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# **The Politics of the Family in Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* and Other Plays**

**Kevin Keane**

In his plays Edward Albee reveals an intuitive understanding of the family as a system that Virginia Satir, R. D. Laing, and other proponents of family theory have shown. In family theory each member of the family contributes to the system.<sup>1</sup> Examining the family as a system is an approach in which the family is viewed as a whole, rather than just a collection of individuals. Albee also seems to understand the existence of triangles and other groupings in families. His play, *A Delicate Balance*, in particular, has an intricate web of triangular relationships that develops in the course of the play. I will focus mainly on that work in this paper.

In addition, I will examine *The Goat*, *The American Dream*, *The Sandbox*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and *The Play About the Baby*, and analyze the family relationships found in them. The first chapter will explicate how the dysfunctionality of the family bonds in *A Delicate Balance* constitutes a fragile form of equilibrium that can easily go wrong, but ultimately serves as a curious source of stability. Subsequent chapters will further compare these bonds with the family relationships in the other plays.

I should mention here that the title of my paper was inspired by R. D. Laing's *The Politics of the Family*. Laing mainly meant "politics" in the figurative sense of getting and using power in a group, but he also meant it in a literal sense, as will be discussed later.

## **1. Family Imbalance in *A Delicate Balance***

The family in *A Delicate Balance* is out of balance, or so it seems.

There are at least two important triangles that make up the uneasy balance in the play, but two friends of the family who suddenly come to stay with the family help to complicate matters even more.

The main family triangle in the play is a classic parent-child relationship, namely the triangle composed of Tobias, the father, Agnes, the mother, and Julia, their grown-up daughter, who has married several times. Julia regresses to some extent at one point during the play. She comes back to stay with her family each time her marriage fails. She returns home once again because of marital problems and returns to a childlike state because some family friends, Harry and Edna, are staying in her room. Their using Julia's room makes her feel abandoned exactly when she is feeling emotionally needy due to her marital problems. She serves a useful function in the play by directly expressing her emotions, unlike Tobias and Agnes, and revealing the true nature of her family triangle. She even brandishes a gun in frustration in one scene, speaking deliriously at first:

JULIA

*(Solemnly and tearfully)*

Get them out of here, Daddy, getthemoutofheregetthemoutofhere  
getthemoutofheregetthemoutofheregetthemoutofhere. . . .

*(They all see JULIA and they groan simultaneously; EDNA gasps but does not panic; HARRY retreats a little; TOBIAS moves slowly toward JULIA)*

AGNES

Julia!

JULIA

Get them out of here, Daddy!

TOBIAS

*(Moving toward her, slowly, calmly, speaking in a quiet voice)*

All right, Julia, baby; let's have it now....

JULIA

Get them out of here, Daddy....

TOBIAS

*(As before)*

Come on now, Julia.

JULIA

*(Calmly, she hands the gun to TOBIAS, nods)*

Get them out of here, Daddy.

AGNES

*(Soft intensity)*

You ought to be horsewhipped, young lady. (118)

As for Claire, Agnes's sister, she is an older woman but acts like a self-centered child herself. She is also part of a triangle with Tobias and Agnes. Claire is a rebel and a perceived failure like Julia, but is financially dependent on her sister and her husband. She lives with them and they provide for her. Claire is an alcoholic, but claims that she drinks by choice; she is just "willful" (40), she says. Claire is self-indulgent and quite outspoken. Agnes is fed up with her, but Tobias tolerates her drinking and even seems to encourage it by offering her drinks:

CLAIRE

*(Holds her glass out; he hesitates)*

Be a good brother-in-law; it's only the first I'm not supposed to have.

(19)

Tobias serves her the drink soon after, despite his initial hesitation.

Claire goes out of her way to annoy her sister and seems to enjoy it whenever she gets angry. Tobias is like an indulgent father-figure, in contrast to Agnes's stern mother-like behavior. Claire is content in her role as child in the family and has no intent to change herself or the situation, even though Agnes would like her to become more responsible.

Harry and Edna serve as a catalyst that upsets the curious homeostasis, the delicate balance that binds this family together. Harry and Edna are obsessed with some inner terror that they cannot articulate and have come to stay with Tobias and his family. Their presence leads to the creation of temporary new relationships in the family or changes the nature of old ones. On the one hand, we could view Harry and Edna as one unit, since they are a couple and act like intruders or outsiders who disrupt life in this family, but for the sake of simplicity, I will treat the two separately.

Julia has a kind of triangle with Edna and Harry; they act as substitute parents to Julia. However, Harry is rather reticent and winds up being detached from the situation. Harry is similar to Tobias to some extent since Tobias does not play as active a role as Agnes does with Julia; consequently, we do not get much of a sense of him as a father-figure. Edna, however, plays the role of mother with gusto. We can see this when she criticizes Julia:

EDNA  
(*Becoming AGNES*)

You return to your nest from your latest disaster, dispossessed, and suddenly dispossessing; screaming the house down, clawing at order...

JULIA

STOP HER!

EDNA

...willful, wicked, wretched girl...

JULIA

You are not my... YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS!

EDNA

We have rights here. *We* belong.

JULIA

MOTHER!

AGNES

*(Tentative)*

Julia...

EDNA

*We belong here, do we not?*

JULIA

*(Triumphant distaste)*

FOREVER!

*(Small silence)*

HAVE YOU COME TO STAY FOREVER?

*(Small silence)*

EDNA

*(Walks over to her, calmly slaps her)*

If need be.

*(To TOBIAS and AGNES, calmly)*

Sorry; a godmother's duty.

(120-121)

Edna is even more direct and critical than Agnes when dealing with

Julia. She feels free to speak frankly, precisely because she is not her real daughter, just a goddaughter. She even implies that Julia is just a transient, unlike herself and Harry.

The complicated new relationships in the play disrupt the makeshift harmony of the family. I should mention here that even though the characters often talk about their thoughts and feelings, the family has elements of a closed system, which Satir explains below:

Closed systems are those in which every participating member must be very cautious about what he or she says. The principal rule seems to be that everyone is supposed to have the same opinions, feelings, and desires, whether or not this is true. In closed systems, honest self-expression is impossible, and it does not occur. The expression is viewed as deviant, or “sick” or “crazy” by the other members of the group or family. (*Conjoint Family Therapy* 237)

Indeed, despite their apparently candid nature, the characters have kept some of their feelings and actions secret, especially in the first part of the play. For example, Tobias and Harry had an affair with some woman long ago. Sharing the same lover is homoerotic but, more importantly, Tobias has never told Agnes about his infidelity, even though Claire knows.

Tobias also stopped sleeping with Agnes after their son Teddy died at an early age. This is not related to his sexual indiscretion; he finally reveals that he stopped because he felt she was more delicate after what happened to their son, when in fact she has missed having him in bed with her all these years, as she tells him later in the play:

AGNES

There was a stranger in my room last night.

TOBIAS

Who?

AGNES  
You.

TOBIAS  
Ah.

AGNES  
It was nice to have you there. (127-128)

Even though Harry and Edna upset the family balance, they also inadvertently help this family communicate more openly. At the end of the play, Tobias finally plays the role of the father of the family and asks Harry and Edna to stay even as he says he would like them to leave. His friends decide to leave, and after they do life seems to return to normal—or as normal as this family can ever be:

AGNES  
*(Sigh)*  
Well, here we all are. You all right, my darling?

TOBIAS  
*(Clears his throat)*  
Sure.

AGNES  
*(Still with her arm around him)*  
Your daughter has taken to drinking in the morning. I hope you'll notice.

TOBIAS  
*(Unconcerned)*  
Oh?



*(Moves away from her)*

I had one here—somewhere, one with Harry. Oh, there it is.

AGNES

*(To fill a silence)*

[...] They say we sleep to let the demons out to let the mind go raving mad, our dreams and nightmares all our logic gone away, the dark side of our reason. And when the daylight comes again...comes order with it.

*(Sad chuckle)*

Poor Edna and Harry.

*(Sigh)*

Well, they're safely gone...and we'll all forget...quite soon.

*(Pause)*

Come now; we can begin the day.

CURTAIN

(176-178)

## 2. Family Imbalance in *The Goat* or *Who is Sylvia?*

The family conflicts in *The Goat* or *Who is Sylvia?* may not be as complicated as in *A Delicate Balance*, but the family relationships and relationships with others outside the family have a similar sense of volatility. The main triangle in the play is the relationship between the two parents, Martin and Stevie, and their son Billy, but the love triangle between Martin, Stevie, and Sylvia gradually dominates the play. Martin's friend Ross is the one who tells Stevie about Martin's affair with Sylvia and so disrupts the apparent harmony of the family. (Ross is an old friend making a documentary about Martin and his work as an architect.)

On the surface, Martin and his family seem happy and content. Martin is a successful architect who has just won the Pritzker Prize. In the beginning

of the play he just seems concerned about his memory:

MARTIN  
*(Preoccupied)*

[...] Do you think it means anything?

STEVIE

I don't know what "it" is.

MARTIN  
That I can't remember anything.

STEVIE  
Probably not. You have too much to remember, that's all. You should go in for a checkup...if you can remember our doctor's name.

MARTIN  
*(Nailing it)* Percy!

STEVIE  
Right!

MARTIN  
*(To himself)* Who could forget that? Nobody has a doctor named Percy. *(To STEVIE)* What's the matter with me?

STEVIE  
You're fifty.

MARTIN  
No; more than that.

## STEVIE

The old foreboding? The sense that everything going right is a sure sign that everything's going wrong, of all the awful to come? All that? (10)

Martin's concern with memory seems to be a slight problem but points to an underlying anxiety about aging since he has just turned fifty. Life is almost too perfect. His wife seems satisfied with their life and is mostly amused at his statement about supposedly losing his memory. Her line about everything going wrong, despite all appearances to the contrary, is especially insightful. There is something amiss beneath the apparent tranquility of their life.

Their son Billy might initially seem to be the problem since he is gay but, in fact, his parents have mostly accepted the sexual orientation of their "handsome and worrisome son" (11). However, Martin's ambivalence is revealed when Stevie and Billy berate Martin for Martin's affair with Sylvia, who turns out to be a goat, and he calls Billy a "Fucking faggot" (48). Martin apologizes but it was a terrible slip to make, even if Billy did call him a "Goat fucker" (48).

The goat serves as a way for Martin to escape the bourgeois normality of domestic life. We can see this is no ordinary fling:

## MARTIN

[...] And I was getting back in the car, about to go back in the car, all my loot—vegetables and stuff... (*change of tone to quiet wonder*) and it was back then that I saw her. (*Sees it*) Just... just looking at me.

## ROSS

Daisy Mae! Blonde hair to her shoulders, big tits in the calico blouse, bare midriff, blonde down at the navel, piece of straw in her teeth...

MARTIN  
(*Gentle, admonishing smile*)

You don't understand.

ROSS  
No? No blonde hair? No tits?

MARTIN  
No. And there she was, looking at me with those eyes.

ROSS  
And it was love.

MARTIN  
You don't understand.

ROSS  
No? It *wasn't* love?

MARTIN  
No. Yes; yes, it was love, but I didn't know it right then. (*To himself*)  
How could I?

ROSS  
Right, then it was good old lust, eh? Dick starting to get big in your pants...

MARTIN  
(*Sad*) You *don't* understand. (*Pause.*) I didn't know what it was—  
what I was feeling. It was...it wasn't like anything I'd felt before; it  
was...so...amazing, so...extraordinary! There she was, just looking  
at me, with those *eyes* of hers, and... (42-43)

Martin describes a love that may seem fresh and innocent to him after years with the same woman. For him it is a refreshing escape from conventional family life.

This play also has a catalyst as in *A Delicate Balance*. Ross, who is filming an interview of Martin concerning his winning the Pritzker Prize, plays this role. He is disgusted to hear that Martin is having an affair with a goat and sends Stevie a letter about it. Predictably, Martin's family is disgusted by his newfound bestiality. Billy is shocked to know such a thing about the father he respects, saying, "You're doing what? You're fucking a goat?" (47). He even goes so far as to call his father a "pervert" (53). Stevie for her part feels disgusted and betrayed and coldly says, "Stay away from me; stay there. You smell of..." (52). It would have been bad enough if his mistress had been human. Stevie additionally feels insulted that he seems to prefer an animal to her.

The triangle composing Billy and his parents is initially not the complex type. In the beginning of the play the three have a fairly peaceful life together. After Stevie and Billy find out about Sylvia, Billy takes Stevie's side in criticizing him for his infidelity. Later Martin tries to comfort Billy, who is terribly upset about the affair.

Relationships with outsiders exert a strong influence in this play. Sylvia, like Ross, acts as a catalyst that brings conflict to Martin's family by making it an all too open system. Sylvia brings out Martin's animal nature that wants to feel unrepressed and innocent, but nobody can truly understand how he feels. Sylvia's presence challenges the apparent normality of Martin and Stevie's married life.

Ross, supposedly Martin's friend, starts out being amused to hear that Martin is having an affair until he sees Sylvia's photo: "THIS IS A GOAT! YOU'RE HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH A GOAT! YOU'RE FUCKING A GOAT!"(46). Ross betrays his friend by revealing Martin's secret and sets off a series of arguments and fights that lead to the violence in the last scene of

the play.

At the end Martin and his family are back to “normal”; Stevie has gone out into the country and killed Sylvia. Now there are just the three of them again: father, mother, and son. Martin and Stevie will either return to their old relationship or get a divorce if they cannot forgive each other. Whatever the case, things will never be the same. Martin and his wife will not be able to forget about their transgressions. Any sense of homeostasis finally seems illusory.

### **3. Families in the Imaginary Son Plays**

Albee’s “imaginary son” plays highlight his skeptical view of American family life. I have treated in another paper<sup>2</sup> a number of these plays concerning couples with children that either are imaginary or have disappeared for some reason. Since these (usually male) children are either nonexistent or have gone missing in the past or present, the family dynamics of the play seem simple enough on the surface. The main focus of these plays is on a triangular relationship in a family, especially the parent-child relationship, but the relationship itself often feels false or unstable..

What is interesting about one of these plays, *The American Dream*, is that the traditional parent-child triangle has an inverted aspect. The characters Mommy and Daddy in the play are trying to dominate the character Grandma as if she is just some sort of difficult child, even though she should be the mother-figure of the relationship. Later on the Young Man appears. It turns out that he is the son that Mommy and Daddy adopted years ago. Something went wrong after they adopted him. Somehow Grandma has found him and apparently arranged for him to come.

In the beginning of the play Mommy and Daddy are thinking of putting Grandma in a nursing home. They are waiting for Mrs. Barker, the chair of the women’s club, to come. It seems at first that that Barker is actually

coming to take Grandma to a nursing home. Mommy and Daddy talk about Grandma in this part:

DADDY. I've been trying for two weeks to have the leak in the johnny fixed.

MOMMY. *You can't get satisfaction; just try. (Sits chair right.)* I can get satisfaction, but you can't.

DADDY. I've been trying for two weeks and it isn't so much for my sake; I can always go to the club.

MOMMY. It isn't so much for my sake, either; I can always go shopping.

DADDY. It's really for Mommy's sake.

MOMMY. Of course it's for Grandma's sake. Grandma cries every time she goes to the johnny as it is; but now that it doesn't work it's even worse, it makes Grandma think she's feeble-headed.

DADDY. Grandma *is* getting feeble-headed.

MOMMY. Of course Grandma is getting feeble-headed, but not about her johnny-dos.

DADDY. No, that's true. I must have it fixed. (11-12)

They talk like parents concerned about how to toilet-train a difficult child. ("Johnny-dos" are an apparent reference to defecation.)

Later on the Young Man appears. We gradually come to understand that the Young Man was the boy that Mommy and Daddy adopted years ago. Grandma uses the distraction of his arrival to escape Mommy and Daddy and the very reality of the play itself.

At any rate, Mommy and Daddy talk to the Young Man but they do not really understand the origin of their attraction to him:

DADDY. Yes. Mommy, you remember about the bumble..about wanting satisfaction?

MOMMY. *(Sees Young Man. Her sorrow turning into delight.)* Yes. Why, yes! Of course. *(Rises and crosses to Young Man.)* Yes! Oh,

how wonderful!

MRS. BARKER. (*To the Young Man.*) This is Mommy.

YOUNG MAN. How...how do you do?

MRS. BARKER. (*Stage whisper.*) Her name is Mommy.

YOUNG MAN. How...how do you do, Mommy?

MOMMY. Well! Hello there!

MRS. BARKER. (*To the Young Man.*) And that is Daddy.

DADDY. (*Crossing with hand outstretched to Daddy, who backs off down left.*) How do you do.

MOMMY. (*Pulling Young Man center. Herself again, circling the Young Man, feeling his arm, poking him.*) Yes, Sir! Now this is more like it. Yes, Siree! Now this is a great deal more like it.

DADDY. I...I can see from here, Mommy. It does look a great deal more like it. (40-41)

They only know that they feel happier having this young man around instead of Grandma. Mommy and Daddy are like society at large in preferring young people to senior citizens, despite everyone's pretense of deeply caring about the latter.

*The American Dream* is a long variation of *The Sandbox*, which is more extreme and violent. In the latter play Mommy and Daddy get rid of Grandma by burying her in sand. Here they plot their drastic solution to caring for the elderly Grandma:

MOMMY. (*Looking about.*) This will do perfectly...don't you think so, Daddy? There's sand there...and the water beyond. What do you think, Daddy?

DADDY. (*Vaguely*) Whatever you say, Mommy.

MOMMY. (*With the same little laugh*) Well. of course...Whatever I say. Then, it's settled, is it?

DADDY. (*Shrugs.*) She's your mother, not mine.

MOMMY. *I* know she's my mother. What do you take me for? (*A*



*pause.*) All right, now; let's get on with it. [...]

(49-50)

The Grandma character in *The Sandbox* complains to the audience about her fate before she dies:

GRANDMA. [...] Honestly! What a way to treat an old woman! Drag her out of the house...stick her in a car...bring her out here from the city...dump her in a pile of sand...and leave her here to rot. I'm eighty-six years old! I was married when I was seventeen. To a farmer. He died while I was thirty. [...] They took me off the farm...which was very decent of them...and they moved me into the big townhouse with them...fixed a nice place for me under the stove...gave me an army blanket...and my own dish...my very own dish! So, what have I got to complain about? Nothing, of course. I'm not complaining.

(51-52)

This family is so dysfunctional that the family members treat their mother, Grandma, like a dog, but she is mentally strong enough not to let it disturb her too much.

The only thing that Grandma can do is to actively participate in her own destruction. Even though the end is near, she manages to chat with the Young Man, who is part of the death ritual:

YOUNG MAN. (*Prepares, delivers line like a real amateur.*) I am the Angel of Death. I am...uh...I am come for you.

GRANDMA. [...]Well...that was very nice, dear.

YOUNG MAN. Shhhhhh...be still...

GRANDMA. What I meant was...You did that very well, dear...

YOUNG MAN. (*Blushing.*) ...oh...

GRANDMA. You've got that...You've got a quality.

YOUNG MAN. (*With his endearing smile.*) Oh...thank you; thank you very much, ma'am.

GRANDMA. (*Slowly, softly--as the Young Man puts his hands on top of Grandma's.*) You're very welcome, dear.

(54)

Mommy and Daddy can only destroy Grandma physically. They cannot crush her spirit. The Young Man in this play, incidentally, is no relation to the family. He is just playing a part of the Angel of Death. Grandma winds up treating him maternally, even going so far as to praise how he assists with her demise.

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* depicts the family as the ultimate illusion. The characters George and Martha play a game for two guests, Nick and Honey, in which they feign having a son. This is just part of an ongoing pretense that helps Martha, who is infertile, to deal with the lack of a child. The game is ultimately destructive.

On the one hand, Martha speaks rapturously of the joys of motherhood:

MARTHA

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

GEORGE

...Martha thinks she saw him at delivery...

MARTHA

...with slippery, firm limbs, and a full head of black, fine, fine hair which, oh, later, later, became blond as the sun, our son. (231)

On the other hand, George and Martha use the game to attack each other. George says of the son that:

All rightie. Well now, let's see. 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 down to wash him in the tub when he's sixteen, dragging strangers into the house at all hours... (228)

Martha gets back at her husband, noting:

[...] A son...a son who spends his summers away...away from his family...ON ANY PRETEXT...because he can't stand the shadow of a man flickering around the edges of a house... (240)

It is the ultimate irony that even this imaginary family is dysfunctional.

Finally, George decides to end the game by claiming that their son died in a traffic accident. Martha objects, complaining that "YOU CAN'T DECIDE THESE THINGS" (247). Besides pretending that her son exists, she is asserting here that they are supposed to make the rules of the family game together; it is a mutual illusion. At the end of the play, she feels empty without the fantasy about the son, but it is possible she could learn to deal with reality in the future, unless she and George simply think up a different game to play.

*The Play About the Baby*, a more recent play, is a new direction for Albee. The members of the family in this story--the Boy, Girl, and Baby--are real enough, but their sense of reality is undermined by the mysterious Man and Woman, who suddenly appear on stage and claim that the baby has been stolen by gypsies. More than likely, the Man and Woman took it themselves. After the Boy and Girl get over their anger and depression, they finally accept their situation and learn to live with it:

BOY

*(Still in tears)* No baby?

GIRL

*(Still in tears)* No.

BOY

*(More a wish than anything)* I hear it crying!

GIRL

*(Please)* No; no you don't.

## BOY

(*Defeat*) No baby.

## GIRL

(*Begging*) No. Maybe later? When we're older...when we can take...terrible things happening? Not now? (94)

In this play, parenthood requires awareness and maturity, which the Boy and Girl may attain in the future. The family is more just a difficult ideal than an illusion in this play. Before, parenthood was just fun for them, but now they are starting to learn that they have to earn the right to be parents; they cannot just take it for granted. Indeed, the Man explains it well:

[...] Wounds, children, wounds. If you have no wounds, how can you know you're alive? How can you know who you are? [...] Learn from it. Without wounds, what are you? If you don't have a broken heart... (89, 94)

The families portrayed in the imaginary son plays mostly seem like a big lie or a game designed to hide one's sense of inner emptiness. The only exception is the *The Play About the Baby*. In this play naivety about being a family leads to eventual disappointment, although in the last scene of the play the Girl tentatively contemplates having a child in the future.

#### 4. Conclusion

In comparing all these plays, we can see that all the families are either dysfunctional or at least in an unstable condition. The members of the families frequently miscommunicate and keep secrets from each other. In addition, they have frustrating triangular relationships. *A Delicate Balance* has one of the most complicated situations. Both Julia and Claire have formed triangles with Tobias and Agnes. Outsiders often make matters more complex because of their interventions and serve as catalysts that upset the

balance of the families, but eventually equilibrium is restored, even if it is a sort of delicate balance, as Albee puts it.

Harmony is at best temporary or potentially precarious. For example, Stevie in *The Goat* restores order by killing Sylvia, but she may have alienated her husband to the point of causing them to get divorced or separated. In the imaginary son plays the balance is unstable almost from the start. Having a child is either an illusion or ideal; it does not quite mesh with reality. There is always a possibility of abandonment as in *The American Dream*, or even real or verbal violence as in *The Sandbox* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*.

Up to this point I have mostly discussed the politics of the family in terms of internal power relationships. I suspect that Albee also views the family rather like R. D. Laing in the last chapter of *The Politics of the Family*. Laing thinks that society, like the family, should be inclusive, not exclusive, and not brainwash its members:

As long as we cannot up-level our "thinking" beyond Us and Them, the goodies and baddies, it will go on and on. The only possible end will be all the goodies have killed all the baddies, and all the baddies all the goodies, which does not seem so difficult or unlikely since to Us, we are the goodies and They are the baddies, while to Them, we are the baddies and they are the goodies.

Millions of people have died this century and millions more are going to, including, we have every reason to expect, many of Us and our children, because we cannot break this knot.

It seems a comparatively simple knot, but it is tied very, very tight--round the throat, as it were, of the whole human species.

But don't believe me because I say so, look in the mirror and see for yourself. (*The Politics of the Family* 49)

Laing was speaking above in a radio lecture in 1968 in Canada in the context of racial tensions, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War, but his basic

principle is seems similar to what Albee has in mind, especially in light of the title of his play *The American Dream*. Not only is the family dysfunctional but society itself.

Albee would like us to truly communicate without all the usual mixed messages that combine apparent love or compassion with subtextual hostility or hate. This is what we need to do before we all kill each other off.

### Notes

1. Napier and Whitman note that defining the family system is a complex matter, but I have tried to define it in a simple manner for this paper (*The Family Crucible* 47).
2. For further analysis of the imaginary son plays, refer to my paper “The Imaginary Son in Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and other Plays” (*Joshidai Bungaku* 175-187).

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