states, "I was wondering
when it would begin . . .when it would start."³⁵ She, too,
displays more of the fecund characteristics of the seductive
Terrible Mother (and will be explored more in the following
chapter). Agnes, although the supreme keeper of the balance,

³³ A Delicate Balance, p. 143.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

has trouble keeping a purely feminine role. She slips back and forth longing for a logical patriarchal existence. Indeed, Julia says she rules the dinner table, "like a combination . . . pope, and . . . drill sergeant!"³⁶ Agnes bemoans her fate of being female to Julia:

I do wish sometimes that I had been born a man.

.
Their concerns are so simple: money and death--making ends meet until they meet the end.

If they knew what it was like . . . to be a wife; a mother; a lover; a homemaker; a nurse; a hostess; an agitator; a pacifier; a truth-teller; a deceiver. . . .³⁷

In fact, Agnes threatens to turn into a man in the middle of Julia's conversation:

I shall try to hear you out, but if I feel my voice changing, in the middle of your . . . rant, you will have to forgive my male prerogative, if I become uncomfortable, look at my watch, or jiggle the change in my pocket . . .³⁸

Such an aspect of the matriarchy as exhibited by Agnes is symbolic of the Good Mother present in the over-all Great Mother archetype. Agnes tells Tobias that the women "don't decide the route"³⁹ and they shall do "Whatever you [Tobias]

³⁶ A Delicate Balance, pp. 87-88.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 64-65.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 137.

like."⁴⁰ This is, of course, directly opposite to Mommy in The American Dream. This aspect of Agnes facilitates Tobias in overcoming his original lethargy and helps him take command --establishing patriarchal rule. Ultimately, Tobias does make the decision to allow Harry and Edna to stay. He does face up to his manhood and also faces the Terror or Plague:

YES! OF COURSE! I WANT YOU HERE! I HAVE BUILT THIS HOUSE! I WANT YOU IN IT! I WANT YOUR PLAGUE! YOU'VE GOT SOME TERROR WITH YOU? BRING IT IN!⁴¹

The power, at this point, belongs then to the patriarchy. Both George and Tobias have taken control away from the child-bearing women and have taken authoritarian logical command. However, Albee's men do not remain in control in his later plays. In his very next drama Tiny Alice Julian begins as a weak, submissive male. On his first meeting with Miss Alice he is told:

So you'll be coming back here . . .when I wish to see you.

.
Several times. It might be better if you were to move in. I'll decide it.⁴²

Julian meekly submits from the very beginning to all of Miss Alice's whims, suggestions and demands. He seems to sense his fate from this matriarchal culture and feminine God and does not make much of an attempt to struggle against it until his very end. Then, after a few brief moments of indecision, he accepts

⁴⁰ A Delicate Balance, p. 145.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 165. The cause of both Tobias' and George's transformation will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁴² Edward Albee, Tiny Alice (New York: Pocket Books, 1966), p. 66.

his fate and surrenders completely to the female God Alice:
 "I accept thee, Alice, for thou art come to me. God, Alice
 . . .I accept thy will."⁴³

Once again, all the males in this drama are subject to control by the feminine principle. Miss Alice has not only the Butler and Julian waiting on her and carrying out every command but extends this control over even the Cardinal (one of the powerful rulers of the church). Although she does not to a great extent control the Lawyer and is forced to submit to his passions--"KEEP . . .GO! GET YOUR . . .LET GO OF ME! . . .KEEP OFF! KEEP OFF ME!"⁴⁴--the Lawyer is eventually put down by Alice's description of her job with Julian:

. . .Am I going to . . .spread my legs for the clergy? Enjoy my work a little? Isn't that what you'd have me do?

 When the time comes? Won't you have me at him? Like it or not? Well . . .I will like it!⁴⁵

Miss Alice, like most of Albee's females, uses her sex and sexual favors as a means to achieve her control. She has indeed used all three men--the Butler, Lawyer, Julian--as lovers to gain control for the God Alice. In this play, the male does not stand a chance of overcoming the feminine rule--the female principle is beautiful, seductive, and fully in charge. This

⁴³Tiny Alice, p. 184.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 77.

whole scene is controlled by a God who, it is later learned, is represented by Miss Alice, and who is a woman. Julian has really taken the only possible course: complete surrender to this all-powerful, matriarchal rule.

Julian's complete surrender to the matriarchy is repeated in Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. Throughout both dramas a matriarchal atmosphere reigns supreme. There is a definite return in these latest Albee plays to the chaotic Theater of the Absurd situation quite similar to that in The American Dream and The Sandbox. Again the characters become symbols--The Old Woman, Long-Winded Lady, Minister--rather than real people and their language is rather vague and nonsensical. For example, the Long-Winded Lady spends nearly the whole play attempting to determine what exact sound she made when she fell off the ocean liner into the sea:

I'd never imagined it--naturally! It's not what one would. The echo of a sound, or the remembering of a sound having happened. No, that's not right either. For them; for the theoretical . . . onwatcher. (Pause) Plut! Yes!⁴⁶

This type of atmosphere seems ideal for the up-cropping of archetypal themes and images--it is rather like a return to the unconscious dream world from the more reality-oriented world of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and A Delicate Balance.

⁴⁶ Edward Albee, Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung: Two Inter-related Plays (New York: Pocket Book Edition, 1970), pp. 43-44.

Another point which emphasizes the feeling of returning is that Albee's first play written as a child at age twelve is described as a "sex farce taking place on board an ocean liner."⁴⁷ Mao also is enacted on board a ship.

Once again, as in The Zoo Story, The American Dream, and The Sandbox, there is very little activity--the whole of Box consists of a stationary box on stage and a woman's voice, and Mao consists mainly of speeches and introspections on each character's own feelings with no interaction between characters--and no initiative. The stable matriarchal environment is apparent. There is no sign of any struggle against this matriarchal rule except perhaps the vacant threats mouthed by Mao in extolling his philosophy:

Riding roughshod everywhere, U.S. imperialism has made itself the enemy of the people of the world and has increasingly isolated itself. Those who refuse to be enslaved will never be cowed by the atom bombs and hydrogen bombs in the hands of U.S. imperialists. The raging tide of the people of the world against the U.S. aggressors is irresistible. Their struggle against U.S. imperialism and its lackeys will assuredly win still greater victories.⁴⁸

The Minister, the only other male in both plays, does not speak at all. Albee's male, rather than maintaining a patriarchal rule which he seems to have achieved in Virginia Woolf

⁴⁷Gilbert Debusscher, Edward Albee: Tradition and Renewal (Brussels, 1967), p. 8.

⁴⁸Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung; p. 52.

and A Delicate Balance, appears to have given up the struggle and have become resigned once again to matriarchal rule. As we have mentioned before, this cycle corresponds closely to the cycle Albee's males make in connection with the Great Mother archetype.⁴⁹ The males rather sadly but with a certain relief seem to welcome this return to being controlled and directed.

One other aspect of the matriarchal-patriarchal struggle which deserves to be mentioned before going on to the over-all Mother Archetype is the correlation of an East-West conflict to the male-female battle. The symbolism of East and West is evident mainly in Albee's first (Zoo Story) and latest (Box-Mao) plays--again, connecting the two dramas. Jerry in Zoo Story is over-anxiously concerned about the West. We feel from his subtle comments that the West represents the matriarchy or being enveloped in the Great Mother which he fears. Jerry, as was discussed in the preceding chapter, does not want to admit to his longing for his mother (or death and rebirth through her) and reverts to any other possible kind of sexual behavior to escape. He tells Peter, "I don't like the west side of the park much." But says he "doesn't know" why.⁵⁰ He is concerned about walking north and employs Peter in an elaborate discussion as to whether he has indeed been walking north or "Good old north"⁵¹

⁴⁹This will be elaborated on in the forthcoming chapters.

⁵⁰The Zoo Story, p. 14.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 12.

as he calls it. (Jung says the hero is devoured by the water monster (West) and takes a sea journey to the East and rebirth.)⁵²

However, before relating The Story Of Jerry And The Dog (or his struggle with the masculine aspect) Jerry tells Peter:

What I am going to tell you has something to do with how sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly; or maybe I only think that it has something to do with that. But, it's why I went to the zoo today, and why I walked north . . . northerly, rather . . . until I came here.⁵³

In other words, Jerry desperately wants to escape being enveloped by the matriarchy or dying--represented by the West. He has been going north or up, away from the womb. However, he seems to know he is fated because he has "gone a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly."

The correlation between the West and the matriarchal aspect is next viewed in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?. George, reading aloud while Martha and Nick are upstairs attempting intercourse, recites, "And the west, encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommodate itself to the swing of events, must . . . eventually fail."⁵⁴ Indeed, the matriarchy in this play, in being able to adapt to having its child-bearing power destroyed, does crumble and fall. The patriarchy is in charge at the end of the play.

⁵² C. G. Jung, "Symbols of the Mother and of Rebirth," The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 5: An Analysis of the Prelude to A Case of Schizophrenia, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (New York, 1952), p. 210.

⁵³ The Zoo Story, p. 30.

⁵⁴ Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, p. 174.

However, in Box and Mao we see here also the matriarchy symbolized as the West, but we feel that in spite of the radical violent words of Mao about destroying this threat a struggle is not even going to be attempted. Mao drones on and on:

We desire peace. However, if imperialism insists on fighting a war, we will have no alternative but to take the firm resolution to fight to the finish before going ahead with our constriction. If you are afraid of war day in and day out, what will you do if war eventually comes? First I said that the East Wind is prevailing over the West Wind and war will not break out, and now I have added these explanations about the situation in case war should break out. Both possibilities have thus been taken into account.⁵⁵

He urges developing "friendship and cooperation with the fraternal (patriarchal references) countries,"⁵⁶ but no action at all apparently will be taken. The male force in the play is completely impotent. In fact, the only action of the story--the Long-Winded Lady falling into the sea (symbolically attempting to return to the womb)--has already passed and is only narrated; and, in addition, is performed by the feminine principle.

This East-West conflict is then but another miniature cycle representing the movement of Albee's male characters. It, too, emphasizes that despite the desire to overcome patriarchal domination--and, at one point, actually having achieved it--the patriarchy ultimately succumbs to the matriarchate. It, too, casts suggestions as to the ultimate outcome of Albee's male in his struggle to be free from the maternal influence.

⁵⁵ Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung, p. 90-91.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 55.



CHAPTER THREE: GIVER OF DEATH . . . AND LIFE

"May the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ be with you always . . . to light your way for you in darkness . . . that you may be worthy of whatever sacrifice, unto death itself. . . ."

Edward Albee--Tiny Alice

From the earliest days of recorded literature the "terrible mother" archetype has been an omnipresent theme leaving its imprint on innumerable folk tales, myths, and stories. Pandora, for example, let out all the evils upon the world by opening the box. Using this myth, Hesiod implied, then, that woman is indeed responsible for all the evils that befall man. Voltaire's interpretation of this story is that the box was only symbolic of the vagina and it was the female genitals containing all the ills and evils of the world.¹

This "terrible mother" theme is endless--originating perhaps with Eve, the dangerous temptress, who caused Adam to sin thereby expelling man from Paradise, on down through the Greek myths filled with myriads of seductive, terrible, male-destroying women--Circe, Medea, the Sirens, the Amazons--and on through the castrating bitch of modern literature. Albee's plays are haunted with these mysterious and fatal women.

¹Theodore Reik, *Myth and Guilt: The Crime and Punishment of Mankind* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957), p. 63.

A brief historical look at the "terrible mother" theme will facilitate our understanding of its use in Albee's plays. The concept of the malicious and punishing cruel mother-goddesses is apparent in the worship of Ishtar, Kali, and Astarte. Originally these were goddesses of evil and terror who were held accountable for the evils of mankind including what was later called "sin." Gradually these goddesses became bearers of love and mercy and, even later, appeared as mistresses to the young gods who must die and be resurrected.²

Lura and Duilio Pedrini trace this concept of woman beguiler up to the Romantics, continuing the idea of woman (Pandora) created for mankind as a punishment. Byron implies that woman-serpent keeps continually tempting while man-serpent tempted only once. Shelley sees himself and Jane both as beguilers and Keats' Lamia enchants Lycuis. For the Romantics pleasure seems to grow from this pain and is inseparable from it. Shelley feels the greatest beauty emerges in a combination including the horrible.³ Such a concept seems to be a vital characteristic of the Mother archetype. She is at the same time beautiful and ugly, terrible and good, loving and destroying.

²Reik, p. 64.

³Lura Nancy and Duilio Pedrini, Serpent Imagery and Symbolism: A Study of the Major English Romantic Poets (New Haven, 1966), pp. 35-100.

Some insight into why the mother archetype is at once so loving and terrifying is offered by Reik in discussing the three lovers in The Tales of Hoffmann. The three women, Reik explains, represent the three typical figures who play a role in a young man's life: the one who gives birth, the one who gives sexual gratification, and the one who brings death or, in simple terms, the mother, the mistress, and the annihilator. Reik says the mother and the annihilator meet each other in the middle figure or the mistress. He contends there is a reaction formation present in that the woman chosen in the beginning appears as the loveliest, most desirable object and in the end represents doom and death.⁴

Carl Jung, also, says death is equated with the mother--the mother is both giver of life and death. He cites the Madonna or Mother of Mercy who spreads bane and destruction. Jung lists examples of her symbols--earth, water, tree, dragon, or whale--which are both fecund and devouring. The children of the earth arise from her fertile womb and return to her in the grave. The mother is simultaneously the tree of life and the tree of death.⁵

Considering present-day woman, Karl Menninger, discussing unwanted women, stresses that certain women give men an unconscious

⁴Theodore Reik, "The Three Women in a Man's Life," in Art and Psychoanalysis, ed. William Phillips, (Cleveland, 1963), pp. 156-163.

⁵Carl Jung, Jung's Contribution to Our Times: The Collected Papers of Eleanor Bertine, ed. Elizabeth C. Rohrback, (New York, 1967), p. 72.

warning--they are overeffusive, overeager, possessive, threatening and presuming. He also says women may choose whether to allow men to become the victims of their own self-destructiveness or they can choose to favor man's spiritual development⁶ --thus, the ambiguity of the loving and terrible mother.

Studying mythology, we find that there does appear to be a reason behind the killing of the son--it is not just wanton slaughter on the part of a vicious woman. The ultimate outcome of dying in the mother is a new and glorious being brought about by the destruction of the old self, resurrection and rebirth. Erich Neumann tells us:

The Terrible Mother is the hungry earth, which devours its own children and fattens on their corpses; it is the tiger and the vulture, the vulture and the coffin, the flesh-eating sarcophagus voraciously licking up the blood seed of man and beasts and casting it out again in new birth.⁷

Neumann continues to say that in a profound way life and birth are always bound up with death and destruction. Thus, the Terrible Mother rules over the desire and the seduction which leads to "sin and destruction, love and death."⁸

⁶ Karl Menninger, Love Against Hate (New York, 1942), pp. 92-101.

⁷ Erich Neumann, The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype, trans. by Ralph Manheim, (New York, 1955), p. 149.

⁸ Ibid., p. 172.

He explains that the youthful son is dismembered or castrated in the ritual to the Great Mother. This is the typical self-sacrifice of the moon leading to rebirth. In many Aztec rites the prisoners are shot with arrows, symbolizing sexual union with the earth or, as Neumann says, "mating and killing are identical and death represents fecundation."⁹

Ultimately in explaining the Great Mother archetype, Neumann tells us that in her spiritual character she grants life only through death and development toward new birth only through suffering. As the Lady of Beasts and Men she confers no birth and no life without pain.¹⁰

Geza Roheim, discussing Australian folklore, condenses the theme of the various stories of mother-husband-son triangles into the same idea that myth is tragedy--the god must die or be destroyed before he can be truly divine.¹¹

Carl Jung again repeats and elaborates the archetypal concept of the son being destroyed by the Great Mother in order to be reborn. To change, he says, the ideal figure has to die, and this creates in the individual all sorts of longings for death. This longing, in fact, is a decision in favour of life--at whose end death stands. Jung names Nietzsche as a prime

⁹Neumann, p. 192.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 279.

¹¹Geza Roheim, "Myth and Folklore" in Art and Psycho-analysis, p. 342.

example of this wish: stretched-out, tortured by God and asking to be smitten deeper. The same cry is heard from Job.¹²

The initiation ceremonies employed by primitive cultures appear to be symbolical rituals reenacting again the identical idea of death and rebirth through the mother figure. Mercia Eliade explains that in the primitive world initiation is a fundamental existential experience through which men attain the status of human beings. He who is initiated dies to one life in order to gain a new existence. Eliade explains the ancient myths involving circumcision and subincision performed in the name of Gods as an "experience of initiatory death and resurrection."¹³

Jung gives yet another example of this same concept. The Persians and Tibetians give their dead to vultures which are mother symbols. He also cites the myth of the Sun God Ra who retires on the back of the Heavenly Cow. Symbolically he goes back into the mother in order to rise again as Horus.¹⁴

With some of the very basic information concerning the Terrible Mother and her purpose let us turn to the inspection of this figure in Albee's plays. Many of Albee's critics have

¹²C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. II: An Analysis of the Prelude to A Case of Schizophrenia, trans. R. F. C. Hull, (New York, 1956), pp. 285-290.

¹³Mercia Eliade, Birth and Rebirth: The Religious Meanings of Initiation in Human Culture, trans. William R. Trask, (New York, 1958), pp. 3-9.

¹⁴C. G. Jung, "Symbols of the Mother and of Rebirth," The Collected Works, Vol. 5: An Analysis of the Prelude to A Case of Schizophrenia, trans. R. F. C. Hull, (New York, 1952), pp. 239-242.

no trouble recognizing the Terrible Mother and pointing out her evils but really do not attempt to explain her function in relation to Albee's male characters. D. C. Coleman says Albee's most ferocious attack on contemporary America has been reserved for the American mother. He says in The American Dream she is revealed as "a repressor of the mentality and instinct of the younger generation"¹⁵ and that there is an accusation of incest at the end of The American Dream and Virginia Woolf. He concludes that Albee's attack on the Mother figure is "too savage to emanate from anything other than personal hatred."¹⁶

Gilbert Debusscher states:

Its [society's] destructive force is almost always executed through the woman, whom Albee's theater presents as essentially negative: the Nurse, Mommy, Martha, Amelia, Miss Alice and Melba . . . are all variations of a deformed conception of feminine nature--doubtless no small part of his personal trauma and his revolt against the accepted ideas of his society.¹⁷

Allan Lewis is but one of the many critics describing Martha as a representation of the Terrible Mother. He says she has a "tongue for cutting words and a body for humiliating insult. She is most alive when she is savage."¹⁸

¹⁵ D. C. Coleman, "Fun and Games: Two Pictures of Heart-break House," Drama Survey (Winter, 1966-67), p. 230.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁷ Gilbert Debusscher, Edward Albee: Tradition and Renewal (Brussels, 1967), p. 83.

¹⁸ Allan Lewis, "The Fun and Games of Edward Albee," American Plays and Playwrights of Contemporary Theater (New York, 1965), p. 90.

Peter Woolf, writing in The Prairie Schooner, says Albee pictures women as "vessels of shrieking sadism" and in referring to Miss Alice says:

. . .her sacrificial act, which she performs in spite of the lawyer (secular law) and the Cardinal (God's law on earth), strongly suggests that Albee is working to refresh artistically his diatribes against modern women and their destructive roles in society.¹⁹

These and the other critics are correct in their descriptions of Albee's women--they are, indeed, savage, terrifying creatures. However, they have not gone far enough in their explanations of these figures in Albee's plays. They have taken the surface themes in the plays and have failed to pry into the archetypal unconscious aspects in their efforts to interpret the Terrible Mother. Let us discuss to a further extent some of the terrible characteristics of Albee's women. We can remember from previous chapters the general attitude of superiority in the women--Mommy belittling Daddy and insisting that he "can't get satisfaction," the Nurse's haughty and hostile conversation with all the males in her environment, Martha's relation to Nick and Honey all of George's inadequacies, Agnes "maintaining the balance," and Miss Alice with her wealth and power ordering all the males about. We need to examine more closely now the extent to which these "mother" figures carry

¹⁹ Peter Woolf, "The Social Theater of Edward Albee," Prairie Schooner, XXXIX (1966), 261.

their power. As we have determined in studying matriarchal rule, these women use their sex, sexual favors, and procreative ability to obtain power. We find Mommy in The American Dream as having taken complete control over Daddy's sexual situation as well as the rest of his life. Mommy's answer to Grandma's suggestion that Daddy would rather sleep with her is that "Daddy doesn't want to sleep with anyone. Daddy's been sick"; and Daddy adds, as if by rote, "I've been sick. I don't even want to sleep in the apartment."²⁰ Apparently, Mommy initiated Daddy's operation (a symbolic if not literal castration) for she tells Mrs. Barker, "Daddy had an operation, you know," and Daddy explains, ". . .the doctors took out something that was there and put in something that wasn't there. An operation."²¹

Mommy in this drama definitely prefers her males sterile, useless, and powerless. She tells Daddy that the chairman of her woman's club has "an absolutely adorable husband who sits in a wheel chair all the time."²² Mommy's character becomes more terrifying when we gradually learn her response to her son, an adopted "bumble of joy" who "only had eyes for its Daddy."²³

²⁰ Edward Albee, The American Dream in Two Plays by Edward Albee: The American Dream and The Zoo Story (New York: A Signet Book, 1961), p. 70.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 82-83.

²² Ibid., p. 60.

²³ Ibid., p. 99.

We find that she "gouged those eyes right out of its head."²⁴
 Not stopping there, after it had developed an interest in "its
 you-know-what," she castrated the son by cutting off his "you-
 know-what" and eventually caused the infant's death by so many
 mutilations for so many faults. There is a desperate finality
 about the death of this son. We do not feel any hope of a
 rebirth--the whole male element in the play is sterile. In
 order to be reborn, remember, the son must enter the mother.
 Mercia Eliade shows this through the young primitive male's
 initiation explaining: "The adept must return to his mother's
 breast or even cohabit with her" or as he quotes from Paracelsus--
 " 'He who would enter the Kingdom of God must first enter with his
 body into his mother and there die. Return to the womb is some-
 times presented in the form of incest with the mother.' "²⁵ Since
 Mommy's infant son did not do this--he "had eyes only for its
 Daddy"--he will not be granted rebirth or immortality.

However, a duplicate son appears to also be adopted by
 Mommy. The concept of the foster mother has been explained by
 Jung as part of the heroic son gaining rebirth. He says that
 the story of the birth of the hero is miraculous. He is not
 born like an ordinary mortal because his birth is a rebirth
 from a mother-wife. This is why the hero often has two mothers

²⁴ Albee, p. 99.

²⁵ Mercia Eliade, p. 57.

and is frequently raised by foster parents. There may even be a dual birth.²⁶

The new son explains that he is an identical twin and he does not know what has happened to his brother since they were torn apart except that "from time to time, in the years that passed, I have suffered losses" and describes for Grandma an identical maiming of his body in a spiritual way exactly as the first son was mutilated physically:

. . .How can I put it to you? All right; like this: Once . . .it was as if all at once my heart . . .became numb . . .almost as though I . . .almost as though . . .just like that . . . it had been wrenched from my body . . .and from that time I have been unable to love. Once . . .I was asleep at the time . . .I awoke, and my eyes were burning. And since that time I have been unable to see anything, anything with pity, with affection . . .with anything but . . .cool disinterest. And my groin . . .even there . . .since one time . . . one specific agony . . .since then I have not been able to love anyone with my body. And even my hands . . .I cannot touch another person and feel love . . .²⁷

So this son enters the scene as impotent and sterilized. He tells Grandma, " . . .I am incomplete . . .I can feel nothing . . .And it will always be thus."²⁸

We feel that there is probably no chance for rebirth in this son either. However, at the conclusion Mommy does approach

²⁶ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 321.

²⁷ The American Dream, pp. 114-115.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

the young man in a sexual manner:

(To YOUNG MAN, her voice already a little fuzzy from the wine)
 You don't know how happy I am to see you! Yes sirree. Listen, that time we had with . . . with the other one. I'll tell you about it sometime. . . .

 (Sidles up to him a little) Maybe . . . maybe later tonight.²⁹

And the young man "(Not moving away)" answers, "Why yes. That would be very nice."³⁰ If the son does respond to Mommy's invitation and return to the mother, he can achieve rebirth. Albee does not make his future action explicit here, but the idea is at least presented and a possible attraction to the mother is not rejected completely as is the case with Jerry in The Zoo Story.

As we have discussed in Chapter One, Jerry denies any attraction to his Mother. He disgustingly describes his mother and landlady in similar terms: "Good old Mom walked out on good old Pop when I was ten and a half years; she embarked on an adulterous turn of our southern states . . . a journey of a year's duration . . . and her most constant companion . . . among others, among many others . . . was a Mr. Barleycorn."³¹ --and the "fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic, cheap, drunken

²⁹The American Dream, p. 127.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹The Zoo Story, pp. 23-24.

bag of garbage."³² Ultimately he rejects both of these repulsively portrayed mother figures. We see Jerry (as explained in Chapter Two) trying to flee ingestion by the matriarchy by walking North (or up, away from the womb) but seeming to know that escape is impossible: " . . .sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly . . .But, it's why I went to the zoo today, and why I walked north . . .northerly, rather . . .until I came here."³³

Jerry does not want to face the situation of possible incestuous desires for his mother and recognizing his masculine aspect (represented by the dog). Instead, he retreats repeatedly--choosing homosexual behavior and making love to prostitutes rather than commit incest with a Mother figure. He also attempts to kill the dog or masculine aspect rather than confront it. Jerry's greatest retreat involves his desire to return to the womb and stay there rather than face the joys and agonies of incest, death, and rebirth. He thanks Peter for providing him with his means of escape as he has consciously or unconsciously planned:

Thank you, Peter, I mean that, now; thank you very much. . . .I think this is what happened at the zoo . . .I think. I think that while I was at the zoo I decided that I would walk north . . . northerly, rather . . .until I found you . . .or somebody . . .and I decided that I would talk to

³²The Zoo Story, p. 27.

³³Ibid., p. 30.

you . . . I would tell you things . . . and things I would tell you would . . . Well, here we are. You see? Here we are. But . . . I don't know . . . could I have planned all this? No . . . no, I couldn't have. But I think I did . . . Peter . . . Peter? . . . Peter . . . thank you. I came unto you . . . and you have comforted me. Dear Peter.³⁴

There will be no rebirth for Jerry. Jerry does not believe in the feminine goddess and will not seek his immortality through her. In his final moments he speaks to some higher being imploring to be, at last, consumed: " . . . (a combination of scornful mimicry and supplication) Oh . . . my . . . God."³⁵ However, he has not presented himself as a willing male sacrifice to the Terrible Mother.

Seemingly, Peter is presented with the opportunity of becoming the male god and perhaps taking control over the matriarchy. Jerry tells him as he dies: " . . . And Peter, I'll tell you something now; you're not really a vegetable; it's all right, you're an animal. You're an animal, too."³⁶ Peter, however, does not offer much hope for achieving masculine rebirth: he is middle-aged--the masculine god must be young; he does not have any more initiative than originally--Jerry must tell him to "hurry away" and "take your book." Ultimately we see that

³⁴ The Zoo Story, p. 48.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁶ Ibid.

Peter will but return to his sterile existence in a matriarchally-controlled environment. Jerry says, "Hurry away, your parakeets are making the dinner . . . the cats . . . are setting the table . . ." ³⁷ Peter cannot even make symbolic use of Jerry's death to bring about a rebirth in himself. He can only repeat Jerry's desire for consumption by the feminine or an eternal retreat to the womb echoing Jerry's death cry, "OH MY GOD!" ³⁸

This desire of Jerry's (to retreat to the womb) was again symbolized in his encounter with the dog or the masculine aspect. Rather than accept his maleness and proceed through the typical dangerous journey of the young male, Jerry chose to side-step. He relates to Peter how at the conclusion of dealing with the dog he "gained solitary free passage" and is rather sad about it. In other words, he is now free to retreat to the womb to stay and feels his loss.

By contrasting Albee's first (The Zoo Story) and second or third play (The American Dream) we can see at least a slight difference in the development of the male. The Zoo Story leaves the reader with a definite finality--there will be no rebirth for Jerry and, almost assuredly, none for Peter either. The concept of incest or co-habitation with the mother is abhorred; Jerry does not even let the idea enter his mind. The American Dream, however, develops differently. There are suggestions of

³⁷ The Zoo Story, p. 49.

³⁸ Ibid.

incest--at least there are sexual advancements by the mother toward both sons and the Oedipal involvement enters the picture. The first son will not be reborn but we feel that the second son is at least desirous of his mother and this may be the beginning of the development of Albee's male toward his transformation.

The Oedipal involvement again is prominent in The Sandbox even though The Sandbox deals more with the feminine development than the masculine. As determined in Chapter Two, the matriarchy is in charge in this drama and the male element is weak and submissive with Daddy only muttering replies to Mommy's caustic remarks. Obviously, the very names of Mommy and Daddy imply a parent-child relationship. However, there is no child as such--Daddy, indeed, is treated and responds like a child and the young man is given that significance by Mommy's attentions. There seems to be a death and perhaps a promise of rebirth (the coming of daylight, the "long night" being over) for the feminine aspect suggested through Grandma's death. The male element, however, does not advance beyond the Oedipal implications. Daddy in his whining remarks does suggest that he has been expelled from the comfort and shelter of the womb. He complains, "I'm cold,"³⁹ and later, "It's so hot."⁴⁰

³⁹ Edward Albee, The Sandbox in Two Plays by Edward Albee: The Sandbox and The Death of Bessie Smith (New York: A Signet Book, 1960), p. 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

As we have pointed out numerous times, the Nurse in Bessie Smith is one of Albee's most vicious Mommy figures. She lacerates verbally all the males with whom she comes in contact. Also, there is a current of sexual interest between the Nurse and all the males she verbally castrates--including her father. The Intern suggests that he would like to retreat to the womb. The Nurse herself puts it into words, "Driving a fine car into a fine sunset" (remember the West symbolizes death or immersion into the matriarchate), and the Intern agrees, "Lord knows, I'd like to get away from here."⁴¹ In fact, he does withdraw mentally into an elaborate daydream of gloriously helping the wounded in Spain. However, he does not physically retreat and neither do any of the males in this play. There will be an aimless and despair-filled continuation of the same existence. The Intern is powerless to accomplish anything (Bessie is already dead) and his masculinity, despite his grandiose daydreams, is still impotent. He exclaims in his frustration to no one in particular, "WHAT DID YOU EXPECT ME TO DO, EH? WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO? . . . TELL ME! WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO?"⁴²

The Orderly also babbles to no one in particular, "I never heard of such a thing . . . bringing a dead woman here like that . . . I don't know what people can be thinking of sometimes . . ."⁴³

⁴¹ The Death of Bessie Smith, p. 59.

⁴² Ibid., p. 79.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 80.

Although the sunset "blazes" at the conclusion there has been no male sacrifice, no willing return to the Mother. The Intern perhaps vaguely desires such a return but has not been able to complete the sexual experience with the Mother-figure (Nurse) in order to accomplish it, and no rebirth will occur. The inept masculine aspect will continue as before in the matriarchal controlled environment.

Within Albee's next play, however, the fate of the male character's development begins to turn. In the world of *Terrible Mothers*, Martha must reign supreme. Early in the play Martha is assigned all the *Terrible Mother* characteristics. George says she chews ice cubes--symbolic of the *Terrible Mother* ripping flesh. She refers to herself as "Mommy" suggesting an Oedipal-like situation with George. She also, according to George, displays her genitals:

. . . And try to keep your clothes on, too.
There aren't many more sickening sights than
you with a couple drinks in you and your skirt
up over your head, you know.

. . . your heads, I should say. . . .⁴⁴

George implies that Martha with many heads is a feminine monster--the horrible Gorgon is immediately brought to mind. Erich Neumann explains the displaying of the genitals as one of the necessary

⁴⁴ Edward Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (New York; Pocket Cardinal Edition, 1967), p. 17.

attributes of the Great Mother:

The Great Goddess as a whole is a symbol of creative life and the parts of her body are not physical organs but numinous symbolic centers of whole spheres of life. For this reason the 'self-representation' of the Great Goddess, her display of her breasts, belly, or entire naked body, is a form of divine epiphany.⁴⁵

This image of Martha is also reminiscent of Freud's explanation of the Medusa's Head. He explains that decapitation is synonymous with castration. The female genitals appear to have been castrated. The snakes on the Medusa replace the penis and, according to his theory, multiplication of the penis signifies castration. In mythology the sight of the Medusa's head turns the spectator to stone. Freud says stiff would mean an erection, showing he is still in possession of a penis.

Finally, Freud states that the female displaying her genitals (a Mother symbol) frightens and repels the male because she appears to be castrated. The erect male organ would be the male's defiance.⁴⁶ Such again seems to be the case with George and Martha. She continually attempts to frighten and castrate George and he fights back.

The concept of Martha as a Terrible Goddess is emphasized again and again by George's vivid descriptions of Martha.

⁴⁵ Neumann, The Great Mother, p. 128.

⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head," Collected Papers: Vol. 5 (New York, 1959), pp. 105-106.

He says she is a "Subhuman monster yowling . . ." ⁴⁷; and later says she is "the only true pagan on the eastern seaboard." ⁴⁸ Even more explicitly connoting Martha as the Terrible Mother is George's narration of her actions. Besides her verbal castration of him, George tells Nick and Honey that being married to Martha demands the sacrifice of a " . . .private portion of the anatomy." ⁴⁹ Also, as described in Chapter One, George accuses Martha of making sexual advances toward their son; suggesting an Oedipal situation: " . . .he couldn't stand you fiddling at him all the time, breaking into his bedroom with your kimono flying, fiddling at him all the time, with your liquor breath on him, and your hands all over his . . ." ⁵⁰

Albee never seems to let us stop seeing Martha as the Terrible Mother. In Act Three Martha herself tells Nick, "You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you're all flops." ⁵¹ She even attributes to herself the Terrible Mother characteristics: " . . .and Martha licks her chops . . .old Martha, who does a little dance for them, which heats them all up . . .while Martha-poo sits there with her dress up over her

⁴⁷Virginia Woolf, p. 19.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 120.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 189.

head . . ."⁵² She also sadly says of George, " . . .and whom I bit so there's blood . . ."⁵³ Finally, she screams at George while he presents her with flowers, "Pansies! Rosemary! Violence! My wedding bouquet."⁵⁴

Also, the sexually-oriented conversations finally culminating in commitment of the physical act between Martha and Nick are reminiscent of part of primitive cultures' initiation rituals to bring about the maturing of the young man. An initiatory pattern of return to the womb is enacted and an orgiastic ceremony takes place where there are sexual pantomimes and a ritual exchange of wives.⁵⁵

Martha, indeed, is Albee's most exaggerated Terrible Mother--continuously exhibiting all her horrid, devouring, vicious ways. Martha, however, while she can be sexually seductive to her imaginary son, does not seem able to force herself to destroy him in order that he might achieve a rebirth. Her seduction of the young teachers who appear at their home follows a similar pattern. She makes sexual advances to them and might even have sexual relations but does not enter wholeheartedly into the act bringing about a satisfaction or a rebirth.

⁵²Virginia Woolf, p. 189.

⁵³Ibid., p. 191.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 196.

⁵⁵Eliade, p. 50.

She tells Nick after the rendezvous, "Your potential's fine. It's dandy. Absolutely dandy. I haven't seen such dandy potential in a long time. Oh, but baby, you sure are a flop."⁵⁶ She also tells George that Nick cannot perform, "Him can't. [Screw] Him too fulla booze."⁵⁷ (According to Freud, Nick would not be able to defy the Medusa.)

The son, of course, represents the young hero (or Sun God) who must die in order to be reborn. Both Martha and George refer to him simultaneously as our son and the sun. George calls him "sunny-Jim."⁵⁸ Martha refers to him in a similar manner in her epic description of the young god:

. . . And he was a healthy child, a red
bawling child, with slippery firm limbs . . .

. . . with slippery, firm limbs, and a full head
of black, fine, fine hair which, oh, later, later
became blond as the sun, our son.⁵⁹

Yet Martha cannot bear to put the son to death. She rebels when George--acting as the helpful feminine principle here--says that the child is dead. Martha screams, "YOU CAN'T KILL HIM! YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM DIE!"⁶⁰ She insists, "That wasn't . . . needed."⁶¹

⁵⁶Virginia Woolf, 188-189.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 197.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 228.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 218.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 233.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 237.

George, however, sees that it was needed and promises Martha, "It will be better."⁶² Indeed, things quickly become better. Martha becomes subdued and submissive letting George take command. She admits that she is afraid of the feminine monster ("I . . . am . . . George . . . [afraid of Virginia Woolf]") which is most likely the child-destroying aspect of herself that she has been unable to face.

Honey has been terribly afraid of motherhood and bearing children and could admit this only to George in a drunken stupor relating her dream:

. . . I DON'T WANT . . . ANY . . . CHILDREN . . .
I . . . don't . . . want . . . any . . . children. I'm
afraid! I don't want to be hurt . . . PLEASE!⁶³

She, too, seems to be "better" after the death of the imaginary child. Honey wails out that she wants a child, "a baby,"⁶⁴ during Martha's recitation of the story of their son. Honey's desire for a child seems to provide a vehicle for the rebirth of a more glorious being. Indeed, the play is pregnant with promises of rebirth at its conclusion. The patriarchy has taken control and Martha has ceased to be the braying beast. George tells them all that a new day is coming, "It will be dawn soon"; and finally we learn that the tomorrow is "Sunday" or the day of resurrection.

⁶²Virginia Woolf, p. 240.

⁶³Ibid., p. 176.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 223.

In this play, then, we can readily see that the death agonies are the symbolic pangs of rebirth as explained by Jung. Jung says, too, that this death and resurrection often required dual mothers--one real and one symbolic. George, in this case, could be considered as playing the symbolic role-- forcing the destruction of the child in order to facilitate the rebirth. Jung says that symbolically he who stems from the two mothers is in his first existence mortal and in the second existence achieves immortality.⁶⁵

While Agnes in A Delicate Balance does not appear as such an exaggerated example of the Terrible Mother, she does contain these characteristics; and, once again, it is this Terrible Mother figure who aids Albee's males in their development. Agnes enjoys playing the role of the domineering controller of all events:

If I scold, it is because I wish I needn't.
If I am sharp, it is because I am neither
less nor more than human, and if I am to
be accused once again of making too much of
things, let me remind you that it is my
manner and not the matter.⁶⁶

Agnes' Terrible Mother aspects come through more subtly, but we see her, as is characteristic of the Terrible Mother, demanding totally committed sacrifice--"What I cannot stand is

⁶⁵Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 322.

⁶⁶Edward Albee, A Delicate Balance. (New York: A Pocket Book Edition, 1967), p. 23.

the selfishness! Those of you who want to die . . . and take your whole lives doing it."⁶⁷ Some of the Terrible Mother aspects in this drama, rather than being displayed in one female character, are distributed among the other females involved. Claire, as well as Agnes, exhibits some of these characteristics. Claire appears to have more of the sexual seductive aspects of the Terrible Mother figure. It is suggested that Claire seduced both Tobias and best friend Harry one summer in the past:

What do you really have in common with your best friend . . . 'cept the coincidence of having cheated on your wives in the same summer with the same woman . . . girl . . . woman? What except that? And hardly a distinction. I believe she was upended that whole July.⁶⁸

In her continuing description of "the girl's" action we see the typical orgiastic characteristics of the Terrible Mother:

The distinction would have been to have not: to have been the one or two of the very, very many and oh, God, similar who did not upend the poor . . . unfamiliar thing that dry and oh, so wet July.⁶⁹

Also, since Claire is one of the family her subtle sexual advancements to Tobias carry an incestuous tone. She is described

⁶⁷ A Delicate Balance, p. 37.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

as raising her two arms in "a casual invitation"⁷⁰ to Tobias as she lies on the floor. Later in the plays she admits, again subtly and casually, that she loves Tobias: "...You love Agnes and Agnes loves Julia and Julia loves me and I love you. We all love each other; yes we do."⁷¹

Agnes, too, contributes a description of Claire, adding to her promiscuous Terrible seductive Goddess image, "Even in her teens, your Auntie Claire had her own and very special ways, was very . . . advanced."⁷² The final convincing factor, completely casting Claire in this role, is her story of her attempt to buy a topless bathing suit. The Mother Goddess as described by Neumann is usually depicted as exhibiting her breasts.

The two sisters combine all the characteristics of the domineering seductive Mother. Agnes and Claire, in fact, are reminiscent of the two mythical sisters in the Australian folk tale described by Eliade. The two sisters who represent dual mothers are eventually swallowed and disgorged by the Great Snake--thus establishing the pattern of death and rebirth.⁷³

Placing the three women of the family--Julia, Agnes and Claire--together we have three typical figures who play a role in a young man's life. Reik names them the child, the woman,

⁷⁰ Delicate Balance, p. 31.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 46.

⁷² Ibid., p. 93.

⁷³ Eliade, pp. 48-49.

and the siren. The three females from Albee's drama portray these roles as do the three women in Offenbach's The Tales of Hoffmann. These are the types Reik explains whom every young man meets and finds attractive in different ways--appealing to the playful, affectionate, and sensual parts in him.⁷⁴ It is this combination of womanly aspects that the Great Mother archetype encompasses. Thus, the three women of A Delicate Balance together could be seen as the archetypal figure.

Tobias takes up the part of the male who is floundering about, lost, "out-of-the-womb" and in need of a return or rebirth. The young son Teddy (as discussed in Chapter One) is already hopelessly lost before the play begins. His possible homosexual tendencies expressed by Julia suggest that he would never seek rebirth through incestuous relations with his mother; therefore, there is no hope of a resurrection for him. If there is to be a rebirth to a further development of the male aspect it must be enacted by Tobias. Tobias does, indeed, present a picture of a weak male rejected from the womb. He could not stand the withdrawal of love by his cat--a typical aspect of the Terrible Mother--and reacts as an emasculated male to the domineering aspects of all the women in his household. When angered by Agnes he does not throw his glass at her but tells her, "I shall sit very quietly . . ." and Agnes adds, ". . .as always . . ."⁷⁵

⁷⁴Reik, "The Three Women in a Man's Life," p. 152.

⁷⁵Delicate Balance, p. 17.

Claire, too, adds to this castrated picture of Tobias by describing his protests to their arguments as "ineffectual stop-it-now's."⁷⁶

Tobias, himself, seems to be at least unconsciously aware that he has been put out of the womb and cannot return; "Once you drop . . .you can come back up part way . . .but never . . .really back again. Always . . .descent."⁷⁷ And Agnes confirms that he indeed has been expelled from the womb. She tells him, ". . .You are not young now, and you do not live at home."⁷⁸ She informs him rather that he now lives in the "dark sadness."⁷⁹

There is much longing by all the characters in this drama to return to the womb. Julia, incensed with the idea of being put out of her room by Harry and Edna, in her frustration asks Claire, "Harry and Edna: what do they want?"⁸⁰ Claire explains that they, like everyone else, want what they can't have--the security of the womb:

Succor.

Comfort.

Warmth. A special room with a night light, or the door ajar so you can look down the hall from the bed and see that Mommy's door is open.⁸¹

⁷⁶Delicate Balance, p. 24.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 33.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 135.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 99.

⁸¹Ibid.

When Julia protests that it is her room, Claire explains,
 "It's . . . the room."⁸²

Claire, herself, narrates that her drinking problem stems from the same need:

. . . You hate with the same green stinking sickness you feel your bowels have turned into . . . yourself, and everybody. Hate, and, oh, God!! You want love, l-o-v-e, so badly--comfort and snuggling is what you really mean, of course--but you hate . . .⁸³

From the very beginning of A Delicate Balance, the reader is given hints about the plague which is coming and must be faced. Claire asks Tobias if he would give Harry the "shirt off your back," and makes implications about the unknown terror:
 ". . . No one to admit to that--now and then--you're suddenly frightened and you don't know why?"⁸⁴ After Harry and Edna arrive because they are "FRIGHTENED" Claire muses with "(A small, sad chuckle) I was wondering when it would begin . . . when it would start."⁸⁵ Claire, also, contends that they are all waiting for the sacrifice or to see how the plague will be met by the male element: "Waiting. The room; the doctor's office, beautiful unconcern; intensive study of the dreadful curtains; absorption in Field and Stream, waiting for the Bi-op-see."⁸⁶

⁸²Delicate Balance, p. 99.

⁸³Ibid., p. 32.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 31.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 58.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 95.

It is Agnes, finally, who adopts the role of the helpful Mother. It is she who forces Tobias to face the plague squarely, make the decision about Harry and Edna, and die to his old indecisive emasculated self in order to be reborn. She tells Tobias that they will do, "Whatever you like. Naturally."⁸⁷ She tells him that the women "let our . . . men decide the moral issues."⁸⁸ Ultimately, she forces Tobias to decide whether or not he will allow Harry and Edna to stay and thus have the plague brought in. She says, "I don't care very much what choice you've got, my darling, but I am concerned with what choice you make."⁸⁹

Compelled at last to face up to the plague which Harry and Edna have brought and subsequently his possible death: "The plague, my darling, the terror sitting in the room upstairs? Well, if we are, then . . . on with it! And if we're not . . . well, why not be infected, why not die of it?"⁹⁰ Tobias decides to let both Harry and Edna and the plague remain. It is a very painfully reached decision. Near hysterics, Tobias shouts at Harry:

YES! OF COURSE! I WANT YOU HERE!
I HAVE BUILT THIS HOUSE! I WANT YOU IN IT!
I WANT YOUR PLAGUE! YOU'VE GOT SOME TERROR
WITH YOU? BRING IT IN!

⁸⁷ A Delicate Balance, p. 145.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 138.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 157.

· · · · ·
 YOU BRING YOUR TERROR AND YOU COME IN HERE
 AND LIVE WITH US!

YOU BRING YOUR PLAGUE!
 YOU STAY WITH US!
 I DON'T WANT YOU HERE!
 I DON'T LOVE YOU!
 BUT BY GOD . . . YOU STAY!!⁹¹

Tobias, then, has faced death and will be reborn. Harry and Edna, however, are retreating; they cannot face it directly. Consequently things will continue as always for them. They are not even able to make love. Harry tells Tobias:

I got out of bed and I . . . crawled in
 with Edna?

· · · · ·
 She held me. She let me stay awhile, then I
 could see she wanted to, and I didn't . . . so I
 went back. But it was funny.⁹²

Edna tells Julia her version of the story:

He . . . he came to my bed last night, got in with
 me, I . . . let him stay, and talk. I let him think
 I . . . wanted to make love; he . . . it pleases him,
 I think--to know he would be wanted, if he . . .⁹³

They cannot even seem to retreat to the comfort and simulated womb-like environment of sexual intercourse. They will have no rebirth or even be able to find the comfort of a Mother-type love. Edna says:

It's sad to know you've gone through it all, or
 most of it, without . . . that the only one body
 you've wrapped your arms around . . . the only
 skin you've ever known . . . is your own--and
 that it's dry . . . and not warm.⁹⁴

⁹¹ A Delicate Balance, pp. 165 & 167.

⁹² Ibid., p. 161.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 168.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 169.

After his painful ordeal, Tobias is promised a new day-- his long night has passed. As at the conclusion of Virginia Woolf, the new day is Sunday, and Agnes says, "Come now; we can begin the day."⁹⁵

To be completely fair, however, we must consider that this masculine rebirth may be only partial. Although we are assured of some type of rebirth and there are promises of a new dawn, there is some question about Tobias' complete surrender to the incestuous aspect. Although he did yield to Claire earlier (remembering that hot July), he does not seem able to do so now. He answers Agnes in what we believe to be all honesty that he "never goes to Claire."⁹⁶ Although he does not deny that he has at one time had sexual relations with Claire, the plague or death he undergoes now does not seem to be directly connected to that past experience.

Also, Tobias in the conclusion seems to have some doubts as to the effectiveness of his actions and is only half-heartedly assured by Claire and Julia that he "tried" and was "honest." Finally, Agnes appears to be beginning where she left off, musing about going insane. Although the male element has developed and is better off at the conclusion, we feel that most likely not as complete a transformation occurred as in Virginia Woolf.

⁹⁵A Delicate Balance, p. 175.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 132.

Tiny Alice provides the reader of Albee with his most striking and obvious reenactment of the young son desiring the Mother figure and consequently being destroyed through her. The desire-death-rebirth pattern is complete in this drama. In addition, Tiny Alice has the dubious distinction of being perhaps Albee's most controversial play. Most reviewers express a combination of bewilderment as to message, praise and disparagement for Tiny Alice. Just to reconfirm, once again, this mythological-psychological approach in studying the male development in Albee, we can "connect" once more to Albee's own feeling about the play. Henry Hewes in Saturday Review says Albee, like Julian, is not sure how much of the play is real and how much is dreamed, imagined, or hallucinated. Hewes also quotes Albee as saying that the characters rather create themselves from perhaps an "unwritten outline in my unconscious."⁹⁷

Albee, himself, then is at least vaguely aware of some of the unconscious elements coming through in his work--Tiny Alice in particular. The general public and critics who are not aware of the archetypal elements and patterns called up from the unconscious and freely employed here would, indeed, be confused. However, once having recognized the Terrible Mother figure, her use and its implications are most apparent in Tiny Alice.

⁹⁷ Henry Hewes, "The Tiny Alice Caper," Saturday Review, (January 30, 1965), p. 38.

Miss Alice is the perfect paradigm of the Terrible Goddess. We learn late in the play, of course, that Miss Alice is only a representative of the God Alice. This is the only Albee play where the woman goddess herself is actually presented--the previous dramas used only symbolic representations of the Mother Goddess. Miss Alice plays mainly the role of the beautiful seductress--luring Julian sexually from the very beginning. On their first encounter Miss Alice encourages him to relate vividly his sexual encounter with the woman inmate who believed herself to be the Blessed Virgin. She also subtly offers herself to Julian:

I . . . am a very beautiful woman.

 And a very rich one.

 And I live here in all these rooms.⁹⁸

She also promises Julian in this meeting what is to come: "I'll send for you, we'll havepleasant afternoons, you and I" ⁹⁹

We see Miss Alice at the end of this act also as the destructive Mother. Her answer to the lawyer's question if there is "anything standing in the way that can't be destroyed" is "No. Nothing." ¹⁰⁰

She continues her sexual advancements toward Julian and even

⁹⁸ Edward Albee, Tiny Alice (New York: A Pocket Cardinal edition, 1966), pp. 62-63.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

admits to both the Lawyer and the Butler that she "will like . . . spread [ing] my legs for the clergy. . . ." ¹⁰¹ Miss Alice stimulates Julian to such a degree that he reveals his long-desired daydream of martyrdom to her in a vividly sexual description:

. . . I could entrance [sic] myself, and see the gladiator on me, his trident fork against my neck, and hear, even hear, as much as feel, the prongs as they entered me; the . . . the beast's saliva dripping from the yellow teeth, the slack sides of the mouth, the . . . sweet, warm breath of the lion; great paws on my spread arms . . . even the rough leather of the pads; and to the point of . . . as the great mouth opened, the breath no longer warm but hot, the fangs on my jaw and forehead, positioned . . . IN. And as the fangs sank in, the great tongue on my cheek and eye, the splitting of the bone, and the blood . . . just before the great sound, the coming dark and the silence. I could . . . experience it all. And was . . . engulfed. ¹⁰²

Julian's narration of his fantasy becomes all entangled with his actual sexual experience as he continues in his self-induced trance:

Bathed . . . my groin. And as the thumbs of the gladiator pressed . . . against . . . my neck, I . . . as the lion's belly pressed on my chest, I . . . as the . . . I . . . or as the woman sank . . . on the mossy hillock by the roses, and the roar is the crunching growl is the moan is the swear-breathing is the . . . ¹⁰³

At the conclusion of this narration when Julian's evident seduction is ultimately accomplished, Miss Alice's unmistakable

¹⁰¹ Tiny Alice, P. 77.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 122.

role as the Terrible Mother is dramatically emphasized. As Julian mumbles about a sacrifice on the altar, Miss Alice with her back to the audience, in Albee's directions, ". . .takes her gown and, spreading her arms slowly, opens the gown wide; it is the unfurling of great wings . . ." Julian, after uttering a "dying cry," kneels within "the great wings" and Miss Alice "enfolds him" telling him, "You will be hers; you will sacrifice yourself to her . . ." ¹⁰⁴

Erich Neumann says that the bird is but another symbol of the uroboric (totally unconscious) Great Mother. The vulture is a symbol used from the ancient worship of the goddess Nut who stands for the Great Mother equipped with a phallus and sometimes a beard. Neumann describes the goddess Nut as the original Great Mother. She is a vulture because she devours corpses or takes the dead back into herself. She is named as "she with outspread wings" and described as the vulture sheltering symbol of heaven: "the generative and food-giving goddess who generates lights, sun, moon, and stars out of nocturnal darkness." ¹⁰⁵

Neumann also relates that this archetypal feminine is the symbol of the creative source of life and is generally held to be a woman and a virgin impregnated by the spirit wind. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Tiny Alice, p. 124.

¹⁰⁵ Erich Neumann, "Art and the Creative Unconscious" in Four Essays by Erich Neumann (New York, 1959), pp. 10-12.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

John Markson, too, emphasizes that Mary was impregnated by the "Logos-Word-Christ which was breathed in her ear."¹⁰⁷ He goes on to elaborate that Julian's sexual seduction is apparently culminated by cunnilingus and in "the posture of submission and worship he may also be considered to accomplish the impregnation, like Mary, by breath."¹⁰⁸ Markson further points out that cunnilingus was performed as a worship act practiced during the reign of Empress Wu Hu (7th Century) in China.¹⁰⁹

Finally, Miss Alice completes the picture of the Mother Goddess by having three lovers--the Lawyer, the Butler and Julian--reminding us of the Trinity. She also talks about "getting . . . into" the Lawyer with " . . . deep, gouging hurt . . ." ¹¹⁰ recalling the previously mentioned Aztec piercing with arrows.

Julian is just as unquestionably the young son who must be sacrificed as Miss Alice is the Terrible Mother. He begins the play as what Markson calls the "asexual child."¹¹¹ The Lawyer jokes with Butler describing lay brother Julian as "our bird of prey. Pray. P-R-A-Y."¹¹² As described before,

¹⁰⁷ John W. Markson, Tiny Alice: Edward Albee's Negative Oedipal Enigma, American Imago, XXXIII (1966), 16.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Tiny Alice, p. 74.

¹¹¹ Markson, p. 5.

¹¹² Tiny Alice, p. 45.

Julian himself desires "to serve" and "to be sacrificed" and often repeats this throughout the play.

At the beginning, also, Julian is attempting to reject the carnal desires of the flesh--he is a lay brother and celibate. It does not take long for Miss Alice, however, to coax from him his admission and detailed description of his real or imagined sexual encounter with the woman believing herself to be the Blessed Virgin. In the beginning also it is implied that Julian has a homosexual relationship with the Cardinal--this being the reason that he (breaking all precedents--he being only a lay brother) is appointed the Cardinal's private secretary. Here we are reminded of Jerry (and perhaps Teddy) who chose the homosexual position to avoid succumbing to any incestuous desires for the mother. These young men, remember, are successful in sublimating any sexual desire or action toward the mother and die with no promise for a rebirth.

We see immediately in this drama that the rebirth must come from Julian--the other males are all stagnant and under the control of the Mother figure. The Cardinal has chosen homosexual behavior, and although the Lawyer has apparently outgrown his homosexuality (he was known at school as hyena because the hyena would chew into its prey "through the anus") he is no longer allowed to make love to Miss Alice. Pushing the Lawyer away

Miss Alice describes him as dead:

That your body is as impersonal as your
 . . .self--dry, uncaring, rubbery . . .dead.
 Ah . . .there . . .that is what I loathe about
 you most: you're dead. Moving pushing selfish
 dry dead . . .113

Over and over Julian's actions mark him as the hero to be sacrificed. In the beginning of Act Two, Butler cautions the Lawyer who is attempting to make love to Miss Alice that Julian " . . .will be with us presently. He's peeing. So I suggest-- unless you're doing this for his benefit--uh, you stop."¹¹⁴ Geza Roheim in discussing Australian folk myths concerning the young boy's entering manhood says that in the beginning the infant and the mother are alone and only gradually does the child become aware of the father. The urine represents semen to the child and he urinates to rival the father.¹¹⁵ Thus, Julian assumes the part of the son caught in the Oedipal triangle having to compete with the Father (Lawyer) for the object of his affections--the Mother.

Julian, of course, resembles Christ. Henry Hewes says that Julian does indeed paraphrase the words of Jesus but rather than being Jesus relates himself to Christ in his hallucinations like so many religious people. His desire to serve and "perhaps . . .be remembered"¹¹⁶ does suggest Christ as well as his untimely

¹¹³ Tiny Alice, p. 74.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

¹¹⁵ Geza Roheim, p. 340.

¹¹⁶ Tiny Alice, p. 118.

death and the sacrifice of his life. Also, dying Julian cries out, "Oh, Alice, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹¹⁷ and finally dies "arms . . . wide in the crucifixion."¹¹⁸ Then, too, there is Julian's involvement with the patient who believed herself to be Mary and the missing years from his life which is reminiscent of Christ's unknown early years. Jung, too, includes the figure of Christ in discussing the young male's development. Christ, he says, represents the self that contains both light and darkness simultaneously. The Christ figure he feels is an important and central archetype in depicting the young male development.¹¹⁹

Julian approaches the total sacrifice ambiguously. He desires "to serve" but cannot reconcile himself "to the chasm between the nature of God and the use to which men put . . . God."¹²⁰ Instead of becoming a priest he becomes a lay brother. He has taken the vow of celibacy but apparently has broken it with both his fellow inmate at the asylum and with the Cardinal. He seems unable to make the total commitment required for rebirth--a complete surrender and death of the old self.

Gradually, he seems to become at least vaguely aware of what will be required of him. He asks Miss Alice in the beginning of Act Two if there is "anything to be frightened of,"¹²¹ already

¹¹⁷ Tiny Alice, p. 181.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 184.

¹¹⁹ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 368.

¹²⁰ Tiny Alice, p. 43.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 94.

knowing that she will answer in the affirmative. When he finally succumbs to her sexual advances (meeting the requirement of incestuous relations with the Mother figure) he kneels to her being enfolded in her robe murmuring, "Oh my God in heaven . . ." and " . . .in . . .my . . .sacrifice."¹²²

From this point on Julian accepts his fate willingly (he is eager to marry Miss Alice) except for a few minutes of indecision when the end is finally approaching. This indecision seems to spring not really from a reluctance to "ACCEPT"¹²³ his fate on "An act of faith"¹²⁴ but rather a puzzlement as to what his fate means. At first he does not understand and so rebels:

I . . .cannot be so mistaken, to have . . .I cannot have so misunderstood my life; I cannot have . . .was I sane then? Those years? My time in the asylum? WAS THAT WHEN I WAS RATIONAL? THEN?¹²⁵

Finally, however, when the realization that he is to be sacrificed to the Mother Goddess seeps into his consciousness, Julian does become the willing sacrifice and thus will be granted rebirth. In the posture of the crucifixion Julian gives himself to the Mother Goddess:

¹²²Tiny Alice, p. 124.

¹²³Ibid., p. 158.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 162.

The bridegroom waits for thee, my Alice . . . is
 thine. O Lord, my God, I have awaited thee,
 have served thee in thy . . . ALICE? . . . Alice?
 GOD?

I accept thee, Alice, for thou art come to me.
 God, Alice . . . I accept thy will.¹²⁶

Thus, we feel Julian, more than even George and Tobias,
 has reached the epitome of male development--he has willingly
 died through the Mother in order to be reborn. This is the
 ultimate in male development. His rebirth will be a trans-
 formation uniting all levels of the feminine archetype in his
 psyche.¹²⁷

In order to complete the image of the young male returning
 to the Mother to be reborn in this drama there are other perfect
 symbols which should be mentioned. The most obvious is the "huge
 doll's house model" of Miss Alice's castle which Julian notices
 early in the play. Later, Miss Alice tells Julian that her
 castle is a replica of the model and all four of them (the Butler
 and Lawyer included) become involved in a discussion as to
 whether they themselves are in the model or the replica. When
 Julian notices that the Chapel in the model is on fire, the
 Lawyer and Butler rush to the real chapel to put out the flames
 and Miss Alice prays to someone in the model: "I have tried to
 obey what I have not understood, understanding that I must obey.

¹²⁶ Tiny Alice, p. 184.

¹²⁷ This will be elaborated on in detail in the following
 chapter.

Don't destroy! I have tried . . ." ¹²⁸ The reader, like Julian, only gradually begins to discover that the model is the home of the God Alice whom Miss Alice only represents. The wedding itself takes place in the other "dimension." Only when the wedding champagne is being consumed after the toasts "To Alice" and "To their house" ¹²⁹ and lights begin to go on in the model does Julian comprehend that he has been married to the Goddess Alice and will be taken up to her house. The house, of course, according to Neumann, Jung, and other critics, is an ageless symbol for the womb, the container, the Great Mother. As Julian is crucified and "engulfed" in the "presence" of Alice whose heartbeats are "deafening," ¹³⁰ we recall Neumann's description of the Terrible Mother who devours and ensnares, drawing the life of the individual back into herself. ¹³¹

The Pieta (Albee's stage directions) created by Miss Alice and Julian during Julian's final moments is also another typical aspect of the Great Mother. Neumann names both the Goddess Nut and Mary as being the mother of death in this pose, "the Madonna, holding in her lap the dead Jesus, the child of death who has returned to her. She is identical with the primitive vessel and urn that shelter both child and adult." ¹³²

¹²⁸ Tiny Alice, p. 90.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 149.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

¹³¹ Neumann, p. 71.

¹³² Ibid., p. 222.

Julian, unquestionably, represents the young man who has reached the ideal development. George and Tobias also provide a promise of a rebirth--if not the total transformation. The male in Albee's drama then has moved from the denial of an incestuous wish in early dramas (The Zoo Story) and a complete succumbing to female domination (The American Dream, The Death of Bessie Smith and the beginnings of Virginia Woolf and Delicate Balance) to an acceptance of the incestuous desires, death in the Mother and rebirth through her. The movement has definitely been a positive one--the way which must be traveled for ideal maturity. This development provides a complete separation from the unconscious ties of the Mother and grants the male a new existence. Even if Albee's theme were personal at the inception, the struggle which his males must undergo and the level they have obtained is the universal goal for the male. Our next chapter will consider whether or not Albee's males maintain their hard-won objective.

GREAT MOTHER
Rebirth
Virginia Woolf
Delicate Balance
Tiny Alice

(Highest Anima Figure)

Patriarchy East

Movement Toward Patriarchy

Terrible Mother
Martha
Agnes
Miss Alice

Woman=Body=Vessel=World
Erich Neumann

The Great Round

Uroboros-Elementary Feminine Arche-
type

Woman=Mother=Destruction=Rebirth?
or
Womb?

Anima

Edward Albee

West Matriarchy

Oedipus Involvement
Zoo Story
American Dream
Sandbox

Womb
Box
Mao
Zoo Story

Matriarchy West

Regression
No Rebirth

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GREAT ROUND

" . . . No matter how far traveled, one comes back, not circular, not to the starting point, but a . . . setting down again . . ."

Edward Albee - Box

Perhaps the best way to begin to examine the present level in development of Albee's male characters is to reemphasize once again the ideal point of evolution for the male in relation to the Mother figure and what actions are necessary in order to achieve that epitome. This ultimate positive transformation is best summarized once again by Erich Neumann:

We have repeatedly referred to the spiritual aspect of the feminine transformative character, which leads through suffering and death, sacrifice and annihilation, to renewal, rebirth, and immortality. But such transformation is possible only when what is to be transformed enters wholly into the Feminine principle; that is to say, dies in returning to the Mother Vessel, whether this be earth, water, underworld, urn, coffin, cave, mountain, ship, or magic cauldron. Usually several of these containing symbols are combined; but all of them in turn are encompassed in the all-embracing psychic reality, the womb of night or the unconscious . . . but in every case, renewal is possible only through the death of the old personality.¹

The male, as we have explained in Chapter Three, must become a willing victim seduced by the ensnaring Terrible Mother and have incestuous relations with her resulting in his death and ultimate rebirth and transformation through

¹Erich Neumann, The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype, trans. by Ralph Manheim, (New York, 1955), pp. 291-292.

the Great Mother. Albee's males gradually working through the Oedipal attachment, the anima identification, and seduction and death in the Terrible Mother have merited the transformation promised and, seemingly, forthcoming at the conclusions of Virginia Woolf, Delicate Balance, and Tiny Alice. The positive endings imply that Albee's males have completed their psychic journeys and have reached the desired development. Yet there are dangers involved in the young males' dealings with the Mother figure. Ideally, as described by Jung, the hero overcomes and wins his battle, but there is the possibility that he will yield once again to the ensnaring Mother not willing to loose her hold on him. Jung says:

In the morning of life the son tears himself loose from the mother, from the domestic hearth, to rise through battle to his destined heights. Always he imagines his worst enemy in front of him, yet he carries the enemy within himself--a deadly longing for the abyss, a longing to drown in his own source, to be sucked down to the realm of the Mothers. His life is a constant struggle against extinction, a violent yet fleeting deliverance from the ever-lurking night.²

Jung suggests that quite easily the son may not be able to resist the temptation to retreat to the primordial existence of the womb, to resist sinking down into the primitive feminine unconscious. He may not be able to overcome his "own inner longing for stillness and profound peace of all-knowing

²C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. II: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia, trans. R. F. C. Hull, (New York, 1956), pp. 355-356.

nonexistence, for all-seeing sleep in the ocean of coming-to-be and passing away."³

Otto Rank, too, although having a slightly different approach suggests that the male may indeed be content with only returning to the womb. He likens being born to being cast out of the Garden of Eden and feels that man may spend the rest of his life only trying to regain the lost Paradise.⁴

The unconscious mother imago, according to Jung, actually aids the male in this longing to return to her. He says that the mother is often referred to as "she who understands"; understanding is synonymous with the word comprehend, which literally means to seize hold of something and hold it tight in the arms. This is what the mother does with the child when it asks for help or protection. So, the male libido can easily get caught up in the elementary feminine and regress to the sheltering ease of the mother's arms.⁵ Ultimately, Jung says, if the son is to live he must fight and sacrifice his longing for the past in order to rise to his own heights.⁶

Erich Fromm, writing in Psychology Today, feels that our current consumer culture fulfilling every need without effort is likely to ensnare modern man into returning to and remaining in the womb. He describes our present technology as characterizing the Great Mother "who nurses her children and pacifies

³Jung, p. 356.

⁴Otto Rank, Oedipus - Myth and Complex: A Review of Psychoanalytic Theory, ed. by Patrick Mullahy, (New York, 1948), p. 163.

⁵Jung, pp. 306-307.

⁶Ibid., p. 356.

them with a never-ceasing lullaby (in the form of radio and television)."⁷ Man, he feels, can become so secure in receiving the mother's milk that he loses his individuality.

The young generation seems to be no better off. Although they have rejected a complete patriarchy, they have regressed to an infantile pattern emphasized in their passive-receptive attitude seen in the drug obsession and the need to huddle together and touch each other physically. Fromm suggests rather a break from the mother--freeing oneself and culture from the dangers of entrapment in the womb. He calls for a combination of "motherly love by justice and rationality, and fatherly love by mercy and equality."⁸ In other words, he recommends a combination of the matriarchal-patriarchal cultures to create an ideal environment.

Albee's males obtaining their freedom from the Mother figure seem to be promised an improvement in their culture also: Martha becomes subdued, the power appears more equally distributed between Agnes and Tobias, and Tiny Alice has the promise of a whole new existence for the male. However, Albee's males do not seem able to maintain this position and a balance of matriarchal-patriarchal power does not continue. Albee's next plays, Box-Mao-Box, return to the matriarchally-controlled environment dominating his early plays. These plays, like

⁷ Erich Fromm, "Mother," Psychology Today (March, 1971), p. 75.

⁸ Ibid., p. 76.

The Sandbox and The American Dream, have a chaotic nonsensical atmosphere reminding us again of the Theater of the Absurd. The plays cannot be related to on a reality level as Virginia Woolf and A Delicate Balance can. The characters become, as in the early dramas, not real people but rather caricatures--rather symbolic of an attitude or idea than suggestive of a human being. In Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung the only character who is named is Mao and he, rather than portraying a person, seems to represent the male element rendered once again impotent in the female-controlled culture. The other characters who do not speak to or acknowledge each other--except for the Minister who has no lines and only listens to the Long-Winded Lady--have no names. The language itself, once again much like that of The American Dream, is often nonsensical and the characters seem to be obsessed with the semantics of the language rather than the real world the words represent. For example, the Long-Winded Lady spends much of the play wondering what exact sound she made when she fell off the boat and landed in the water and musing as to the difference between death and dying. Indeed, in Box there are no characters at all; only a detached female voice and box on the stage.

As explained in Chapter Two in our dealings with the matriarchy and patriarchy, this chaotic environment along with the static inactive male element indicates a rule by the matriarchy. Albee's males then, even after having reached their ideal point of development, are once again caught up in the matriarchy.

It is necessary to explore to a greater degree the elementary feminine archetype and its implications before further examining the latest male element in Albee. Erich Neumann has done exhaustive study of the feminine archetype considering its presence and meaning from the most primitive times in countless cultures. Neumann explains the symbol of the uroboros or the circular snake biting its tail as a symbol of the Great Round (elementary archetypal form of the Great Mother)--a symbol of the original situation in which:

Man's consciousness and ego were still small and undeveloped . . . in which positive and negative, male and female, elements of consciousness, elements hostile to consciousness, and unconscious elements are intermingled. In this sense the uroboros is also a symbol of a state in which chaos, the unconscious, and the psyche as a whole were undifferentiated.⁹

Jung's reference to the circular symbol is quite similar to Neumann's description of the elementary feminine archetype. He says the circular movement has the moral significance of activating all the light and dark forces of human nature, and all the psychological opposites.¹⁰

Neumann explains the various levels which can develop out of the totally unconscious uroboros. The next step is the uroboric Great Mother eliminating the masculine aspect but

⁹Neumann, p. 18.

¹⁰Jolande Jacobi, The Psychology of C. G. Jung, trans. K. W. Bash (New Haven, 1942), pp. 135-136.

containing all aspects of the feminine archetype--the witch, the virgin, etc.--but without order and making it impossible for the ego to predict or apprehend. The following level lies between the conscious and unconscious. Here there is an order. The Mother archetype has three forms: the good, the terrible, and the good-bad mother. The good-bad mother is the Great Mother which makes possible a union of positive and negative attributes.¹¹ It is this level, of course, which calls to mind the level in which Albee's male characters are captured by the archetype. The Mother figure associated with them at its best is a combination of the good and the bad: a seductive figure luring the male causing him to die but ultimately granting him rebirth. Miss Alice and the God Alice are the most perfect examples of this level of the mother figure found in Albee. Martha, Agnes, and Claire would also qualify.

Neumann goes on to explain the higher planes in the development of the mother archetype. The last two phases are more involved with the ego and the projection of the inner archetype upon the world. Remembering Neumann's discussion of the creative man (included in the Introduction) we feel that Albee as a creative man most likely is caught up in the archetypal feminine and reflects this thus upon the male characters. The level dealing with the three forms most likely is the highest

¹¹Neumann, p. 21.

level obtained in Albee's drama.

In addition, once again, Albee himself suggests the presence of unconscious elements in his drama. He cautions the audience to react to his plays (Box and Mao) on a feeling level rather than in intellectual one. He says:

All that one need do is--quite simply--relax and let the plays happen. That, and be willing to approach the dramatic experience without a preconception of what the nature of the dramatic experience should be.¹²

Instead, however, of remaining on the plane of the division of the mother archetype into the three forms, Albee's males as illustrated in Box - Mao - Box allow themselves to be "sucked down" again to the womb-like existence of the Great Round symbolized by the uroboros. Neumann describes the nature of this elementary level of the archetype:

As elementary character we designate the aspect of the Feminine that as the Great Round, the Great Container, tends to hold fast to everything that springs from it and to surround it like an eternal substance. Everything born of it belongs to it and remains subject to it; and even if the individual becomes independent, the Archetypal Feminine relativizes this independence into a nonessential variant of her own perpetual behavior.¹³

Neumann feels also that this elementary character is typical of matriarchy. This, indeed, proves to be the case in Box and Mao. Albee's males have not been able to maintain control or remain at their achieved peak of development. Talking

¹²Edward Albee, Introduction to Box and Quotations from Mao Tse Tung: Two Inter-related Plays (New York: Pocket Book edition, 1970), p. 8.

¹³Neumann, p. 25.

about the male ego which cannot break free from the elementary unconscious, Neumann says that the ego unable to achieve independence responds to psychic gravitation: "It sinks back into the unconscious or circles as a satellite around the Archetypal feminine."¹⁴ So it goes with the male characters in Albee's plays; they free themselves from the matriarchy only to be captured by it again and they gain rebirth only to eventually return to the womb or ureboric unconscious. The circular snake is a splendid graphic description of the struggles and entrapment of Albee's male element in the Great Round.

To emphasize this we can refer again to Neumann's description of the male's struggle. We find that the transformative character drives toward development bringing movement and unrest. Consequently it contains negative as well as positive elements. A struggle to overcome the static domination and achieve transformation must take place.¹⁵ We can trace this struggle through the Oedipal and anima involvements in Albee's early works to the seduction and death of the young son (the negative aspect) up to the promises of rebirth (Virginia Woolf, Delicate Balance, Tiny Alice).

However, Neumann cautions that the Archetypal Feminine not only "bears and directs life as a whole . . . but also takes

¹⁴Neumann, p. 28.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 29-31.

everything that is born of it back into its womb of origination and death."¹⁶ He says that where the elementary character is dominant all change still takes place within the unconscious and an "ego-consciousness" quality exists for only a brief time before it is redissolved in the unconscious: "the uroboros of the beginning is not only the Round but also the wheel rolling upon itself and the serpent which at once bears, begets, and devours."¹⁷

The anima, which we discussed in Chapter One, is generally seen as a helping figure. Both Jung and Neumann feel that she can be the helping element which leads the male toward transformation. She often provides dangerous tasks which must be completed or a trial the male must withstand. Ultimately, she is defeated. We can see Martha and Agnes especially in this role. However, Neumann warns that if the maternal uroboros is in command the male may be destroyed.¹⁸ This most likely is the case for Albee's males.

Again, as with the negative (or Terrible) Mother archetype, the dangerous anima may bring about positive change. As we detailed in Chapter One, Albee's females, if considered as anima projections, evolve from the lowest anima level of

¹⁶ Neumann, p. 30.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 33-36.

Eve (the purely instinctual, biological woman) represented in Mommy of The Sandbox and The American Dream to the highest anima figure Sapiientia (wisdom transcending even the most holy and the most pure) suggested by a female who has reached the level of a God in Tiny Alice. But, because apparently the break has not been made from the primitive maternal uroboros, the anima leads Albee's males back down to the gaping womb. If there is an anima figure in Box or Mao it most likely would be the Long-Winded Lady. She is much concerned with the size of her late husband's genitals ("His scrotum was large, and not only for a small man, I think, as I remember back . . ." ¹⁹) and the biological functions--her obsession with the exact sound she produced when falling into the ocean and her descriptions of the event are reminiscent of a child being born. The anima figure also has returned to the lowest level of development to the anima on the sexual-biological level. The box itself seems to represent the dominant feminine element of these plays. In this case the lowest stage of anima development (Eve) is not even employed. Only the most primitive concept of the feminine--the Great Round, the container--is brought to mind by the box and its detached voice.

Indeed, the obvious symbolism of the womb suggested by the box immediately indicates that a retreat has been made in these plays to this place of security. In addition to the word "box" being a slang term for the female genitals, Albee's

¹⁹ Albee, Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung, p. 76.

stage directions call for the "cube" to "take up almost all of a small stage opening"²⁰ --symbolically suggesting engulfment in the Great Round. If there is any doubt remaining that this cube represents the womb it is distilled quickly as the female voice describes this place of security:

Nicely done. Well put . . .

(Pause)

. . .together. Box

(Three-second silence. More conversational now)

Room inside for a sedia d'ondalo, which, in English--for that is Italian--would be, is, rocking chair. Room to rock. And room to move about in . . . some. Enough.²¹

And later when again describing the box we have the distinct feeling of an embryo inside the mother's womb: "And room enough to move around, except like a fly. That would be very good!"²² Finally, the wistful longing in naming this place, "Beautiful, beautiful box,"²³ exemplifies the desire for existence in the security of the womb.

Almost everything in these dual plays indicates a retreat to the womb, a regression to matriarchal domination, and a willing engulfment by the male element in the uroboric feminine. As previously mentioned, these dramas are a return to the static stagnant environment indicative of a controlling matriarchy as in the early Albee plays. The monologue given

²⁰ Box, p. 17.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

²² Ibid., p. 17.

²³ Ibid., p. 21.

by the detached female voice only serves to exaggerate this situation. The voice tells us that the arts are "going out" and that "Many arts" are "all craft now . . .and going further."²⁴ We see that there seems to be no male initiative, only a maintaining of the static matriarchy represented by the "crafts" instead of the creative arts. The voice continues to elaborate on this situation telling us of the barrenness of such a society: "Nature abhors, among so many, so much else . . . amongst so much, us, itself, they say, vacuum."²⁵

We finally feel the empty hopelessness of this situation when the voice tells us:

Seven hundred million babies died in the time it takes, took, to knead the dough to make a proper loaf. Well, little wonder so many . . . went . . .cut off, said no instead of hanging on.
(Three-second silence)
Apathy, I think.²⁶

There certainly is no opportunity presented for rebirth here: the millions of dead babies symbolize the death of all hope.

Yet there seems to be a knowledge of what is needed to remedy this situation. The voice suggests a need for a return to the patriarchy. With a "(Light, self-mocking laugh)" the voice recalls those days "when it was simple"²⁷ and longs for those authoritarian times: "The beauty of art is order-- not what is familiar, necessarily, but order . . .on its own terms."²⁸

²⁴ Box, p. 19.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

When the voice mentions the "small cracks"²⁹ we are reminded of the birth canal. In fact the whole speech here concerned with art beginning "to hurt" cannot help but remind us once again that rebirth is not granted without suffering. Apparently, in Box both the arts and the suffering have been abandoned and the male element chooses instead a retreat to the safety of the womb. It is as Otto Rank has suggested: man after traveling down the "small crack" and experiencing birth seems to be spending the rest of his days seeking a way to return to this spot. Man seems to have given up trying for rebirth--the voice tells us, ". . .It's only when you can't come back . . ." ³⁰--and seeks only to gain the womb once more.

The retreat to the engulfing uroboric quality of the feminine is suggested in the ocean imagery which seems to emerge from the unconscious:

What was it used to frighten me? Bell buoys
and sea gulls; the sound of them, at night, in a
fog, when I was very young.

(A little laugh)

Before I had ever seen them, before I had heard
them.

(Some wonder)

But I knew what they were . . .a thousand miles
from the sea. Landlocked, never been, and yet
the sea sounds . . .³¹ [dots in original]

²⁹
Box, p. 23.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

³¹ Ibid.

(Silence, except for the sound of bell buoys and sea gulls. Very slow fading of lights to black, sound of bell buoys and sea gulls fading with the light)³⁴

The only hope offered in this ending of bleak return to the darkness is the "one" bird moving "in the opposite way" from the "black net . . .skimming."³⁵ However, the bird is a Great Mother symbol and movement by her probably does not indicate any change in the fate of the male element.

The primordial ocean imagery is again called into play in Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. To properly emphasize the importance of the ocean symbolism as an aspect of the uroboric Great Mother let us turn once again to both Jung and Neumann. In discussing the water symbolism in a patient's dream Jung said, in this particular case, it was significant that the deadly flood flowed back into the fissure, back into the mother again, for it was from the mother that death came into the world in the first place. He continues that the Deluge is simply a "counterpart of the all-vivifying and all-producing water, of the ocean, which is the origin of all things."³⁶

Neumann explains that in countless myths the source of all life is the primordial ocean emphasized by darkness. He

³⁴ Box, p. 29.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Jung, p. 365.

says it is this primordial darkness, "which bears the light as moon, stars, and sun, and almost everywhere these luminaries are looked upon as the offspring of the Nocturnal Mother."³⁷

Neumann later attributes all water symbolism to the Great Mother:

The Great Goddess is the flowing unity of subterranean and celestial primordial water, the sea of heaven on which sail the barks of the gods of light, the circular life-generating ocean above and below the earth. To her belong all water, streams, fountains, ponds, and springs, as well as rain. She is the ocean of life with its life--and death--bringing seasons, and life is her child, a fish eternally swimming inside her, like the stars in the celestial ocean of the Mexican Mayaul and like men in the fishpool of Mother Church--a late manifestation of the same archetype.³⁸

Ultimately, Neumann says the primordial ocean is a "uroboric snake encompassing the earth that is born of it, and at the end of the world taking everything born of it back into its primordial waters."³⁹

Mao takes place on "deck of an ocean liner" in "Bright daylight, that particular kind of brightness that is possible only in mid-ocean."⁴⁰ This fact in itself points to a return to the Great Round if we remember that Albee's first play written at age twelve also took place on board an ocean liner. Then, too, Neumann reminds us that the cradle and crib

³⁷ Neumann, p. 212.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 222.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁰ Mao, p. 39.

symbolism of the ship belongs "like the life-preserving ark of Noah, to the vessel symbolism of the Feminine."⁴¹ Neumann explains that the ship can represent simultaneously the uterus in which the sleeping embryo rocks on the primeval ocean and the ship of death which "leads back to the swaying, gliding somnolent rhythm of childhood, of the primordial ocean and the night."⁴²

The ancient ritual of burying the dead on a boat is based on this belief that the ocean is both loving mother as well as the devouring primeval water. The ocean then is a perfect symbol of the Great Round who gives life but ultimately draws it back into herself. A more appropriate symbol could not be employed in this Edward Albee play where the male element, unable to maintain its present development, is drawn back into the elementary Mother archetype and seeks succor in the womb instead of rebirth and immortality.

As we determined in Chapter Two, there is a definite return to matriarchal control. Mao takes up the role of the patriarchate and presents the United States or the West as the matriarchy which must fall. However, his impotent haranguing apparently will have no effect. While he insists that the

⁴¹Neumann, p. 256.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 256-257.

matriarchy must "fall" when it is "hit"⁴³ nothing which happens (indeed, the only action which takes place is the Long-Winded Lady's fall) indicates that the matriarchy will be overthrown. Mao proposes violence as the means to rebel against the oppression and take command:

But there is only one way to eliminate it and that is to oppose war with war, to oppose counter-revolutionary war with revolutionary war, to oppose national counter-revolutionary war with national revolutionary war, to oppose counter-revolutionary class war with revolutionary class war.⁴⁴

However, the play ends with Mao still calling for violence: "People of the world, unite and defeat the U.S. aggressors and all their running dogs"⁴⁵ and apparently nothing is going to happen. At one point he betrays his own unconscious longings for the peace and security to be found in retreating to the womb:

When human society advances to the point where classes and states are eliminated, there will be no more wars, counter-revolutionary or revolutionary, unjust or just. That will be the era of perpetual peace for mankind.⁴⁶

Seemingly there will be no surge of male initiative and Mao, like the males of the early Albee plays, will continue his same static existence in matriarchally-controlled environment. The only other male in this drama, remember, is the Minister

⁴³ Mao, p. 71.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 106-107.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 118.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 107.

who has no lines and must only listen to the Long-Winded Lady. Both the Minister and the Long-Winded Lady remind us of the Mommy and Daddy characters in The Sandbox and The American Dream. Their relationship with the submissive male listening meekly while the domineering female prattles on in a nonsensical manner is an almost exact replica of the Mommy-Daddy relationship. This similarity offers one more piece of evidence supporting the concept of a retreating movement taking place by Albee's male.

The Long-Winded Lady, while adopting the roles of the domineering matriarch and the lowest sexual-biological anima figure, also, like the male element, projects a desire for a return to the womb. She is much obsessed with her falling from the ship; and her musings about the exact sound she made, and descriptions of this action clearly suggest the imagery of birth. For example:

Though not the sound I knew, for I was hardly thinking--but the sound I imagine someone else would have manufactured had he been there when I . . . [dots in original] WOOOOSHH!! PLUT!!⁴⁷

Other speeches also emphasize her terror of being put out of the womb and her desire to go back to that place of safety. She describes her attempt to dream about falling to see if it were true that if you didn't wake up before you landed you would die. She relates:

⁴⁷Mao, p. 57.

... Once, I dreamt of falling straight up . . .
[dots in original] or out, all in reverse, like the
projector running backwards, what they used to do,
for fun, in the shorts.

(Some wonder)

Falling . . . [dots in original] up!

.
Falling . . . up!

.
Not rising, you understand: a definite . . .
[dots in original] falling, but . . . [dots in original]
up!⁴⁸

She seems to make a conscious effort to attempt rebirth through death but even in her dream she is not able to detach herself from the uroboric safety of the womb to face death and rebirth. Any movement away from the womb is most frightening to her, indeed, has become an obsession. She tells us she is "even less" fond of depths than heights. Again, a probable indication of her fear of being born or going down.

The fact that a woman character also seems to be desiring to return to the womb like the male also confirms our belief that Albee's characters are returning to the uroboric unconscious. The first stage, as we have previously stated, does not allow for a separation of the male and female aspects; all are intertwined and related as symbolized by the Earth Mother with a beard.

⁴⁸ Mao, pp. 60-62.

Finally, in her narration the Long-Winded Lady reveals that she fell from the ship into the ocean and was rescued. When she speaks of being "dragged in" and "hauled up" we liken her near-disaster to a baptism. This too only confirms this incessant longing to return to the womb. Neumann says the pre-Christian plunge both signifies return to "the mysterious uterus of the Great Mother and its water of life."⁴⁹ In Christianity, he reports, the baptismal bath is a return to "the primordial egg of the beginning."⁵⁰ Besides being a vessel of positive transformation, Neumann says, the vessel can lead downward to hell.⁵¹

The Long-Winded Lady also refuses to be concerned with "death" but only the aspect of "dying" of her husband's end. Ideally the death should provide the vehicle for rebirth but here this is not the case. There will be no male rebirth and the emphasis is placed only upon the process of dying. Again, consciously this Mother figure seems to desire a rebirth--a new life from the male death--and wonders aloud about it:

But, wouldn't you think a death would relate
to a life? . . . [dots in original] if not resemble
it, benefit from it? Be taught? In some way? I
would think
.
Be taught? In some way?
.
I would think.⁵²

⁴⁹Neumann, p. 326.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Mao, pp. 79-80.

So, we see that even though a conscious desire exists for the greater development it will not occur.

Albee's males in returning to their original unconscious state still seem to have overcome their Oedipal attachment to the Mother. The Old Woman illustrates this. As she recites her poem we learn that her favorite son Charley (in fact, all of her children) has abandoned her to seek a love relationship with his mate:

Still I worked for Charley, for Charley was now my all;
 And Charley was pretty good to me, with scarce a word
 or frown,
 Til at last he went a-courtin', and brought a wife from
 town.⁵³

She spends the entire play reciting her poem about how she was finally deserted by all her children and is now on her way, "Over the hill to the poor-house." This rejection of the mother most likely is a positive growth for the male because he ultimately must break free if he is to avoid being drawn back down into the mother as is happening in this drama.

Both the conclusion of Mao and the repetition of the ending of Box show us definitely that the male element has indeed yielded to the Great Round in these dramas. The Long-Winded Lady, after being retrieved from the sea, says she has "nothing to die for,"⁵⁴ indicating that she expects no rebirth

⁵³Mao, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 118.

but only a total immersion in the uroboros. Portions of Box are again replayed emphasizing again that art "hurts" and that music is not listened to anymore "because we cry."⁵⁵ The distinct feeling of being drawn into the Mother is created by the sad musing about the sea sounds and the admission of being frightened by them. Ultimately the sad voice ceases with the final word, "Box"⁵⁶ and there is:

(Silence, except for the sound of bell buoys and sea gulls. Very slow fading of lights to black, sound of bell buoys and sea gulls fading with the light)⁵⁷

Although the immersion into the uroboric Great Mother is complete for the male in this play, the fact that there is "just one bird . . . [dots in original] moving beneath . . . [dots in original] in the opposite way,"⁵⁸ and that there is a longing for "Order!"⁵⁹ expressed by the voice promises perhaps a chance for Albee's males to retrieve their ideal point of development in later plays.

To more fully view the cycle or "coming back" of Albee's males let us once more review the male's movements. Remember even the Mother figures considered as anima projections make a complete circle. They move from the lowest instinctual

⁵⁵Box, p. 123.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 125.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 123.

biological level (Eve) represented in the Mommies of early Albee (The Sandbox and The American Dream) to the second level (Helen of Troy) being on a romantic aesthetic level as Miss Alice. They continue to the level of spiritual devotion (Blessed Virgin) best presented by Agnes, and finally reach the fourth or highest level (Sapientia, wisdom) in the God Alice. At this point also Albee's males reach the epitome of their psychic development-- a complete transformation. Then as the males return to the uroboric Mother archetype in Box and Mao, the anima figure also descends once more to the lowest (and below) anima level--the biological, instinctual.

All other progression in a similar manner seems to reverse and regress to almost its starting point. As just discussed the atmosphere changes from the hard-won patriarchal rule back to the chaotic matriarchy wherein the male is dominated and squelched by the maternal feminine power.

This conflict is symbolized and paralleled in the East-West battle which is emphasized mainly in Albee's first (Zoo Story) and last (Box-Mao) plays. Jerry, remember, cannot escape the West or the womb even though he tries to walk northerly and the impotent Mao in the latest drama will not be able to overcome the powerful West either in spite of his incessant rantings. The males find themselves also in this aspect come full circle back to their beginning--enveloped in the West (devouring night, primordial Mother).

The male development itself progresses from a seemingly superficial Oedipal involvement (exhibited mainly in The Zoo Story and The American Dream) to incorporation of anima elements (present in most of the plays) on up to the important and fatal entrapment by the seductive Terrible Mother--epitomized in Tiny Alice. At this point the Terrible Mother evolves into the Great Mother who grants the son rebirth and immortality through death. Instead of maintaining this victorious peak, Albee's males succumb to the uroboros and retreat to the painless and stagnant security of the womb in Box and Mao.

All of these aspects remain fairly well parallel. All of them too could be represented graphically by the great uroboric snake biting its own tail "bearing, begetting, devouring." As the Pedrinis' reference to Howey indicates the serpent represents immortality, eternity, and even a symbol of God. The coil of the serpent represents the circle of eternity and seeing the world as eternal.⁶⁰ Ideally, however, the complete cycle of development indicates that a renewal or rebirth is necessary in order for the "cycle of life" or "eternity" to be fully carried through. The ideal development indicates a need for an actual return "to the starting point" which Albee's males have not been able to yet accomplish--that is, a complete rebirth, immortality and a beginning life as a god.

⁶⁰ M. Oldfield Howey, The Encircled Serpent (New York, 1955), p. 226. Quoted by Lura and Duilio Pedrini, Serpent Imagery and Symbolism (New Haven, 1966), p. 82.

However, the dilemma of male development in Albee seems not yet to have reached its final position. At the conclusion of Box - Mao - Box Albee's males are unquestionably caught up again in the Great Round but there is some element of hope. Perhaps they will be again reborn in plays which have yet to be written. We must digress here and refer to Erich Neumann once more. Neumann sets up an equation representing the archetypal meaning of woman to early man while he is in the matriarchal stage where the unconscious dominates over the ego and consciousness. His formula is: "woman=body=vessel=world."⁶¹ He explains that woman seen as "body=vessel" is the natural symbol for the experience of woman bearing the child "within" her and of man entering "into" her in the sexual act. Woman as body=vessel expands easily then into being equal to the world for man at this point.⁶² Neumann says: "Only when we consider the whole scope of the basic feminine functions--the giving of life, nourishment, warmth, and protection--can we understand why the Feminine occupies so central a position in human symbolism and from the very beginning bears the character of "greatness."⁶³ Thus the "world-filling matriarchal symbolism of the Great Round" means mother to early man or modern man captured in the archetype.

⁶¹ Neumann, p. 43.

⁶² Ibid., p. 42.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 43.

The development of Albee's male also seems to set up such an equation. Albee's formula, however, appears to be more individual and directly applied to the development of the male psyche in regard to the feminine archetype. Albee's present formula is as follows: woman=mother=destruction=rebirth?
 or
 womb?

Only succeeding dramas will reveal if the last phase of that formula will equal rebirth or retreat to the womb for his males. In any case, it certainly will be interesting to note the point of male development in the next Edward Albee play. As Neumann explains, the highest level of the feminine--spiritual wisdom symbolized in the Goddess Sophia--"desires whole men knowing life in all its breadth, from the elementary phase to the phase of spiritual transformation."⁶⁴

⁶⁴Neumann, p. 331.

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