

Anti-feminism in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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Women's voice of their freedom and equality with men has been echoing for centuries in America. The first women's convention held in Seneca Fall in 1848 brought a drastic change among women activists in the United States as well as it vied attention of the feminist scholars around the world; consequently, feminist activists opposed women's subservient roles in the male chauvinist society. They campaigned for their equal rights with men in every walk of life. One movement after another by feminist activists took place in America, yet male chauvinism reiterated biblical notion of woman's creation and womanhood which considered women to be secondary to man. Despite feminist attempts to liberate women from their subordination to men, the ideological rejection of women's independent identity and equal rights with men antifeminism emerged as counterblast to feminism. Antifeminism has been prevalent in the society in the form of misogyny. Edward Albee, the twentieth-century American playwright dramatizes the twentieth century American womanhood on the stage. In his play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Albee portrays female characters as homemakers and their counterparts as fighters, similarly the Victorian ideology of women: "Man for the field and woman for the hearth; / Man for the sword and for the needle she;" (Tennyson, 261). In the play, George treats woman as useless creature except for she is able to fulfill the need at the time of emergency like World War II because the regular male workers are in the armed forces. Martha is confined within the web of the American Dream ignoring her duties and responsibilities of womanhood assigned by Nature. Throughout the play, she readily embraces inequality between sexes and conforms herself to male expectations, first, to her father to fulfill the American Dream and then to her husband to keep body and soul together. The present article is a discussion of antifeminist acts in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. It is divided into three sections. The first section deliberates upon definitions, concepts and dimensions of antifeminism. The second section reflects antifeminist acts in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and the third section deals with the conclusion.

Key Words: Misogyny, feminism, antifeminism, sexuality, Edward Albee.

The *Feminist Dictionary* defines antifeminism as "[t]he conviction that women are not entitled to the same moral and legal rights as men, or to the same social status and opportunities. 'All antifeminist thinkers hold in common the thesis that there are innate and unalterable psychological differences between women and men, differences which make it in the interests of both sexes for women to play a subordinate, private role, destined for wife-and-motherhood. . . . [it]

involves 'the idea that women ought to sacrifice the development of their own personalities for the sake of men and children.'" (*Feminist Dictionary* 54). An antifeminist is, therefore, a person who "[is] opposed to women or to feminism; a person (usu. a man) who is hostile to sexual equality or to the advocacy of women's rights" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 524).

According to Hope Phyllis Weissman an "antifeminist writing is not simply a satirical caricature of women but any presentation of a woman's nature intended to conform her to male expectations of what she is or ought to be, not her own . . . Indeed the most insidious of antifeminist images are those which celebrate with a precision often subtle rather than apparent, the forms women's goodness is to take" (94). Audrey Bilger thinks that antifeminist persons oppose feminism; therefore, their opinions are projected against equality of women at work, home, society and culture. In her words, "Antifeminism may be simply defined as the opposite of feminism. Like feminism, anti-feminism focuses on the role of woman at work, at home, in society, and in the culture. And, like feminism, antifeminism promotes a complex political, social, and cultural agenda. Antifeminists often take their cues from feminists, speaking out against current feminist platforms and against feminists themselves" (27). Valerie Sanders vividly describes antifeminist acts. She thinks that the term 'anti-feminist' itself is problematic as is the original designation of 'feminist', which was not officially used until 1894. In her opinion, the term 'antifeminist' emerged thirty years after 1894, in the preface to Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1924). She thinks that it is difficult enough to define antifeminism in the twentieth century, but in the nineteenth, the definition suffered from additional complications. In her view, antifeminism is "a conviction that women were designed (whether by 'God' or 'Nature') to be first and foremost wives and mothers, and that their social and political subordination is the proper corollary of that position" (5). Describing the different traits of antifeminism, she writes:

The definition of anti-feminism naturally hinges on how we perceive feminism, and a specific anti-feminist upsurge generally arises in response to a specific feminist campaign, such as for the suffrage or legalization of abortion. . . . [a]ntifeminism, as implied by its name, is usually a resistance movement against the advancement of women's rights. It tries to halt the development of new liberal attitudes towards the boundaries between the sexes, insisting that there are fundamental differences in sexual characteristics and roles which women should accept. Like feminism, antifeminism, too, tries to envisage a better society, but one based on tradition or status; it tries to put the brake on change, unless it is a return to family values. (Sanders 3)

The antifeminist writers thus oppose the idea of equal rights for women by making discrimination between the sexes. They think that women are emotional, graceful, meek, submissive, and passive but have a resilience men lack. They make derogatory comments against women to maintain their dominant status. They consider them competitive to men; hence, they oppose their equality in every walk of life.

Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has been studied from the standpoint of feminism by the critics. For example, in his dissertation, *The Animal within: Edward Albee's Deconstruction of Human Privilege in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Ryan Thomas Jenkins argues that Edward Albee deliberates upon the old models, new paradigms and the advancement of women. Dashrath Gatt points out Albee's depiction of an arid academic world where human decadence and depravity govern human relationships. Kari Hauge states that Albee complicates the very idea of sexuality in the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. Mona Hoorvash argues that Albee depicts woman as a self-conscious actor in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* On the contrary, Albee's projection of antifeminist practices in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has not been studied by the critics.

Defining the ideology of "ideal woman" Vanessa Martins Lamb writes, "In the United States of the 1950's the image of the 'ideal' family was that of the successful husband, of the children running in the garden or watching the brand-new television set and, above all, of the wife cooking in her highly-equipped kitchen, doing the laundry in the most modern washing machine and cleaning the house with her extremely powerful vacuum cleaner while wearing high heels and pearls and with an intact hairstyle" (17-18). Through his theatrical spectacles, Edward Albee defends antifeminist acts in the play. He sets new paradigms of womanhood in the old model of femininity which either exist in the magazines, newspaper, fashion paper, posters or in the patriarchal structure of family but they do not exist in real life.

In the play, the female characters succumb themselves to male characters. For example, like a traditional woman; Martha shows her staunch faith in masculinity. She considers herself the 'Earth Mother' and offers to a man who can 'get it up' and beget a son from her. Her subjective, overt and aggressive desire for sex becomes disgusting for George who finds it abominable. Even John Kundert-Gibbs recognizes misogyny in the sexual relationship between an overt, aggressive, Martha and George. He writes, "In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, the relationship between a sexually aggressive woman and a reluctant male is even more pronounced. Before Nick and Honey arrive, Martha expresses her sexuality in the context of a total, expansive sensuality which George finds disgusting" (234). Martha's desire to beget a son reveals her subservient desire to fulfill patriarchal needs as well as hate herself for being a girl. Hans Osterwalder also argues, "The patriarch's most burning desire is to have son to ensure his succession. In a way Martha never received her Daddy's love because she committed the unforgivable crime of being born as a girl" (110). Misogyny reflects in George's hatred of Martha. Albee's dramaturgy reveals that overt and aggressive sexuality emerges from Martha's feminized romance:

MARTHA. I WANT A BIG SLOPPY KISS!

GEORGE. (Preoccupied). I don't want to kiss you, Martha . . .

MARTHA. . . . Make me another drink . . . lover.

GEORGE. (Taking her glass). My God, you can swill it down, can't you?

MARTHA. (Imitating a tiny child). I'm firsty.

GEORGE. JESUS.

MARTHA. (Swinging around). Look sweetheart, I can drink you under any goddamn table you want . . . so don't worry about me!

GEORGE. Martha, I gave the prize years ago . . . There isn't an abomination award going that you. . . (1.16-17)

Like antifeminist thinkers, Albee dramatizes women's physical charm, amiable behavior and sexual appeal as their valuable property that helps them to allure men. When Martha finds that she is not able to control her male counterparts either verbally or physically, she uses her feminine wiles. Enticing men with her attractive dress and sexual appeal, she gains power over them. She puts on a sexy dress, flirts with Nick, and reveals secrets from her sexual past so that she can gain authority to control them in her own way.

Simone de Beauvoir criticizes socio-cultural construction of womanhood. She advocates that a woman is not woman by birth her subservient roles to men and duties in the male dominated society construct her femininity. She writes, "One is not born but rather becomes, a woman" (295). On the contrary, in the play, femininity is constructed by the male chauvinist society. Martha is confined within the sacrosanct institution of marriage. Her independent decision to marry gardener's son turns to be a failure after few months because her father does not consider her husband a suitable life partner. Her Daddy thinks that the boy does not have enough education hence; he cannot look after his college after his retirement. Consequently, her marriage breaks up and her dreams are shattered by her father. Being a patriarch, her father imposes his will on her to marry a man whom he likes. Her father declares George fit for marriage. Consequently, she marries George an Associate Professor of History in her father's college. In this way, she has to conform to the patriarchal desires. Thaddeus Wakefield rightly points out Martha's subservient role: "Martha and Julia select their husbands not on the basis of romantic love, but on the ideological "assumption" that her husband will be a "producer" - financially/socially/academically" (20).

In a patriarchal family, Martha's decision to marry a gardener's boy without her father's will is considered a rebellious act against the traditional principles of the phallogocentric society of the time in American culture. In the play, Martha herself asserts it when she says, "But Daddy and Miss Muff got together and put an end to that . . . real quick . . . annulled . . . which is a laugh" (1.86). Embracing her father's decision passively Martha says to Honey, "Well, Daddy knows how to run things" (1.28). Moreover, Martha frequently repents her independent decision to ignore her father's principles by marrying a boy without his permission. Hence; she tries to win his favour again as she accepts that her father "always had it in the back of mind to . . . groom someone to take over" so that he can carry out the responsibilities of the college after his retirement (1.87). Thus, Albee depicts Martha and Honey as intellectually weaker sex than their male counterparts hence; they constantly chase men who can give them financial support, social prestige, and academic intelligentsia. The relationship between Nick and Honey is similar to the relationship between George and Martha. Their future marital relationships will reiterate George and Martha's marriage

relationship based on the economic determinism of American society within the institution of marriage. Matthew Roudané concurs with similar opinion. He states, "Nick, a young biologist, new to the college, emerges as a smug opportunist, a patronizing scientist who married, we discover, for money, not for love. His wife Honey is . . . a comedic airhead, who provides much humour, and who also appear subjugated by her husband and endures his trivializing remarks throughout the evening" (40). Wakefield rightly states, "In the twentieth century, economic determinism pervades all of American society, including the institution of marriage" (22). Vanessa Martins Lamb argues, "This desperate search for a husband was every young woman's goal. After finding a husband and founding a family they could live the "American Dream"; but they no longer knew who they were, what they wanted or what they liked" (29).

Albee projects economic independence of men while women remain economically subservient to men. For example, both Martha and Honey's fathers remarry merely for the purpose of grabbing money in their hands. Martha's father decides to remarry only for a strong economic hold in the society: "Martha's got money because Martha's father's second wife . . . not Martha's mother, but after Martha's mother died . . . was a very old lady with warts who was very rich" (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*:122). Thaddeus Wakefield writes, "Daddy makes money, and Martha values him for that. Martha has internalized the capitalistic values of an economically driven society in analyzing her father; he is 'valuable' because the endowments are up, not because of his intrinsic personality and individuality" (19-20). Martha's father does not show faith in her daughter as he considers her a weaker sex, hence; she cannot hold economic powers. Similarly, Honey's father raises money by preaching the virtues of religion among the public as he is a priest. In the play, Nick also asserts it when he says to George, "My father-in-law . . . was a man of the Lord, and he was very rich" (120). Thaddeus Wakefield points out contradiction between Martha's father and Honey's father when he states, "Honey's father made his money from religion, while Martha's father made it from marrying a rich old woman who died and left everything to him in her will" (21). Thus, male characters hold economic independence; on the contrary, women are economically dependent on men.

One of the concerns for women's freedom is the function of mothering for fulfillment of womanhood. The feminist scholars advocate women's freedom to exercising of their choice for mothering. On the contrary, mothering is another concern for Albee dramatizes antifeminism. He reveals women's reproductive rights as fantasy. He makes satire of women's maternal instinct and function of mothering. Martha and Honey have no freedom to exercise their reproductive rights in the real life. Martha wants to be mother of a son. She bears an imaginary child who is murdered in fantasy. On the other hand, Honey's constant appeal and strong desire to give birth to a child is rejected and her dream of mothering is shattered because she is forced to abort her "hysterical pregnancy". In this way, woman's reproductive right is rejected by the patriarchal society. Further, George makes caricature of Honey's "hysterical pregnancy" and he considers it as "up and down". Albee, thus ridicules women's reproductive rights on the

stage by showing an anti-nature situation where female characters are forced to shirk their responsibilities for bearing and rearing of children. In the play, Albee's antifeminism rests on mothering as phantasy rather than a reality:

HONEY. [almost tearfully]. I want a child.

NICK. Honey. . . .

HONEY. [More forcefully]. I want a child!

GEORGE. On principle?

HONEY. [in tears]. I want a child. I want a baby. (3.236)

In her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1960), Betty Friedan opines that mothering is the central goal of American women for their maternal happiness and fulfilment of modern womanhood. On the contrary, in the play, Martha and Honey have no freedom for maternal happiness as well as fulfilment of modern womanhood. On the one hand, Martha has to give birth to an imaginary child and remain childless throughout her life. Her imaginary child is strangled by her husband, hence her right to be a mother is spoiled by him. On the other hand, Honey's "hysterical pregnancy" (104) becomes meaningless when she is forced to take pills and strangle about the child in the womb whom she desperately wants to give birth.

Albee rejects women's equal right for education with men. For example, Martha and Honey's education cannot be overlooked by the feminist scholars because their education is different from their male counterparts. There were very few colleges till 1960s, which made transitions and adopted co-educational system of study for boys and girls, otherwise; girls were sent to the segregated colleges for their study and the syllabus for their education was also different from the syllabus designed for the education of boys. In *The Education of Women in the United States*, McClelland points out that the actual educational experiences of the girls at school were simply different from the boys. In her essay, Jennifer C. Madigan finds discrimination between girls and boys' education. Madigan writes, "In reviewing the historical picture of women's educational experiences in the United States, it appears that expectations for girls in school have been different than expectations for boys" (12). Thus, Martha and Honey's education focuses more on home making, cleaning, mopping, bearing and rearing of children in fantasy, ignoring other arena of life like economic independence, and earning their livelihood independently.

Moreover, in the stage direction, it is described that Martha and Honey obtain school education but it is not told as to whether they get higher education and/or aspire for their professional career. Describing the American education system for women, Azra Ghandeharion and Manzay Feyz argue, "Martha and Honey were both victim of such an educational system. Of Honey's education, we know little. She may or may not have gone to college. Yet during her high school she was clearly influenced by sex-directed educators persuading her that higher education or any career plans would defeminize her" (10). On the contrary, Albee describes the degrees of George and Nick with their professional career while women's educational advancement is marginalized. Friedan states, "The one lesson a girl could hardly avoid learning, if she went to the college between 1945

and 1960, was not to get interested, seriously interested, in anything besides getting married and having children, if she wanted to be normal and happy, adjusted, feminine, having a successful husband, children, and a normal, feminine, adjusted, successful sex life" (142). Friedan opines that women's education was responsible for their general and sexual frustration because college was predominantly considered as "the place to find a man" (158) and the new sex-directions were part of school curriculum which "was perhaps even more insidious on the high-school level than it was in the colleges, for many girls who were subjected to it never got to the college" (154). Thus, by opposing women's equal right to education, Albee reiterates antifeminist notion that women are not entitled for their equal rights for education, with men.

The antifeminist notion of women as housekeepers, men as breadwinners, echoes throughout the play. Martha and Honey never cross their thresholds. In the 1960s, when women were campaigning against their domestication to break the shackles of their slavery, Martha readily accepted the role of a housewife. She speaks with pride about Bette Davis' role of a housewife:

MARTHA. . . . Bette Davis comes home from a hard day at the grocery store . . .

GEORGE. She works in a grocery store?

MARTHA. She's a house wife; she buys things . . . (1.8)

In the play, audience finds that Martha is indulged in cooking food, washing utensils inside the kitchen: "She's making coffee . . . in the kitchen" (99). On the contrary, male characters are professors of history and biology respectively, hence; they have economic independence. Albee, thus defends antifeminist ideology where woman is seen as a homemaker and man is seen as a breadwinner.

In the play, patriarchy is the focus of women's subordination. Martha has to live under the control of his domineering father. She has to conform to his expectations and embrace every decision taken by him about her life. He considers her a valuable commodity as she will inherit all his money, simultaneously he thinks that she would not be able to multiply and manage all his money, hence he makes decision solely about her marriage partner who can carefully manage and monitor long-term investments. Hans Osterwalder rightly argues, "The patriarch's most burning desire is to have a son to ensure his succession. In a way Martha never received her Daddy's love because she committed the unforgivable crime of being born as a girl" (110). In the play, the patriarchal attitude of Martha's Daddy becomes clear when George speaks about him ironically:

GEORGE. [. . .] Martha's father expects loyalty and devotion
out of his . . .
. . . staff.

[. . .] the old man is not going to die. Martha's father has the staying power of ne of those Micronesian tortoises. There are rumours . . . which you must not breathe in front of Martha, for she foams at the mouth . . . that the old man, her father, is over two hundred years old. (1.43-44)

Albee dramatizes sex as a strong antifeminist motif in the play. When George flings open the front door for Nick and Honey, the first word that Nick and Honey hear is: "fuck you" (1.20). The antifeminist belief that woman is sexually controlled by a man, manifests itself in the play. The dramatist shows that Martha is independent and capable of controlling her sexuality. She marries a boy without her father's permission because she wants to satisfy her own sexuality. Like Martha's father, George declares Martha's sexual expression improper when he says, "your skirt up over your head." (1.18). Martha's overt sexuality is emphasized understood in George's words: "Well, dear, if I kissed you I'd get all excited . . . I'd get beside myself, and, I'd take you, by force, right here on the living room rug, and our little guests would walk in, and . . . well, just think what your father would say about *that*" (1.17). The playwright reveals that Martha constantly chases George and Nick for the fulfilment of her sexuality. She uses her feminine wiles to attract Nick and satisfy her sexuality. When she is not happy with George, she flirts with Nick. Susan Abbotson rightly argues that Martha is a female character who "deliberately flirts" (317) to vie Nick's attention for her sexual satisfaction. Kari Hauge opines that Martha presents herself an object of male desires to be gazed at by man. He writes, "By putting her sexuality out in the open though, she is not able to achieve power, but rather reduces herself to a sexual object to the two males" (26). When George provokes Martha at the end of Act II, she flirts blatantly with Nick, and engages with an exotic dance with him. She is exposed as a highly sexual woman who tries to frustrate George by seducing Nick to satisfy her dark desires. John Kundert-Gibbs opines, "Martha's coarse sensuality reveals itself not only in talk, but also in the way she is described, both by George and by Albee himself" (234). In the stage direction, describing Martha's personality, Albee confirms Martha's overt sexuality and attractiveness: "A large, boisterous woman, 52, looking somewhat younger, ample, but not fleshy" (iii). Albee dramatizes Martha's thirst for sex to show that woman's consciousness lies in her loins and she does not think beyond her exoticism. In the play, Martha's libidinous desires constantly provoke George for sex: "YOU CAN STAND IT!" and "YOU CAN STAND IT. YOU MARRIED ME FOR IT!" (2.170). Martha's marriage thus, results in a deal in the fulfilment of her carnal desires. Honey also signifies Martha's casual sexual relationships with different men, particularly with Nick, 'a boxing prowess', when she calls her "floozy" (1.81) at her face in the play.

Albee's antifeminist attitude reflects in his depiction of phallic consciousness of male characters. For example, Nick's phallic pride, from his declaration that he is going to be a "fucking machine" (1.75). George raises Nick's phallic consciousness when he says to him, "...until you start plowing pertinent wives, you really aren't working. The way to a man's heart is through his wife's belly, and don't you forget it" (2.126). George likes to plough pertinent wives with his phallus, particularly Martha who considers herself as the "Earth Mother" (3.199). George entertains antifeminist notion of woman as earth and man as seed, woman as mother and man as father in the play. John M. Clum underestimates George's virility and his physical strength who ploughs Martha as the 'Earth Mother' with his manly seeds. Clum states, "Albee's women rail against, or triumph over,

men who seem unable or unwilling to “get it up” (59). On the one hand, Clum criticizes George’s virility; on the other hand, he considers woman as object to be used by the man who is able or willing to “get it up” for her sexual pleasure. Clum’s argument is, therefore, untenable. In addition, he states, “Martha is far from being a faithful wife in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*” (71). Clum’s arguments about George’s manliness and Martha’s faith on her husband are contradictory as well as untenable because, firstly, Martha finds her happiness in George and submits herself to him in the end of the play. Secondly, George shows himself as weak, emasculated, submissive and sometimes passive before Martha, not because he is really weak, but, because he wants Martha to be obedient and devote herself to him. Simone de Beauvoir rightly recognizes man’s trick of yielding before women. She writes: “In [women’s] presence man forgets his pride; he knows the sweetness of yielding and becoming once more a child . . . he submits to their kindly power because he knows that in this submission he remains their master” (207). In the beginning of the play, George is portrayed as weak and feminine; consequently, the audience compares his identity with an emasculated man because his heterosexual quality is not seen by them. But, undoubtedly, he enacts male attributes to maintain his male supremacy which he overcomes by the end of the play and remains a master of women he comes in contact with.

Violence on women has been opposed by the feminist thinkers in the first wave as well as the second wave feminism. It was pilloried or ridiculed by the feminist activists in America. On the contrary, in the play, Albee, through theatrical performances, defends different practices of wife battering. For example, George’s aggressive and overt display of masculine behavior horrifies Honey. She screams with fear, “Violence! Violence!” (2.150), “Oh, violence . . . violence!” (2.151), “VIOLENCE! VIOLENCE!” (2.152), “Violence! Violence!” (2.153) when she finds that George physically attacks Martha: “George (On her) I’ll kill you! (Grabs her by the throat)” (2.152). In the stage direction the author describes violence on women: “Grabbing her hair, pulling her head back” (3.221). George calls Martha a “satanic bitch!” (2.152). He stops only when Nick prevents him. Analyzing physical violence on women, Susan Abbotson writes:

Woolf was a writer who courageously battled the Victorian image of the Angel in the House to try and gain some independence as a woman. Though she ended unhappily, committing suicide, it was without compromising her ideals. Martha has never had the courage to escape the dominance of her father, who even now dictates her life. At the play’s close, Martha admits it is she who is afraid, and we are left to guess at what—perhaps of the type of independent woman Virginia Woolf was, but she could never hope to be?” (143).

Further, the mind of the female characters is filled with some or other kind of fear:

MARTHA. *Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf,*

Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf . . . (Martha and Honey laugh; Nick smiles) (1.26)

In an antifeminist society, bifurcation of woman's image into Madonna /Whore is associated to love and hatred by their male counterparts. In the play, Martha, who represents Albee's ideology of 'ideal woman' of the 1960s is depicted both an object of love as well as hatred. On the one hand, George uses Martha to satisfy his physical needs and says, "Martha's a romantic at heart" (1.90). He embraces her as "darling", "little yum yum" (2.99), and "pumped-up little wife" (2.123). Such expressions reveal that Martha pumps up George's excitement towards her. He finds his sexual pleasure in her loins. Like antifeminist thinkers, he also believes that woman's consciousness lies in their loins when he says to Martha, "You just gird your blue-veined loins, girl" (3.217). On the other, George treats her with contempt—his expressions are imbued with misogynistic, antifeminist and derogatory remarks regarding Martha's character. In the play, he calls her a "devil" (1.21), "a wicked woman" (1.78), "SATANIC BITCH," (2.152), "monster," (2.173), and "a spoiled, self-indulgent, willful, dirty-minded, liquor-ridden. . ." (2.174). Furthermore, George considers Martha's step-mother as a "goodwitch" (122). He compares Martha to the South American ladies known as "putas" and famous as "geese". Martha hisses away like "a bunch of geese" (2.126). In George's eyes, Martha is a hostess whom he likes to hump by playing a game with Nick: "Hump the hostess?" (2.154). Nick also tunes with him and calls Martha "the biggest goose in the gangle" that moves awkwardly, pointing a finger at her character (2.127). These misogynistic expressions visualize woman as object and reinforce gender stereotypes for her subordination. K. K. Ruthven considers these gender stereotypes roots of sexism, femininity, and subordination of women. He writes, ". . . obviously cultural stereotypes like the Great American Bitch as represented by Martha in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), whose function is to reinforce the sexist view that 'true happiness is based on True Womanhood', feminine subordination which supports male domination" (72). Thus, K. K. Ruthven reveals that Albee's gender stereotypes are projected against women's freedom.

The critics of Albee have pilloried his antifeminist notion of 'ideal womanhood' in American during 1950-60s. Analyzing George's statement: "I don't want to kiss you, Martha", Katharina Kirchmayer views their relationship as "unemotional and passionless" (3). Similarly, Stephen J. Bottoms considers Albee's presentation of Martha as "a vindictive caricature of womanhood" (101) and as "a kind of monstrous dual stereotype—both smothering mother and voracious whore" (101). Other critics like Katherine H. Burkman and Judith Roof concur that "Martha admits a traditionally feminine weakness for the first time in the play, and explicates the tragedy of attempting to be a fully subjective woman in a misogynist world" (246). Finally, the readers are able to understand antifeminist presentation of women on the stage when Martha succumbs to the male supremacy at the end of the play. Her submission to George is well described in the stage direction: "Martha slumps to the floor in a sitting position" (3.247). John Kundert-Gibbs writes, ". . . Martha, in the end succumbs to traditional power and relational structures, reaffirming the propriety of contemporary, misogynist society" (246). Moreover, Kundert-Gibbs concurs with Martha's assessment as a womanized character in the play who is fully "womanized" (245)

while George maintains the stereotypical male roles. Thus, Albee's presentation of women is not only misogynistic but antifeminist in nature.

Thus, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Albee defends antifeminist acts. In the play, he deconstructs the family structure and shows that women are given equal choice with men to exercise their power but his dramatization of women's issues for equality does not prove to be from a feminist standpoint, as women are neither fit for the old paradigms of femininity nor do they represent the ideology of 'ideal womanhood'. Women are confined within the four walls of the house where they indulge themselves in making coffee, cooking food, and other typical familial duties. They are not given freedom to make their own independent decisions in marriage, and mothering. They do not get opportunity for equal right for education with men and choose their professional career. Besides this, women suffer from the domestic violence. Men characters treat female characters with contempt. They use and abuse them for their own benefit. They satisfy their lust and reduce them to an object. Martha consistently indulges herself in the playful mimicry of the feminist activists and makes a satirical caricature of the ideology of 'ideal woman'. In the end of the play she succumbs to George. Thus, antifeminist acts are projected against women's freedom; therefore, playwright's attitude towards women is antifeminist.

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