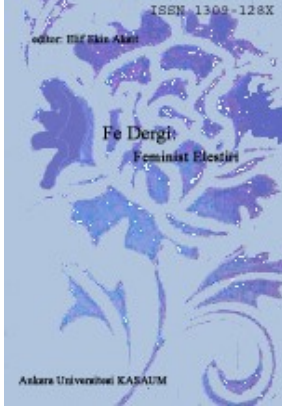


Yayınlayan: Ankara Üniversitesi KASAUM
Adres: Kadın Sorunları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi, Cebeci 06590 Ankara



Fe Dergi: Feminist Eleştiri Cilt 5 Sayı 1
Erişim bilgileri, makale sunumu ve ayrıntılar için:
<http://cins.ankara.edu.tr/>

Power Struggle in *The Zoo Story*: A Performance of Subjectivity

Parisa Shams and Farideh Pourgiv

Çevrimiçi yayına başlama tarihi: 15 Haziran 2013

Bu makaleyi alıntılanmak için: Parisa Shams and Farideh Pourgiv, “Power Struggle in *The Zoo Story*: A Performance of Subjectivity,” *Fe Dergi* 5, no. 1 (2013), 1-11.

URL: http://cins.ankara.edu.tr/9_1.html

Bu eser akademik faaliyetlerde ve referans verilerek kullanılabilir. Hiçbir şekilde izin alınmaksızın çoğaltılamaz.

Power Struggle in *The Zoo Story*: A Performance of Subjectivity

Parisa Shams* and Farideh Pourgiv**

*Edward Albee's dramatic career was born in the context of postwar America and the counterculture of the 1950s and 60s to confront the contemporary politics and question the long-held social values. Likewise, Judith Butler's work first appeared as a critique of identity within the social and political movements of contemporary America. Albee's early play *The Zoo Story* (1959) voiced a critique of the existing social and political structure by bringing up a variety of issues such as gender, sexuality, family, class, power, identity, and communication. Butler's work, embodying a post-structuralist account of identity, subjectivity, gender and sexuality, forms the backbone of the present study which aims to explore gender and power struggle in *The Zoo Story*. Albee's characters, struggling within the boundaries of gender and the limits of socio-political regulations, lend themselves to a Butlerian approach eyeing upon gender and the relations of power.*

Investigation and juxtaposition of Albee's plays and Butler's work reveal that femininity and masculinity are not absolute, and no fixed gender as male or female can be defined; gender is not a fact, but a phenomenon that is reiterated and reproduced again and again over time. If certain gender traits are considered to be feminine or masculine, the reason must be looked for in the dominant cultural, political, social, and ideological discourses of the society which attempt to subject or abject individuals on whom they impose themselves. Entrance into the domain of agency, then, necessitates resisting the violence exerted by these regulatory frameworks.

*Key words: Albee, Butler, *The Zoo Story*, heteronormativity, gender intelligibility*

Hayvanat Bahçesi Hikayesi'nde İktidar Mücadeleleri: Öznelliğin Sergilenişi

Edward Albee'nin tiyatro kariyeri savaş sonrası Amerikasında başlamıştır. Albee, 1950li 1960lı yılların alt kültürü bağlamında güncel siyasete karşı çıkmış ve köklü toplumsal değerleri sorgulamıştır. Benzer minvalde, Judith Butler'ın eserleri günümüzün Amerikalı sosyal ve politik hareketlerindeki kimlik sorununun eleştirisi olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Albee'nin erken dönem oyunu Hayvanat Bahçesi Hikayesi (1959) toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsellik, aile, sınıf, kimlik ve iletişim gibi çeşitli meselelerden söz ederek varolan sosyal ve politik yapının eleştirisini yapmıştır. Butler'ın kimlik, öznellik, toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsellik ile ilgili post-yapısalcı görüşleri bu makalenin ana temasını oluşturuyor ve böylelikle, Hayvanat Bahçesi Hikayesi'ndeki toplumsal cinsiyet anlamlarını ve iktidar mücadelelerini incelemeyi amaçlıyor. Albee'nin toplumsal cinsiyet sınırlarıyla ve sosyo-politik düzenlemelerle mücadele eden oyun karakterleri Butlercı bir yaklaşıma katkıda bulunarak, toplumsal cinsiyet ve güç ilişkilerine göz gezdirir.

Albee'nin oyunları ile Butler'ın eserlerindeki örtüşme ve bu yapıtların incelenmesi, kadınlık ve erkekliğin mutlaklık arz etmediklerini ve kadın veya erkek gibi sabit toplumsal cinsiyetlerin tanımlanamayacağını gösterir. Toplumsal cinsiyet bir sabit bir gerçek değil, zaman içerisinde defalarca yinelenen ve yeniden üretilen bir olgudur. Eğer herhangi bir toplumsal cinsiyet özelliği kadınsı veya erkeksi addedilirse, bunun sebeplerine toplumun egemen kültürel, politik, sosyal ve idolojik söylemlerinde aramak gerekir. Zira, bu söylemler, bireyleri ya tabi kılar ya da perişan eder. Dolayısıyla, özne olmak söz konusu düzen rejimlerinden kaynaklı şiddete direnmeyi gerektirir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Albee, Judith Butler, Hayvanat Bahçesi, heteronormativite, toplumsal cinsiyetin anlamları

* MA in English Literature, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran,

** Ph.D, Professor of English Literature, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

Introduction

Albee has been an influential figure in the dramatic stage of the past 50 years and his works delve deeply into contemporary social, psychological, domestic and political issues. In the context of postwar America, with all the social, political and economical upheavals and debates, Albee's plays started to voice the questions of gender, family, women, femininity and masculinity, human relationship and power struggles across gender and class. These notions not only have been the constituents of gender studies emerging since the sixties and the rise of second wave feminism, but also have continued to penetrate widely the mainstream disciplines of the current era. Albee's and Butler's works emerged in the second half of the twentieth century when large-scale political movements such as Black Civil Rights, second wave feminism, and queer movement, which were grounded in the claim about the injustices done to certain groups, started to change American life through fostering questions about nature, origin and future of identities being defended.¹ Being an authentic representation of human life and mind, Albee's plays comprehend the key ideas of Butler's so that, in many cases, it seems as if these concepts were animated through the acts and dialogs of his characters.

Albee came of age as a playwright in the post-world war II years when the United States saw the first stage of its global hegemony as a wealthy world power. It was a time of white middle-class affluence and media saturation in America.² Between the years 1945-1960, America was a prosperous society where the consumer culture urged the Americans to compete for owning luxury items, homes, cars and televisions. Popular television presented an image of idyllic suburban prosperity. The TV shows of the time depicted white middle class nuclear families in which the father was an organization man, the wife looked after the family and home, and the traditional gender roles were maintained.³

This was the time when Albee came on stage in 1959 with his landmark first play *The Zoo Story* where he voiced a harsh criticism of his contemporary society. The target of his criticism is the dominant culture of his time for which Peter acts as a representative. The play opens with the sight of Peter, an upper middle class publishing executive, reading Time magazine on his favorite bench at the park where he spends all his Sunday afternoons in solitude. He has a wife, children, a home, and two televisions. Suddenly, Jerry, a carelessly dressed stranger enters the scene to initiate a small talk with Peter, starting the conversation with "I have been to the zoo." Jerry talks about his life in a poor rooming house owned by a cruel woman and her frightening dog who tries to bite him. He also tells Peter a story about how he tried to kill the dog as he found himself incapable of communicating with him. Later on, as he starts to occupy Peter's bench and they come to fight over the possession of the bench, he draws Peter into an unusual encounter which ends in Jerry's impaling himself upon the knife Peter holds. He commits a suicide/murder to make himself seen by all those who watch the news on their TVs in their luxurious homes, or read the Time magazine on their seemingly peaceful Sunday afternoons.

Albee presents the confrontation of two individuals, one of whom has assimilated into the dominant culture and power structure of the society while he is unaware of the vanity of the life he is living. The other one, Jerry, being a socially and economically unprivileged outcast who has denied the definitive norms of his society, tries to shake Peter out of his role and resists the unjust system that victimized both him and Peter. In this article, we will use Butlerian approach focusing on gender, subjectivity and power to examine the nature of Jerry and Peter's encounter.

Heteronormativity and Gender Intelligibility

According to Butler, the idea of gender identity is a social construction which is not only politically charged but also "informed by a socio-historical context of patriarchy and other social laws like heteronormativity"; therefore, gender is shaped by the traditions, laws, language and norms that we internalize and reiterate over time, so gender identity is "an agentic process of achievement' that we come to create only as a result of social pressures."⁴ If a person wants to persist as a credible gendered subject, they have to recite the socially defined

gender norms, demeanor, dress and behavior. So, in order to become signified in society one has to conform to the expected gender identities and act out as it is dictated by social, cultural, and linguistic laws.⁵

As Jerry gives Peter an account of his life, it becomes evident that he has been a victim of the normative discourses of his society. He has been unprivileged as a child in a dysfunctional family with a mother who escaped with her lover and an alcoholic father. As a grown up, he has lived an isolated and miserable life in poor rooming houses of New York. Now, he is at the park to make himself understood and heard through self-attempted murder, and for this end, he aims at a middle-class man with an outwardly perfect life. Jerry is separated not only because of the socio-economic barriers, but also because he is non-conforming in his gender presentation.

Jerry's gender trouble can be traced to his refusal to merge with the socially approved definition of gender. In "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender", Mikkola explains that, according to Butler, "gender is an illusion maintained by prevalent power structures." Individuals have "intelligible genders" if they exhibit a certain sequence of attributes in a coherent manner: "women are females with feminine behavioural traits, being heterosexuals whose desire is directed at men; men are males with masculine behavioural traits, being heterosexuals whose desire is directed at women." It is to say that for men and women to be gendered individuals and to persist through time as men and women, their sexual desire should follow from sexual orientation which in turn follows from feminine/masculine behaviour "thought to follow from biological sex."⁶

Jerry's homosexuality in the story suggests that he tries to defy power structures which maintain the gender regime. Jerry has become a recluse. He fails to communicate with the inhabitants of the society, which has put him aside. He says he cannot love the same person more than once and cannot interact with women. He cannot get married and have a family like Peter; however, he cannot live a normal life as a homosexual either. He has to live in misery and solitude in a poor rooming house with an abusive landlady and her monstrous dog. He comes to the park in the hope of talking to someone so that he can make himself understood. Being a recluse as a homosexual who is also economically deprived, he decides to occupy the bench of a middle-class family man. He fights for the possession of the bench so that he can overthrow the structure of power, which has excluded him from social life. He attempts to commit suicide in the hands of Peter, who stands for a symbol of power as a gendered citizen of the society, to violate the very same power that has doomed him to stay aside in misery. He is happy that he will appear in the news in the houses of all those who do not tend to recognize him. After his death, Jerry will be talked of and seen, and this is exactly what he aims to achieve.

Thus, Jerry's unintelligible gender caused him to be an outcast in a society where traditional gender roles and family values are emphasized. This is a society where minorities are not allowed to have a voice, and if they want to be seen and heard, they must fight for it. This is why Jerry, who is in a desperate need to connect to someone, or as he puts it "to deal with something," comes to the park to "really talk to someone." A talk that gives way to violence and culminates in a quarrel over the possession of Peter's bench, ends in Jerry's death in the hope that Peter will understand that other people, too, have the right to "need" something.

In her account of intelligible subjects, Butler highlights the importance of social justice and honors the dignity of each individual and marginalized population in society.⁷ She suggests that "the regulatory nature of dominant discourse and its impact on the psyche can interrupt the social justice and equality" and can stereotype individuals.⁸ Jerry, therefore, is not only marginalized due to his sexual orientation, but also as a result of his ability to see into the futility of the consumerism propagated by the expanding capitalist society, and the regulatory norms regarding social class, marriage, family, race, and gender which have stereotyped people like Peter, and excluded those non-conformists like himself.

The gender we act out is upheld by dominant discourses and reinforced by family systems, mass media and everyday social relations. Thus, the attribution of gender is unconsciously transmitted to the individuals, and consequently, the individuals come to perform their socially accepted roles. As they involve themselves in repeating the cultural patterns and roles, they unconsciously repress any opportunities for self-expression and

desire.⁹ This can explain Peter's submersion into his outwardly appearing blissful life whose emptiness is invisible to him, and this is Jerry's duty to wake Peter out of his illusory world where his indifference even toward himself has made him unable to see the bitter isolation he shares with Jerry.

Melancholia, Subjectivity and Abjectivity

Melancholy is a cultural form which indicates "the impossibility of any return of the self to itself by virtue of its inclusion within the gender."¹⁰ The inevitable entry into 'masculine' and 'feminine' happens at the rejection of "love for one's own kind in the form of desire for the other gender."¹¹ This entry into the gender entails melancholy which records the loss of a forbidden attachment. According to Butler, gender identity does not only depend on being homosexual or heterosexual, but also it is the result of loss of desire which is announced unlawful, denied and foreclosed. Any process of gender identification is accompanied by melancholy "to the extent that it indicates the marking rules: the subject becomes what it *cannot* have" and thus what it cannot desire.¹²

Jerry's identification with his mother and his desire for her could have made him mourn the loss of an opposite-sex parent, which has led him to a state of melancholy. His homosexual desire is undertaken at the price of denying heterosexuality. In other words, he is a melancholic homosexual whose desire for a love object of the opposite sex has been barred from his consciousness. That is why he says he cannot establish good relationships with women or cannot love the same woman twice. He mentions his involvement in a homosexual activity when he was a teenager, and insists on denying that there is nothing going on between him and the "colored queen" who lives next door. He has become a melancholic subject who cannot think of attachment to a love object of opposite sex. Therefore, he cannot meet "pretty little ladies" twice or love them more than one hour, and he finds his lustful landlady disgustingly intrusive.

On the other hand, there lies the character Peter who appears to have conformed to the socially accepted cultural norms as a typical man of family. On the surface, he seems to be happy with the life he has with his family, cats and parakeets. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that he is not much of a happy satisfied man; he has to provide for his seemingly demanding family, he does not have a son, and spends all Sunday afternoons alone at the park. Like *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf's* George, Peter's wife seems to be present like a shadow around him. Then, why is it that in spite of being a lonely unhappy man, he "has surrendered himself to his role"¹³ and being unaware of his miserable situation, he must be brought to an awareness of life by Jerry's suicide-murder?

Drawing upon Butler, social researcher Amie Hough writes that the social force to conform and act out socially acceptable identities is ingrained into the individuals' psyches from childhood, and the underlying pressure behind conformity originates from the internal drive to belong, avoid harm, and gain personal safety.¹⁴ Peter's submersion into conformity is, therefore, the result of "socialization into the heterosexual matrix and compulsory heterosexuality"¹⁵, which has created a melancholy in him, too. Under constraint, individuals perform an acceptable gender which brings them the most rewards and the least amount of pain.¹⁶

In *The Poet of Loss*, Stenz asserts that Peter and Jerry represent extremes in the social spectrum to show "the self-destructiveness and cruelty implicit in an education for conformity."¹⁷ As much as Jerry is miserable due to violating the norms of the society, Peter is pathetic in his devotion to norms and to socially-defined masculine gender role. Therefore, he cannot see his wasted life and obsessive attachments unless he is awakened by Jerry's suicide-murder. In "Dependency, subordination, and recognition" (2006), Allen clarifies that according to Butler, individuals tend to form attachments even if they are painful or subordinating because there exists a very strong need for attachment in human beings. This willingness to attach is exploited by the "processes of social regulation, such as the processes that regulate the production and reproduction of normative masculinity and femininity" as they cultivate an attachment to subordinating identities and gender norms.¹⁸

Butler (1997) clarifies that "no subject emerges without a passionate attachment to those on whom she or he is fundamentally dependent (even if that passion is 'negative' in the psychoanalytic sense)," and without a

passionate attachment to those by whom the subject is subordinated, no subject would be formed.¹⁹ Therefore, for the subject to continue to live, there must be a certain attachment to the norms that regulate the stages of self-identification so that the subject is allowed access to the social life and can continue to live. No subjectivity is detached from any regulation since there has always been attachment in the constitution of any self to the rules that precede the subject. Thus, “the power of the social affections is suffered and desired at the same time.”²⁰ Peter has conformed to the rules and regulations to gain permission to live, this is why he has married, has children, and advises Jerry to get married and have a family. He has, in fact, never gone out of his way. On the other hand, Jerry is the one who has violated the ideological norms and social regulations through his life style and more importantly, through his homosexuality. This is why he has become a solitary outsider who is deprived of his right to continue to live.

As Butler proposes, “subjects are signified only when they fit into viable, intelligible social categories. Arguably, the White, male, heterosexual, able-bodied subject acts as the standard of normalcy that all other subjects in society are compared to.”²¹ These “intelligible beings” are materialized through dominant discourse, and are granted the rights of subjectivity. Those who fail to fit into the intelligible social categories due to “their gender, sexual orientation, or racial and ethnic backgrounds are marked off and abjected as unviable, unintelligible subjects” who are not recognized within “the matrix of normalcy.”²² “The term abjection is defined as ‘excluding what is unclean, repulsive or improper’ in order to signify and recognize the proper subject. To be considered ‘abjected’ is to be denied ‘subject status’.”²³ Therefore, Jerry stands for the abjected, and Peter for the one who is signified as a proper subject; however, they share solitude in their outwardly seeming different lives.

In “The Melancholy of Social Life” (2010), Durante clarifies that Butler draws upon Freud where in *Mourning and Melancholia*, he explains that

self-aggression is the secondary effect of a relationship that consults the other. Before each masochistic element, in other words, there would be a sadistic rebellious impulse, which is internalized and which allows the emergence of another aspect of the ambivalence of the attachment: the dual desire to defeat and, at the same time, to save the object of love. In the self punishment of the melancholic, it is possible to collect then a containment of aggression that was originally directed to the object of love.²⁴

Jerry’s attempt at self-murder then could also be looked upon from this point of view. Melancholic Jerry first participates in an act of violence against Peter, and then turns against himself to practice the aggression that he would originally have liked to direct toward his mother. The case of Jerry’s mother was for him a loss that could not be planted as no one expected him to grieve the loss of a mother who had left him to escape with her lover, so it remained unseen to the order of socially established discourse.

Moreover, melancholy is also defined as “what allows us to touch the limits of subduing.”²⁵ Jerry probes the way through which he can exceed the power to which he is bound. Psychic life is “the sequence and sedimentation of the life-power relation,” and as Butler suggests, it is life inside the norms. As such, life is precarious and “no life ever belongs to itself.” The psychic scene goes beyond the life where it takes place as there is nothing absolutely internal to the subject.²⁶ “Challenge of social order necessarily speaks the same language as the rules that deny it.”²⁷ Jerry’s melancholia, then, allows him to go beyond the limits of subordination.

Power Struggle

In *Act Like a Man: Challenging Masculinities in American Drama* (1995), Vorlicky asserts that Albee’s characters “engage in violent power plays over their rights to self-identification, as well as to their connections with other men.”²⁸ *The Zoo Story* “dramatizes the extent to which a male would engage in violent power plays in an effort to forge an identity and to pursue a connection with other men.”²⁹ Even in Jerry’s long narration which serves as a microcosm to the play, Jerry and the dog “engage in a vicious battle over the dynamics of power within their

relationship.”³⁰ Peter and Jerry’s struggle over dominance and control reaches its height when Jerry, having thrown the knife at Peter’s feet, invites him to defend his manhood.

As it was mentioned before, apparently, Jerry suffers from being an outcast. He admits that he does not talk to many people except to say, “give me a beer, or where’s the john, or what time does the feature go on,” but he continues, “every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk; like to get to know somebody, know all about him.” He lacks family and friends. He lives in a rooming house where he cannot interact with anyone, even he finds himself in trouble communicating with a dog. He has not conformed to the socially established norms, and resisted submitting to the power structures of his society. Therefore, he has become an outsider who is desperately in need of being involved with other human beings. Consequently, he plans to do something that makes others recognize him, put him in the papers or show him in the news.

To this end, thus, Jerry has to submit to power in order to get an identity. This is why he commits his self-murder in the hands of Peter, the representative of power as one who has assimilated into the power structure of the society. Peter’s being a symbol of power becomes more palpable as he holds the knife in the fight with Jerry. This is when Jerry throws himself on the knife and symbolically submits to the knife, to Peter, to the power that has subordinated him. He wants to make himself be recognized by others, as he is tired of being a man without identity. However, his submission has dual sides in that it is at the same time an act of resistance through which he also asserts his agency. Subjection to power is an ambivalent form of agency; therefore, according to Butler, the subject is “neither fully determined by power nor fully determining of power (but significantly and partially both).”³¹ “Agency lies in giving up any claim to self coherence, while risking one’s ontological status may constitute a means of successful revolt.”³² By destroying himself, then, Jerry succeeds in revolting against the power to which he has capitulated.

The relations of power sustain the subject’s identity by subordinating them, so the subject develops an attachment to power in spite of the damage done by subordination.³³ This can explain further why Peter has yielded to the power relations that subordinate him; subjection is the only way through which he can gain an identity. To the contrary, Jerry has chosen to have no identity by his denial to submit to the dominant discourses of the society, and now he has decided to assert his agency by committing self-murder.

Butler’s account of psychic life is useful in understanding Jerry’s relation to power. Psychic, as Salih puts it, “focuses on the emergence of consciousness, specially its emergence within discourse and the law.”³⁴ It is possible to theorize the relationship between the psyche and power by considering the fact that the psyche is formed within power structures and also that power takes a psychic form. The agency which is possessed by the subject is the effect of its subordination. “The subject’s relationship to power is ambivalent: it depends on power for its existence, and yet it also wields power in unexpected, potentially subversive ways.”³⁵ What initiates psychic life is melancholia³⁶, which, working “in tandem” with “processes of social regulation,” can cause a subject’s turning against itself.³⁷ As the psyche exceeds the law and the power structures through which the subject is formed, it presents the possibility for subversion and agency.³⁸ Thus, Jerry exceeds power; he proves his agency and subverts the power relations that had previously subordinated him.

So, for Butler, resistance is internal to the very power that it opposes. Disciplinary regimes produce subjects as they reiterate and rearticulate the norms to which they are subjected; thus, they also produce the possibility of resistance and their own subversion. “The key to successful resistance, then, is figuring out how we can ‘work the power relations by which we are worked, and in what direction. . . .’”³⁹ “In order to continue as a subject, individuals have to submit to the very power that subordinates them.”⁴⁰

As Boesten explains, in Butler’s view, gender difference, heteronormativity, and sex difference are not natural; rather, they are constructs that are produced “through the workings of power.”⁴¹ The norms which guide our societies are expressed and formed through the discourses and institutions; thus, power is a process in which the subjects take part, and is not limited to leaders. Butler holds the view that physical and social life is made possible through norms and regulations which are not only enabling but also limiting in that they can restrict the

possibilities of how life can be lived. “Norms are reproduced by ‘regulative discourses’ and the productive power of repetitive performance.”⁴² In a heterosexual society like the one in which Jerry and Peter live, the binary of male/female is not the only basis of power struggle, but also sexuality, race, ethnicity and class are identity makers that can define the norms according to which people are allowed to live.⁴³ This could explain why Jerry brings up the question of social class divisions as in when he asks Peter about the difference between middle-middle class and upper middle class. He also talks about his homosexual affair with a Greek boy when he was a teenager. Obviously, his economic, social and sexual backgrounds are the factors that count in who he is and how he can live.

Normative Violence

“The concept ‘normative violence’ follows from Butler’s analysis of the power of norms to enable and restrict life.”⁴⁴ Butler believes that one of the ways in which ideological constructs and discourses are upheld “is through the threat of normative violence in our everyday lives, which serves to maintain power and a certain social order.”⁴⁵ Normative violence takes on different forms such as the way race, disability and sexuality “are portrayed or excluded in the mass media” by showing that only white, heterosexual able-bodied men and women are normal. The dominant social order, then, is maintained out of the fear of ostracism which leads the subjects to reify the norms and notions of intelligibility.⁴⁶

Norms dictate to us what we can and cannot do even at the most personal level of life, as in sexuality, desire and love. Consequently, norms exert violence on those who break the norm, and exclude the non-conformists as they are considered nonexistent and unintelligible beings. Laws determine the boundaries of being, and can make unlivable certain lives such as homosexual lives since they are not recognized by society, and thus, are denied being.⁴⁷

In *The Zoo Story*, normative violence has resulted in Jerry’s being a recluse. He is a victim of the society’s norms, which dictate to him how to perform, behave, dress, desire, and simply put, how to exist. As a homosexual, he is not recognized by the society and has to live the life of an outcast. Being desperately in need of connecting to others, he makes any attempt to gain the impression that he exists as a human being. As Gabbard notes in “Edward Albee’s Triptych on Abandonment,” Jerry is an isolated human being who lives in “the deep center of a honeycomb of outcasts.”⁴⁸ His mother died alone in Alabama, shortly after, his alcoholic father died by a collision with a city bus, and his aunt dropped dead on the day he graduated from high school. Now, he lives in a rooming house which has sheltered a group of outcasts, a colored queen, a Puerto Rican family, an unseen tenant in the front room, and a crying woman. The landlady is also isolated with her unsatisfied desire and her misused dog. All the inhabitants are like encaged animals of the zoo, wherein they live as imprisoned offenders who are doomed to be permanently excluded.⁴⁹

There is a point in the play where Jerry asks Peter “do you understand what other people need?” The feeling of rejection and loss has resulted in Jerry’s hostility towards those whose attention he seeks.⁵⁰ This is why he treats Peter aggressively towards the end of the play and also why he tries to poison the dog in order to establish communication with him. He, being a victim of violence himself, finds no way other than exercising violence in order to get into contact with others. Finally, he passes an awareness of life to Peter through his death.

Conclusion

In *The Zoo Story*, the play in which patriarchal norms and heterosexual values are re-examined, “Jerry does not only intrude into Peter’s world but also into a rarely explored sphere of male interactions.”⁵¹ Albee challenges the audience’s expectations of how men should relate to one another and “attacks the social forms and sexual norms.”⁵² The play dramatizes “the extent to which a male would engage in violent power plays in an effort to forge an identity and to pursue a connection with other men.”⁵³ It is a power struggle of masculinization and emasculation which unlocks “the ideological cages which separate human beings in this society.”⁵⁴ Being

politically charged, Jerry's story about the dog symbolizes patriarchal, heterosexual masculine values that preserve power and domination as they impose themselves upon individuals.⁵⁵ Jerry and Peter are the victims of heteronormative, patriarchal capitalist discourses of the society. Normative violence has excluded Jerry from the social sphere, and made conformist Peter hypnotize into a state of vegetable life wherein he fails to see the vanity of his values and the norms he reiterates in order to be signified as a subject. Jerry enters the domain of agency by resisting the violence exerted by the society's regulatory frameworks. Finally, Jerry, who used to call Peter a vegetable, wakes Peter out of his self-deceiving world through his suicide. He makes Peter understand that he is just another isolated human being encaged within the same social barriers and limitations which have made him an outsider. That is why, he makes his final comment about Peter; "you're not really a vegetable; it's all right, you're an animal. You're an animal, too."



¹ Cressida Heyes. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Spring 2012 ed., s.v. "Identity Politics."
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/identity-politics/>

² James Fredrick Kittredge. *Chasing a Myth: The Formulation of American Identity in the Plays of Edward Albee* (PhD thesis, The University of Arizona, 2006), 8.

³ Kittredge, *Chasing a Myth*, 10-11.

⁴ Amie Marie Hough. "An Exploration of Selected Concepts from Judith Butler: With Application to the Understanding of Gender Identity in Social Work Practice with Marginalized Female Adolescents" (PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2010), 35.

⁵ Hough, "An Exploration," 36.

⁶ Mari Mikkola. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Spring 2012 ed., s.v. "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender."
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/feminism-gender/>

⁷ Hough, "An Exploration," 4.

⁸ Hough, "An Exploration," 26.

⁹ Hough, "An Exploration," 36-37.

¹⁰ Graziella Durante. "The Melancholy of Social Life. The Power of Loss in J. Butler." *Humana.Mente*. 12 (Jan 2010): 118.

¹¹ Durante. "The Melancholy of Social Life."

¹² Durante. "The Melancholy of Social Life," 119.

¹³ Anita Maria Stenz. *Edward Albee: the Poet of Loss* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 8.

¹⁴ Hough, "An Exploration," 44.

¹⁵ Hough, "An Exploration," 43.

¹⁶ Hough, "An Exploration," 44.

¹⁷ Stenz, *Edward Albee*, 5.

¹⁸ Amy Allen. "Dependency, subordination, and recognition: On Judith Butler's Theory of Subjection." *Continental Philosophy Review* 38.3-4 (2006): 206.

¹⁹ Judith Butler. *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, May 1997), 7.

²⁰ Durante, "The Melancholy of Social Life," 109.

²¹ Hough, "An Exploration," 45.

²² Hough, "An Exploration," 45.

²³ Hough, "An Exploration," 45.

²⁴ Durante, "The Melancholy of Social Life," 115.

²⁵ Durante, "The Melancholy of Social Life," 111.

- ²⁶ Durante, "The Melancholy of Social Life," 110.
- ²⁷ Durante, "The Melancholy of Social Life," 120.
- ²⁸ Robert Vorlicky. *Act Like a Man: Challenging Masculinities in American Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 131.
- ²⁹ Vorlicky, *Act Like a Man*, 133.
- ³⁰ Vorlicky, *Act Like a Man*, 123.
- ³¹ Allen, "Dependency, subordination, and recognition," 202.
- ³² Sara Salih. *Judith Butler* (London: Routledge, 2002), 136.
- ³³ Salih, *Judith Butler*, 201.
- ³⁴ Salih, *Judith Butler*, 120.
- ³⁵ Salih, *Judith Butler*, 121.
- ³⁶ Salih, *Judith Butler*, 134.
- ³⁷ Allen, "Dependency, subordination, and recognition," 202.
- ³⁸ Salih, *Judith Butler*, 134.
- ³⁹ Allen, "Dependency, subordination, and recognition," 204.
- ⁴⁰ Moya Lloyd. *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 97.
- ⁴¹ Jelke Boesten. "Inequality, Normative violence and Livable Life: Judith Butler and Peruvian Reality" *POLIS Working Paper* 1 (2010): 4.
<http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/research/working-papers.php>
- ⁴² Boesten, "Inequality, Normative violence and Livable Life," 4.
- ⁴³ Boesten, "Inequality, Normative violence and Livable Life," 4.
- ⁴⁴ Boesten, "Inequality, Normative violence and Livable Life," 5.
- ⁴⁵ Hough, "An Exploration," 44.
- ⁴⁶ Hough, "An Exploration," 44.
- ⁴⁷ Boesten, "Inequality, Normative violence and Livable Life," 5-6.
- ⁴⁸ Lucina P Gabbard. "Edward Albee's Triptych on Abandonment." *Twentieth Century Literature* 28.1 (1982):15.
- ⁴⁹ Gabbard, "Albee's Triptych on Abandonment," 15.
- ⁵⁰ Gabbard, "Albee's Triptych on Abandonment," 16.
- ⁵¹ Chiang-Sheng Kuo. "Images of Masculinity in Contemporary American Drama: Albee, Shepard, Mamet and Kushner" (PhD thesis, New York University, 1998), 86.
- ⁵² Kuo, "Images of Masculinity," 86.

⁵³ Vorlicky, *Act Like a Man*, 133.

⁵⁴ Kuo, "Images of Masculinity," 92.

⁵⁵ Kuo, "Images of Masculinity," 87.

References

- Allen, Amy. "Dependency, subordination, and recognition: On Judith Butler's Theory of Subjection." *Continental Philosophy Review* 38.3-4 (2006): 199-222.
- Boesten, Jelke. "Inequality, Normative violence and Livable Life: Judith Butler and Peruvian Reality." *POLIS Working Paper*. 1 (2010): <http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/research/working-papers.php>
- Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, May 1997.
- Durante, Graziella. "The Melancholy of Social Life. The Power of Loss in J. Butler." *Humana.Mente*. 12 (Jan 2010): 107-121.
- Gabbard, Lucina P. "Edward Albee's Triptych on Abandonment." *Twentieth Century Literature*. 28.1 (1982):14-33.
- Heyes, Cressida. "Identity Politics." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2012 Edition)*.Ed. Edward N. Zalta.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/identity-politics/>.
- Hough, Amie Marie. "An Exploration of Selected Concepts from Judith Butler: With Application to the Understanding of Gender Identity in Social Work Practice with Marginalized Female Adolescents." PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2010.
- Kittredge, James Fredrick. *Chasing a Myth: The Formulation of American Identity in the Plays of Edward Albee*. PhD thesis. The University of Arizona, 2006.
- Kuo, Chiang-Sheng. "Images of Masculinity in Contemporary American Drama: Albee, Shepard, Mamet and Kushner." PhD thesis, New York University, 1998.
- Lloyd, Moya. *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics*. Cambridge: Polity, 2007.
- Mikkola, Mari, "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. Web. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/feminism-gender/>.
- Salih, Sara. *Judith Butler*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Stenz, Anita Maria. *Edward Albee: the Poet of Loss*. The Hague: Mouton, 1978.
- Vorlicky, Robert. *Act Like a Man: Challenging Masculinities in American Drama*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.