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**INNER CONFLICT OF CHARACTERS IN EDWARD ALBEE'S *THREE TALL WOMEN*: AN OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S LIFE IN MODERN LITERATURE****Oleh****Nur Fadillah****English Language Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Makassar of Indonesia****Email: [nurfadillahia1@gmail.com](mailto:nurfadillahia1@gmail.com)**

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to analyze the inner conflict faced by the three women of the play where the characters feel regret with their past life and also tries to reveal the women's life that describe the characteristics of modern literature. The study focuses on intrinsic elements of the play, especially the characters' conversation. To explain the regret of the characters, the writer uses psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and analyzes the symptoms of regret and despair. This analysis also relates the play of Three Tall Women with the characteristics of modernist literary that presented the condition of society and women's life. The primary data is taken from the script of Edward Albee's Three Tall Women itself. After the analysis is done, the writer found that each woman in Three Tall Woman faces the inner conflict that makes them questioning what was they did wrong. The three of them feels regret to what happen with their life in the past and wish that the other women not to face it in their future life. In addition, the characteristics of modern literature is reflects the condition of the society where the story was written. The play Three Tall Women reflects the condition of people at the time until nowadays because people have done many things but still regret and wish to come back to their life in the past before the death come to them*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Literature is composed of language and it also provides space for the applications of language. It contains the record of author's experiences, thoughts, emotions, and ideas. In general, literature is a work that contains written and non-written accounts. Literature is divided into several kinds, such as short story, novel, poetry, play, etc. In this journal, the writer just focuses on play. Wellek and Warren (1956:39) states that literary theory itself is the study of the principles of literature, its categories, criteria, and the like, and by differentiating studies of concrete works of art. Each literary work contains intrinsic and

extrinsic elements. The intrinsic elements include theme, character, plot, and setting, while extrinsic elements contain the social condition where the story was written, the cultural background, or the relation with the author's life.

Character, as one of intrinsic elements, is the most important part that surely would be found in all literatures. Characters are performed to show different kinds of behaviors that might be the same with the human in real life. These characters will experience many incidents that lead them to face it. The incidents also turn into conflicts involving the characters themselves. Conflict happens in a situation where two people or more disagree and argue about one thing. Weirdly, conflict does not only happen for two people or more (character with other character), but also conflict within the character itself. This kind of conflict is called inner conflict and connected with the character's personality and psychology which lead them hard to solve their problem. The symptoms of strange behavior are categorized in psychological aspect of the story.

A play by Edward Albee entitled *Three Tall Women* is a two-act play written in 1990. It gained Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1994. It is a story of three women named A, B, and C who were talking in a bedroom and discussing most about A's life. A is a woman in her 90s, B is a woman in her 50s, while C is a woman in her 20s. As the old woman of 92 years, A is described sick and forgetful woman that sometimes need help from the other women to remember what she has said. B is 52 years old and described as a care person who always helps A to do almost everything. Woman A and B were visited by C, a 26 years woman and sent by the lawyer to help A in her financial. Most of all the conversations are about the A's previous life when she was young. Throughout the first Act, A reminisces about her life. Woman A slips in and out of knowing what she is talking about and finds herself weeping at memories about her life. The first Act ends with A suffering a stroke.

The act two is presented by woman A, who is wearing a mask over her mouth and nose. She realizes that death is about to come, but B and C are still there and continue to make conversation about A's past. From here, the writer could assume that A's story of her past life represent the future life of B and C. It is described as woman A and B are connected to the same stories rather than C who is still in her 20s. It shows that A and B are concern about C's future life and warn her about what will come to her life by story telling their life. A, B, and C are actually represent the same woman in different stage and point in their life. Therefore, C discovers what is about to come to her life by asking the other women about what happen next in the future. Sometimes A tells the story in joyful, remembering the good memories with smile. Sometimes she becomes sad that causes her to cry remembering the difficult part of her life. C asks the women when are the happiest moments will occur. A tells her that the happiest moment is when it all stops at the very end.

In short, A and B are talking about their past life which about to come to C's future life. By remembering those memories, A becomes emotional and sometimes debate to C. A also regrets about what happens in the past and wish to experience it again. In contrast, C does not really like A because she cannot do anything in her 90s and she does not want to be like A in the future. Furthermore, C is excited with her future life and asks many questions to A and B, such as the marriage, the financial, and how she will face the cancer in the old age. By these kinds of different behavior, the writer tries to analyze the characteristics of the three women that face inner conflict and lead them to regret what they have done in the past. In

the other side, as a production of modernist literary, Edward Albee is one of a modern writer. The writer tries to describe the characteristics of modern literary with Albee's *Three Tall Woman* because it reflects the social condition of the society where the story was written.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In analyzing the play *Three Tall Women* by Edward Albee, the writer uses two approaches; structural approach and psychoanalysis. After that, the writer will find the relation between the women's life in the play and the characteristics of modernist literature.

Structural approach is firstly introduced by Ferdinand De Saussure. Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* (2006:210) states that in literature, structuralism has very important implications. Applying structuralism does not mean to judge whether a literature work is good or not; structuralism means to discover the underlying principles that govern their composition short.

Structuralism theory is the theory that emphasizes the overall relationship between various text elements. Stand-alone text elements are not important. These elements only get meaning in relationships, both associations and opposition relations. Relationships learned can be related to the micro text (words, sentences), longer text (stanzas, chapters), and inter textual (other works in a certain period). These relationships can be real replication, gradation or contrast and parody (Taum, 1997).

Susanto (2012: 88) states that structural approach is a part of logical thinking that reveals the deepest structure by seeing the real events happened through a literary work and focuses on a subjective method. More clearly by Teuw (1988: 26), structural approach is trying to understand the whole aspect which develop the structure, analyze and explain carefully interrelatedness of the literary aspects to generate the whole meaning.

In other hand, analyzing a play is the same with fiction. Based on Johnson and Arp (2006) they state that analyzing drama should pay attention on the nature of drama, realistic and non-realistic of the drama, and its category which is tragedy or comedy. Furthermore, the writer just focuses on how the drama or play built by using the intrinsic elements and the facts of story analysis. Fact of story analysis is a part of structuralism approach proposed by Stanton (2012:24) who classifies the intrinsic elements of a story in three general points: facts (plot, character, and setting), literary device, and theme. These elements consist of interrelated elements that unite and make the story can be built.

In order to analyze the inner conflict of the three women, the writer focuses on how the conflict happened between them. The conflict includes a person against himself or herself called inner conflict. Arif (2015:14) states that inner conflict is struggle within the mind of literary or dramatic character, the resolution cause of the plot's suspense. Inner conflict occurs when the character who struggles within himself or herself and could not choose in one choice. The hard he or she tries to make a choice just led him or her in a situation where the emotion changes the character.

There are two main types of inner conflict, as follows:

- a. Individual internal conflict, the conflict that happens between our self. It happens when someone has to argue with herself or himself about something.
- b. Conflict that affects the other, it means someone is in a situation when he or she has to reply or respond the other. In order to respond in a right way, he or she prefers to make the other happy by considering the further situation. The other situation is

when someone has an inner conflict with herself or himself but also give an impact to the others.

Also in this research, attempting to reveal the symptoms of strange behavior, the writer tries to connect a little bit with psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis of literary criticism is developed from the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud's theory. Psychology has relation with the science of life that studies the human behavior (Floriani, R., Arafah, N & Arafah, B., 2020). Some basic concepts of Freud's theory are about consciousness and unconsciousness which are considered as personality aspects about instincts and anxiety. One of the strange behaviors is feeling of anger that is closely related to the tension and anxiety that can lead to destruction of property and assault. Aggression can be shaped directly or redirected (direct aggression and displaced aggression). Direct aggression is aggression that is expressed directly to the person or object that is a source of frustration. For adults, this kind of aggression is usually in the form of verbal rather than physical. Displaced aggression is when a person experience frustration but cannot be satisfied to reveal the source of frustration for not being clear or untouched. The offender does not know where to attack, while he is very angry and needed something to rebound. The attack is sometimes drawn to people who are not guilty or seek scapegoats (Hilgard *et al*, 1975).

To reflect the characteristics of modern literary, the writer tries to find the connection between the characteristics and the literary work itself. Bradshaw & Dettmar (2006) state that the difficult birth of a modern drama in Britain and America is typically explained – or rationalized – in a familiar historical narrative premised on a particular geography and economy in which drama's tortuous development is attributed to the primacy of London's West End and New York's Broadway, then redressed by a series of movements against this hegemony.

More by Bradshaw & Dettmar, at least two points seem inferential from the history of modern drama. First, for a modern drama to be conceived in Britain and America, it needed to escape an expensive commercial theatre, finding more receptive audiences elsewhere. Second, a modern drama, through either form or content, attempts to express something new or "just now," as the Latin root of "modern," *modo*, denotes. That "new" reality included the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, an issue given its fullest expression on the American stage.

All of this suggests the need for a second history of modern drama's uneasy development that emphasizes dramatic form. While this history is theoretically separable from a narrative about a perishable theater of spectacular effects and mediocre plays, the two are irreducible. It might begin with melodrama, a portmanteau word combining "melody" and "drama," a form that grew to dominate the repertoires of mid- and later nineteenth-century companies. Melodrama provided "a means of affirming a belief in a reductive perception of reality" (Mason 1993:153), a perception as one-dimensional as the characters who occupy its world.

## METHODOLOGY

There are several methods in collecting data. This method is intended to make a research more focused and not deviate from the framework of scientific though. The method is the way or strategy in understanding the reality to solve the problem. Collecting data is

important step to achieve successful writing. In order to collect data in this journal, the writer uses library research method by reading number of books that are relevant to the subject. The writer also uses literary study which is done to the written sources, such as documents, relevant articles from internet as the additional resources.

In this research, the writer tries to get information by reading the script of Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* and other references, such as books, writings, journals, articles, and some other useful printed sources that related to the problems in this writing. Next, the writer notes the problems and sentences each event in the story that are considered related to the title of this research.

The technique of data analyzes that use in this thesis is descriptive method. The writer describes the personality of each character based on the conflicts happened in the story. Through the plot, the writer tries to discuss about the inner conflict of all characters that affect and give influences of the psychology. The writer analyzes this research by using structural approach to see the relation with inner conflict and psychology literature approach to understand the psychological aspects contain of the story, and also to see the overview of women's life in the play by connecting it to the characteristics of modernist literature.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

#### 1. Characterization

##### a) Woman A

As the old woman of 92 years, A is described sick and forgetful woman that sometimes need help from the other women to do everything and to remind her what she has said. She is very emotional when talking about her past. She sometimes happy, sometimes cry. A is very wise woman. Because she is very old and had experienced much things in her life, she gives advises to the young version of her, that are B and C.

She is the major character of this play because she has experienced everything in her life so that she can talk much about it. Being a dominant character, the two other women just let her to tell everything eventhough they tell her to stop. It is also because she is in the end of her life that she knows the death is about to come. Therefore, she wants to make her self happy by remembering and telling her life in the past.

##### b) Woman B

Woman B is 52 years old and described as a care person who always help A to do almost everything. She is very kind that she always helps A to answer all the questions from C and becomes the mediator when A and C were debating. She is the middle version of three. Some moments told by A, had also experienced by B. Therefore she also gives some advises to C to avoid the worst moments that about to come. Furthermore, some moments have not happened to her yet. It makes her also curious about her future by paying attention to A's story.

In contrast being nice to A, she shows a little bit act of selfish when she said that her age was the best time of the three women. Furthermore, it is just the way he expresses her grateful. Standing right on top of the middle of it has to be the happiest time. Being in her age is the only time she gets a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree view – see in all directions

(Albee 1995:108-109).

c) Woman C

A 26 years woman and sent by the lawyer to help A in her financial. She always debates with A because she does not like when A depends her life to B. Furthermore, she also curious to hear the story of A's past because it will become her future. She always become the minor when A and B were talking about some moments of their life that C have not experienced yet. Several moments make her excited, but knowing that some of those moments are sad, she could not believe it and just make her debate with the other two women.

## 2. Inner Conflict (Psychological Aspect that Caused Conflicts)

In previous part, the writer has given explanation of inner conflict that is the conflict includes a person against himself or herself. Inner conflict occurs when the character who struggles within himself or herself and could not choose in one choice. The hard he or she tries to make a choice just led him or her in a situation where the emotion changes the character. In this part, the writer reveals the inner conflict of each woman that happens just between their mind and inner conflict that affects the other woman and makes them debate. Based on the explanation, the writer discusses in this part about the relation of the characters activity and their mental situation.

a) Woman A

She really loves to talk about her past. But she also has a changeable mood, sometimes she is happy to tell the happy moments of her life, sometimes she is sad remembering the things she has done and regrets.

A

*(tearful again) Why can't I remember anything?*

B

*I think you remember everything; I think you just can't bring it to mind all the time*

A

*(Laughs.) My gracious! (To C) I remember everything!*

C

*Gracious. That must be a burden. (Albee 1995: 51-52)*

From this conversation, it shows that A has psychological strange behavior in showing her thought. As the writer mentioned before that she has a changeable mood that she can be very enthusiastic and turn to be sad in a very short time. In inner conflict side, she has to debate within herself about something that she cannot remember. In order to find out what she is trying to remember, she ends herself with crying.

A

*(A little bitter) I've sold everything. Well, not everything. . . but most. Money doesn't go as far these days? Money doesn't go anywhere! I have no money. I have money, but I eat into it. . . every year; every year it's less. (Albee 1995:101)*

Woman A feels regret to what happen in her past, one of the regret is shown in the dialogue above. She tells how she lost money and she had to sell everything she has. She regrets that she receives a big diamond ring but it was fake, so it was useless to sell it to the bank. She hates to remember that moment when a guy gave her a fake

diamond ring.

A

*(Weepy again.) I used to be tall! I've shrunk! (Albee 1995:47)*

The dialogue above shows how she regrets and wants to go back to her past when she was still tall and not shrink. She remembered when she was still young, not using spine, and not getting osteoporosis.

A

*I broke the glass! I took the glass and I threw it down in the sink! I broke the glass and now she has to clean it up. (Albee 1995: 28) (psychological aspect-destruction of property)*

A

*... It's all right at first - except for the depression, and the fear - it's all right at first, but then the pain comes, slowly, growing, and the day he screams in the bathroom, and I rush in. . . (Albee 1995:105)*

A

*... In my premonition I knew I was dead, and it didn't seem to matter any, and I was all alone. There was no one there with me and I was dead! No one! (Albee 1995:106)*

A

*... be all alone; you do want to see him again, but the terms are too hard. We never forgive him. We let him come, but we never forgive him. (To him.) I bet you don't know that . . . do you! (Albee 1995:92)*

In addition, another symptom of strange behavior based on psychological aspect, it is shown in the dialogue in page 28 when A broke a glass and tried to get attention from the other two women. Deep inside herself, she feels lonely because she has no family left, no friends to talk to until the death is about to come. Years before, she once felt depressed when her husband was sick and she was there to see him suffer (Albee 1995:105). It was all right at first, but she realized that it was hard to accept that her husband got Prostate that spreads to his bladder, bone, brain, and to the liver. It was so sad that she was hard to accept when her husband passed away left her alone. It makes her regret how she was late to know that her husband got that disease.

The last point of inner conflict that faced by woman A is shown in page 92 when she says that she hates and never forgives her son for leaving her but she still welcomes him when he comes back to home. As a mother, she faces a conflict inside herself where in one side she was mad because of her son left, but in other side she is still a mother who will always love her child no matter what happen.

b) Woman B

As the mediator between woman A and C, she always has conflict with C because every time C wants to disturb A, B cuts the conversation and let A finish her words.

A

*(General.) I'm ninety-one.*

B

*(Accepting sigh.) OK.*

C

*(Smaller smile.) You're ninety-two!*

B

*(Unconcerned.) Oh . . . let it alone. (Albee 1995:4)*

In fact, B is the younger version of A in her 50s. Therefore, almost regrets and the despairs that A felt are also felt by B. Woman B also knows how it feels when her son left her alone but still try to accept him as her child. One thing that she also regrets is when she broke her back while riding in the hunt. She regrets to meet a hunter and led her to break her back and causing trauma that she never wants to meet a hunter again.

For the further explanation, woman B is very wise to both A and C. To A, she always helps her to do almost everything A needs. To C, she gives advises and warnings about what will happen to her in the future.

B

*. . . Try to keep on the good side of whole wretched family, stand up for your husband when he won't do it for himself, watch out for all the intigrue; start really worrying about your sisterwho's really stopped worrying about herself- about anything, watch your own mother begin to change even more than you're aware you are, and then try to raise that?! (Points to him.) . . . (Albee 1995:95)*

By this dialogue, it is shown the inner conflict of woman B. She knows she has got through many moments in her life either good or bad. Some of those moments are the moments that she regrets has happened to her. Therefore, instead of being evil to C, she gives her advises and warns her about the bad moments that she has experienced. She knows it is unfair if she told C about those moments, but she prefers to be wise and help C to face her life in the future.

Furthermore, beside all the regrets and the desire to change C's life by saying the truth, she still feels grateful to everything she has got in her life. She said what she likes most about being where she is that there's a lot she does not have to go through anymore. Standing right on top of the middle of it has to be the happiest time. Being in her age is the only time she gets a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree view – see in all directions (Albee1995:108-109)

c) Woman C

As the youngest woman of three, she becomes a tempered one. She has conflicts within herself that she does not want to become A in the future. Based on all the stories that A and B has told her, she does not like almost everything. She does not like the fact that her son will leave her, when her husband will die because of a disease, when her parents also die, and she will dying in cancer in her old days and nobody will be there.

C

*I will not become that.... (points to A). (Albee 1995:69)*

C

*(To A; slowly, with great emphasis, but no anger.) I . . . will . . . not . . . become . . . you. I will not. I . . . I deny you. (Albee 1995:107)*

C

*What happens to Ma?*

A

*What? She becomes an enemy. . . .*



C  
*I couldn't!*

A  
*She comes to resent me; she starts to resent getting old, getting helpless. . . (Albee 1995:87)*

From the conversation between A and C above, it shows that in the future her mother will leave her when her father passed away. She hates to know that her father passed away because she really loves him. Also she hates the fact that her mother starts to resent her when she has so much and she is being generous (Albee 1995:87). She does not want to hate her mother because she believes that her mother will stay with her forever when her father passed away.

B  
*(To C) You'll meet him in two years*

C  
*What? Who?*

B  
*Your husband. We're what-twenty six? We'll meet him in two years. (Albee 1995:78)*

Although she has an internal conflict about this, she is still curious about the other women's life and keeps asking about that. It is such an attempt to avoid all the bad moments and as a warning so that she will not experience it. Not only the bad memories, but also the happy moments such as she wants to get prepare in what age she will meet her husband.

In the end of the play, she finally convinces herself to not really believe with what A and B told her. There is still many years to be A and B in her age now, so that she believes that she will make and find her happiness based on her own story, not based on the story of A and B's life.

C  
*Is it like this? What about the happy times . . . the happiest moments? I haven't had them yet, have I? . . .*

*I know my best times – what is it? Happiest? – haven't happened yet. They're to come. Aren't they? Please? And . . . and whatever evil comes, whatever loss and taking away comes, won't it all be balanced out? Please? I'm not a fool, but there is a lot of happiness along the way. . . (Albee 1995:107)*

Woman C believes that although the bad moments will come to her one day, it will always be balanced with the happy moments. She believes that all the worst moments will come along with the happiest moments. There are still so many ways to get happiness and please herself. Therefore, she does not afraid anymore with every story that A and B have told her. She believes that her parents and her husband will die one day and she has to be ready with that. Her job now, in her 20s, is to please herself, her family, and everyone around her in order to make good memories that she will remember in her old days before the death is about to come.

### 3. *Three Tall Women* as Modern Literature

The idea of modern literature means that the literary works contains life and society

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that are presented as they are, both positive and negative qualities alike. The play of *Three Tall Women* reflects the condition of women in society. It is not also reflect the society at the time, but also the real condition of people even nowadays who regret many things that have happened to their life and wish to comeback and change everything they have done. All the sad memories make the woman A regrets and warn the other women not to do the same as her. All the regrets come when woman A is at the edge of their life and death is about to come.

According to Espejo : 2004, states that *Three Tall Women* takes us back to see the reflection upon a meaning of going through the last stage of human life. Therefore, the characteristics of modern literature that contains three stages of human life, that are woman in 90s, 50s, and 20s truly reflected the play *Three Tall Woman* as a modern literature. In addition that modern literature contains melodrama, this play also has it. Melodrama provided "a means of affirming a belief in a reductive perception of reality" (Mason 1993:153), a perception as one-dimensional as the characters who occupy its world. It is very clear that this play contains the characters who tell about their own world each other and reflects the real life of human being.

## DISCUSSIONS

In discussion, the writer interprets the findings that have presented in previous part. The writer tries to describe the reason of findings become the answer of the questions of this paper. As mentioned in abstract, there are two major questions in this paper, they are the inner conflict that faced by the three women and the women's life that characterized the modern literature.

To answer the first question of this paper that is about the inner conflict, the writer found that each woman has their own problem in their different levels of age. Inner conflict often relates with psychology. Psychological term that the writer tries to reveal in this part is the unusual behaviors of the three women. There are some reasons why people sometimes do unusual things unconsciously. One of the reasons is that the hidden pressure or repression comes from inside and appear through physical symptoms, destruction of property, regret, despair, not able to pronounce words, stutter, or even talkative. Besides, the psychological symptoms that might influence someone to act strange is because the story behind those acts. It could be come from their past and causing trauma, the overthinks that make them hard to make decision and end with depression, or in the worst case the symptom of suicidal.

The writer has presented several conversations in finding part about the psychological aspects that affect the three women face inner conflict. The writer thought that this could happen because all the problems that come to their life were buried deep inside their heart and never got a chance to express it. The result is that when they became older, they remembered all the bad things and regret how they cannot do better for their life. Beside that, the writer also found the other side of each woman. Instead of being selfish to each other, the two women, A and B were giving C advises and warnings to avoid her experience the same that will make her regret in the future.

To answer the second question of this paper that is about women's life that characterized the modern literature, the writer found that there is a relation between them. Based on the characteristics of modern literature that is to see the reflection upon a meaning of going through the last stage of human life, it is very related with the

women's life in the play *Three Tall Women*. As the writer knew about modern literature, it is not always about romantic and show a perfect life of human being, but also contains what is actually happen in the world without covering anything in attempting to make a literary work looks perfect. If a literature should contain the negative part of human, then it should be in that literature.

Therefore, the behavior and characterization of the three women in this play reflect the truth about woman that never satisfies with the life that has given to her. They also being dramatic for every conversation they made, especially for woman A as the oldest woman who always seeking for help as if she was giving up on her life. In addition, after doing something that a woman thinks good for her, later on she will regret because she thinks she could do better. To sum up the discussion of this part, the writer thinks that a characteristic of modern literature is reflected in the play *Three Tall Women* seeing from the fact that it reflects the real life and contains of melodrama.

## CONCLUSION

The three women of the play face both conflict with other character and inner conflict. It makes them always debate and cannot finish one topic to talk because one of the women becomes the mediator. The symptoms of psychology are seen in each woman. Woman A and B shows their regrets to the past life and wish to experience the happy moments again, but wish to forget the bad memories. While the woman C shows that she is hate and care to A.

The play of *Three Tall Women* reflects the condition of women in society. It is not also reflect the society at the time, but also the real condition of people even nowadays who regret many things that have happened to their life and wish to comeback and change everything they have done. It is actually good to remember the memories of the past, either it was good or worse because it became the journey of life that can never be change. It is not good to regret what have done, just feel bless and enjoy every moment that happen in this life, because it will just become a memory at the end.

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