

ABSTRACT

Rabbit Hole comprises the quality of motherly love, blending harmony and woman-ness into a domestic atmosphere, an amalgamation of elements from cultural feminism. The three main female characters display the aforesaid elements throughout the play. In reinforcing an affirmative self-image of being a woman, the three female protagonists are portrayed as strong support systems for one another, especially in a time of grief. The play exhibits the three different types of mother, each one is dealing unique mothering experience – Becca, a grieving mother who took pride in her motherhood, misses being a mother and gives up her career to one; Izzy, a reckless, free-spirited woman whose accidental pregnancy leads her to turn herself into an exuberant mother-to-be, while protecting her elder sister; and Nat, the equilibrium to the yin-and-yang personas of her daughters.

MOTHERING IN PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE: THE ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL FEMINISM IN FEMALE CHARACTERS IN DAVID LINDSAY-ABAIRE'S *RABBIT HOLE* (2006)

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Introduction

This paper revisits *Rabbit Hole*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by David Lindsay-Abaire, a male author, as the play contains elements of cultural feminism that can be discerned in themes, as well as characters and characterisations. Previously, many earlier feminist scholars believed that feminist writings must be done by feminists or female playwrights, as stipulated by Helene Keyssar, who justified that feminist drama is about female issues and agendas written exclusively by women. Nonetheless, in the 1990s, many male playwrights were beginning to write plays dealing with issues on women, highlighting their plight with both cynicism and sanguinity. It is strongly believed that male playwrights are more associated with cultural feminism as it identifies with femininity and the exposure of female attributes in everyday life.ⁱ *Rabbit Hole*ⁱⁱ comprises the quality of motherly love, blending harmony and woman-ness into a domestic atmosphere, an amalgamation of elements from cultural feminism. This paper is highlighting and explaining the aforesaid elements and focusing on the three principal female characters: Becca, the grieving mother; Izzy, the future mother; and Nat, the mother who holds the family together.ⁱⁱⁱ Throughout the play, both Izzy and Nat are constantly keeping Becca occupied with their presence. When they are around, they are trying to insert some sense of normalcy around Becca and within her household; she is less emotional and combative as compared to when she is with Howie, or any random stranger.^{iv}

In general, the majority of cultural feminists upheld the “connection” theory by stressing the fact that women are related to all of human life and frequently believe that the “woman's way” is the better way, as women are connected to all human life materially (pregnancy, intercourse and breast-feeding) and existentially (moral and practice life). Rosemarie Tong, a renowned feminist philosopher, emphasised that the best things that can contribute to a better social life are women’s capabilities for sharing, giving, nurturing, empathising and connecting. The elements mentioned are closely related to the essence of care-taking, and similar to the qualities of a mother. Connection is about life as most people experience it every day and not about separate individuals bounded by social contracts. Josephine Donovan (2012) argues that significant physical events experienced by women, such as menstruation, childbirth and breastfeeding, give them a better edge over men as the latter do not experience the essence of life and nurturing. “Woman-ness” is unquestionably an important aspect to highlight in any discussion pertaining to issues of cultural feminism.

Women have the sense to be equal as their counterparts as a moral paradigm built upon transactions between equally informed and powerful adults. One influential theoretical example of the attempts to facilitate more compassion throughout every sphere of social existence is *Maternal Thinking*, written by Sara Ruddick in 1995. Ruddick (1995) argues that women engage in the practices of protection, nurturance and training. As these