

Twentieth Century American Drama
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Lecture - 30
Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf Part 1

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FOR RICHARD BARR
AND
CLINTON WILDER
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This is a lecture of the Twentieth Century American Drama on Edward Albee's 1962 play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

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FIRST PERFORMANCE October 13, 1962, New York City, Billy Rose Theatre
UTA HAGEN OS MARTHA
ARTHUR HILL as GEORGE
GEORGE GRIZZARD OS NICK
MELINDA DILLON OS HONEY
Directed by ALAN SCHNEIDER
THE PLAYERS
MARTHA
A large, boisterous woman, 52, looking somewhat younger.
Ample, but not fleshy.
GEORGE Her husband, 46. Thin; hair going gray.
HONEY 26, a petite blond girl, rather plain.
NICK 30, her husband. Blond, well put-together, good-looking.



This is one of the early plays of Albee. He had some minor success before this with his play *Zoo Story* which was performed in 1959. This was first performed in the year 1962. We can see that there it is set against like the World War II has ended a few years before there are references to that war. There is the Cold war in the air with Russia. There is this lot of tension of war a grand tension that kind of clouds the play which of course appeared in the play, but not always very directly.

This play which was performed first in 1962. It has three acts. We are going to discuss act one which is called Fun and Games. We can see it was first performed October 13, 1962 in New York City at the Billy Rose theatre. It has four characters Martha and George who are a couple, and who as hosts are receiving another couple Nick and Honey.

Martha George is a professor at a college where he is a professor of history who has been teaching there for some time. His wife Martha is the daughter of the president of the college. Nick has joined the college recently as a biology professor, and he is accompanied by his wife Honey when they come to the residence of the George and of George and Martha.

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HONEY 26, a petite blond girl, rather plain.

NICK 30, her husband. Blond, well put-together, good-looking.

THE SCENE

The living room of a house on the campus of a small New England college.

ACT ONE

FUN AND GAMES

(Set in darkness. Crash against front door. MARTHA'S laughter heard. Front door opens, lights are switched on. MARTHA enters, followed by GEORGE)



We can see here that we have the description of the characters; it is only a four people play. Martha is a large, boisterous woman 52, looking somewhat younger. We must keep in mind different references to age in the play because age plays a critical role in the

play, the one huge important aspect is the difference of age in Martha, George, and Nick, and Honey. Nick and Honey are much younger than their hosts.

We have George her husband 46, thin; hair going gray. We see that George is younger than Martha and that is a reference in the play that comes up pretty often. We have Honey 26, a petite blond girl, rather plain. Nick 30 her husband, blond; well put-together, good looking.

We would like to point out as we begin the play is that the men are referred to as the husbands of the women, and the women are not referred as wives of the husband. If we see that general stage direction which would not be called general stage direction, but general methods of introducing people we would see that this is mister this, and this is his wife misses something.

We see that the women here are introduced first, and the husbands identity are introduced against the women. The identity of the women are more independent than somehow the husbands. We see there are different reasons of that. We will see that the marriages are often a marriages of convenience which cause further trouble. It is somehow though the men have some less power or they are a bit emasculated in the play which is hinted by this introduction.

When we will read the play, we will see that the stage direction is pretty copious. If we compare it with some other play *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson which is another play will that will be done in this course that the stage direction is pretty sparse in that play.

Albee kind of had in his head just the way this play should be performed. He has for long held a little bit of authorial control over how the play will be performed, and how it should be taken, how it should be presented, he has kind of held that control all his life. So, it starts. The scene is the living room of a house on the campus of a small New England college. We start with Act One, Fun and Game.

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MARTHA Jesus....
GEORGE
... Shhhhhh
MARTHA
... H. Christ.... Boisterous entry, drunk.
GEORGE
For God's sake, Martha, it's two o'clock in the ...
MARTHA
Oh, George!
GEORGE Well, I'm sorry, but...
MARTHA What a cluck! What a cluck you are.
GEORGE It's late, you know? Late. For what?



We have as the play starts a boisterous entry. This is a play that is being enacted on a stage. And this stage also plays a very important role here. So, if you look at the title *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. So, it is taken from a 1933 Disney song called *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf*.

We will see that a big wolf is haunting or is trying to kill and eat three piggies' three small piggies who are like meat for the wolf. There is a sense that death is always haunting us that we are always being the wolf is the figure of death and the pigs are living, but they are always being haunted by this figure of death.

The title is borrowed from a cartoon. It is a cartoonish title in a sense it is under then the title is again if a cartoon does a parody like if you see that the pigs are not actually afraid of the wolves in the sense they should be, and it is pretty funny.

It is a wolf trying to come and eat the pigs, we will die if they if the wolves succeeds in doing so, but there is an air of being funny about it. If we see that the play takes it forward, the play takes it a far ahead that in its use of comedy. It takes our plays in very serious manner. There is a fight between couples. It is very serious what is happening, but it is presented in a comedic manner.

It is a deep tragedy of personal lives, a deep tragedy of being unable to connect with the person the way you would want to, but it has been posted to us it has been given to us

through different flashes of comedy. But what that reference to that cartoon the title this cartoonish title does is to tell us that hey, we should not discard, we should not discard the meaning of seriousness when it is presented in the garb of comedy.

If we think that the big bad wolf is turned into Virginia wolf. So, what parallels can we draw from there. There is a slight similar not slight similarity in name between the big bad wolf and Virginia wolf. The wolf the big bad wolf in the Disney movie is a male character, while as Virginia wolf is a female character.

There is a reference to the archetypal she-wolf character that we often see appearing in different guises in different media representations. We can see the character of Martha in the light of a she wolf if we choose to do. It can give us an important lens and can be one of the entries that we can make sense of the title that helps us make sense of the title. It starts with George saying that for God's sake Martha, it is two o' clock. We do not know like it is what is it two o' clock in the afternoon or in the evening in the afternoon or at midnight sorry.

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GEORGE **It's late, you know? Late.** For what?
MARTHA (Looks about the room. Imitates Bette Davis) **What a dump.** Hey, what's that from? "What a dump!"
GEORGE How would I know what...
MARTHA Aw, come on! What's it from? You know...
GEORGE... Martha...
MARTHA WHAT'S IT FROM, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE?
GEORGE (Wearily) What's what from?
MARTHA
I just told you; I just did it. "What a dump!" Huh? What's that from?
GEORGE I haven't the faintest idea what...
MARTHA
Dumbbell! It's from some goddamn **Bette Davis picture.**... some goddamn **Warner Brothers epic.**...
GEORGE / can't remember all the pictures that...



We see that it is continuous references of something being late. This idea of lateness of not arriving is very important in the play. We will see that George and Martha are a couple who probably wanted children, but at this age it is probably too late for them to have a child of their own. The ideas of lateness that it is getting late the time is running

out as mentioned before that the big bad wolf carries with it the sense from where the title is borrowed a sense of death.

We feel like death is always chasing us that our time is running out, and the play starts with that sense. It starts with a sense of something time is running out, time is often like vanishing, and there is a need to hold on to something. Martha makes a reference to a Bette Davis movie.

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I just told you; I just did it. "What a dump!" Hunh? What's that from?

GEORGE I haven't the faintest idea what...

MARTHA

Dumbbell! It's from some goddamn Bette Davis picture... some goddamn Warner Brothers epic...

GEORGE / can't remember all the pictures that...



MARTHA

Nobody's asking you to remember every single goddamn Warner Brothers epic... just one! One single little epic! Bette Davis gets peritonitis in the end... she's got this big black fright wig she wears all through the picture and she gets peritonitis, and she's married to Joseph Cotten or something...

GEORGE

... Somebody...

MARTHA... somebody... and she wants to go to Chicago all the time, 'cause she's in love with that actor with the scar... But she gets sick, and she sits down in front of her dressing table...



But they cannot remember the name of the movie and they say that some goddamn Warner Brothers epic. We see that the films are playing a very critical role for this drama. The title is borrowed from a Disney movie, we have now and Warner Brothers epic. The play will very soon be turned into a very successful commercially as well as critically successful film that is again a movie that can be referred to for better understanding of the play.

We see one of the things that will be highlighted as we read some themes. The first is the theme of dehumanization. We will find there are lots of references to objects, humans as objects, humans as animals which adds to this idea of dehumanization in the play. We will see many of these images are there. People are calling people animals, and objects something like that.

She is married to Joseph Cotten or something that is Martha saying. George corrects her says somebody. We see there is this kind of individual dignity there is a sense of loss of individual dignity that the play tries to restore, but is often not too successful because of its awareness of the failure of the project.

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GEORGE What actor? What scar?

MARTHA / can't remember his name, for God's sake. What's the name of the picture? I want to know what the name of the picture is. She sits down in front of her dressing table . . . and she's got this peritonitis . . . and she tries to put her lipstick on, but she can't . . . and she gets it all over her face . . . but she decides to go to Chicago anyway, and . . .

GEORGE Chicago! It's called Chicago.

MARTHA Huh? What . . . what is?

GEORGE The picture . . . it's called Chicago . . .

MARTHA Good grief! Don't you know anything? Chicago was a 'thirties musical, starring little Miss Alice Faye. Don't you know anything?

GEORGE Well, that was probably before my time, but . . .

MARTHA Can it! Just cut that out! This picture . . . Bette Davis comes home from a hard day at the grocery store . . .

GEORGE She works in a grocery store?

MARTHA She's a housewife; she buys things . . . and she comes home with the groceries, and she walks into the modest living room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotten has set her up in . . .



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GEORGE Well, that was probably before my time, but . . .

MARTHA Can it! Just cut that out! This picture . . . Bette Davis comes home from a hard day at the grocery store . . .

GEORGE She works in a grocery store?

MARTHA She's a housewife; she buys things . . . and she comes home with the groceries, and she walks into the modest living room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotten has set her up in . . .

GEORGE Modesty

Are they married?

MARTHA (Impatiently) Yes. They're married. To each other. Cluck! And she comes in, and she looks around, and she puts her groceries down, and she says, "What a dump!"

GEORGE (Pause) Oh.

MARTHA (Pause) She's discontent.

GEORGE (Pause) Oh.

MARTHA

(Pause) Well, what's the name of the picture?



We come to this line where Martha says that in the movie Bette Davis plays the role of a housewife. She walks into the modest living room of the modest cottage modest Joseph Cotten has set up, set her up in. We can see there is this continuous reference to modesty.

As we will read through the play we will see that there have been lot of charges of immodesty, immorality, vulgar language that has been leveled against the play over the years. But we can see the outset kind of discussion, this idea of modesty through Martha that this is a play where modesty does not hold much importance, this is a world where modesty, propriety, a sense of self a sense of place do not because it will soon see the kind of ugly fight that the couples getting.

The games they play will come to the idea of fun and games what do games mean as we continue to read up the play. This disparaging comments about modesty; that modesty, propriety, these take a toss in the play they do not make it much longer.

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(Pause) Well, what's the name of the picture?

GEORGE I really don't know, Martha...

MARTHA

Well, think!

GEORGE I'm tired, dear... it's late... and besides...

MARTHA

I don't know what you're so tired about... you haven't done anything all day; you didn't have any classes, or anything...

Tiredness vs Exhaustion. George is exhausted.

GEORGE Well, I'm tired... If your father didn't set up these goddamn Saturday night orgies all the time...

MARTHA

Well, that's too bad about you, George...



We see here like there is it is starting at midnight. They say “I am tired, dear, it is late, and besides. And this is when they know that a guest, guests are appearing to visit them. And Martha says I do not know what you are tired about, you have not done anything all day; you did not have any classes or anything. And George says well, I am tired. If your father did not set up these goddamn Saturday night orgies all the time.”

We can see here what George is feeling from is a sense of exhaustion. One can see as you read through it and exhaustion is different from tiredness. Exhaustion is a more overbearing condition.

One can be exhausted out of nothing. One can just feel exhausted because of and that is what is happening to George. He has been exhausted. And as we will read through we will see that there have been experiences in his life, experience of his relationship with Martha, and with Martha's father who Martha calls daddy whose name does not appear in the play, but he appears as daddy. This reference to daddy will come to it will read his character when his reference.

But to take note of this idea of tiredness versus exhaustion, that exhaustion is different from tiredness. Even though George says he is tired what he means to say or what his condition is later extrapolated as is a form of exhaustion. And he says that this goddamn Saturday night orgies.

There are certain amount of references to Greece that come up that in ancient Greece there would be banquets that would be held. These banquets would start around at midday, and they would go on till night where lot of stimulating discussions would take place, it would be a form of discussion, and drinking. And people would get drunk, but not so they would mix water with wine.

So, they did not get too drunk too fast, so that they could have knowledgeable discussions while they were enjoying the company of others, so that is something the idea of a Greek banquet. They are coming back from what can be not quite a Greek banquet then again like whatever form of western, classic western civilization that comes here is a form of decadence, is a form of corruption.

In T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland*, we will see that after the First World War, T.S. Eliot does something like that through his wasteland he says that there has been a legacy of the west, a culture of the west, and the current climate to a certain extent signifies a kind of decadence.

The decadence of the culture, the decadence of the promise, the individual talent tradition and individual talent by T S Eliot, he draws this connection between Greek, he draws this connection like he kind of attaches the English poet to his Greek predecessors. He creates this line of descent, he creates this line of inheritance. And inheritance is again another important thing in the play that we will take note. So, a line of descent from the Greek poets.

There will constantly be references of Greek culture and Greek arts that there is a sort of hair also like Eliot, Albee faces a descent from a Greek origin, but what he does is again like Eliot show that there has been a corruption that this is almost like a parody.

The title itself is a parody it is a mockery. And the play, and the culture, and the pretensions of culture, the pretensions of high culture whatever that these people take part in are a form of corruption or form of parody have been are hollowed out of whatever great standards they were held in.

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GEORGE (Grumbling) Well, that's how it is, anyway.

MARTHA You didn't do anything, you never do anything, you never mix. You just sit around and talk.

GEORGE

What do you want me to do? Do you want me to act like you? Do you want me to go around all night braying at everybody, the way you do?

MARTHA (Braying) I DONT BRAY!

GEORGE (Softly) All right . . . you don't bray.

MARTHA (Hurt)

I do not bray.

GEORGE All right. I said you didn't bray.

Act One

MARTHA (Pouting)

Make me a drink.



George says that Martha brays which is something that a donkey does. And so this continues the image of dehumanization. We would like to see is that George says softly all right you do not bray. Martha says in a hurt manner “I do not bray”.

We would like to think that Albee in this play you would if you look up some of the critical commentary on the play, you would see that there is a constant discussion of how Albee takes up the theme of real reality and illusion in the play.

We have already seen through the figures of Miller and Eugene O'Neill, that realism and expressionism they made a huge impact on the American stage. The stage was supposed to be the plays where realist realism had its whole punch.

Albee here is kind of mix this sort of illusion and realism. Because and kind of in a sense we can see that if the influences of the epic theatre, the Brecht and epic theatre, and the

absurd theatre here. Epic theatre because one of the key ways that the epic theatre would work would be what Brecht called alienation. It would constantly tell the audience that hey, what you are witnessing is not quite real life it is on a stage, but through that alienation he would achieve certain political effects.

Albee through his constant juxtaposition of reality and illusion, and we will see that there are lots of make believe things that are being said in the play which we do not know are true or not, like there is a son who is mentioned who is supposed to be arriving and coming who never arrives who we do not even, but it is mentioned that he is not even real because George and Martha do not have a child.

So, but then again there are other references dubious references where something is said like, this is real, this happened to this person, and, but it is left hanging like is it did it really happen. So, if we can see that we are left hanging in a sense that this clear distinction that we would like to make ok. So, this is real, this is illusion, this is real, and this is fiction kind of breaks down in the play.

And this is done with this is what makes a piece of literature more effective because you would often hear arguments that this is from a book, this is not real, but books are also part of life experiences. What other people say about them even if it is not real, if they pose it as real, then it has a sort of way of impacting us.

So, this idea of fiction and reality, reality and illusion, this differentiations get very murky. And Albee is very aware that this is being watched on a stage by people who are aware that they are watching something on a stage. We will see that he constantly takes into account the gaze of the audience.

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make me a drink.

What?

I said, make me a drink.

GEORGE

MARTHA (Still softly)

GEORGE (Moving to the portable bar) Well, I don't suppose a nightcap'd kill either one of us.

MARTHA A nightcap! Are you kidding? We've got guests.

We've got what? Guests. GUESTS.

GEORGE (Disbelieving)

MARTHA

GUESTS!

over.

When?

now!



At a point we have Martha pouting and she says make me a drink. And this pouting and asking things, so this is a childish behavior. And we see that the adults in this play often revert to a form of childishness, it is too kind of escape from the realism of their lives they would like to be children again. And there is a story later on told in the play of a child who kills inadvertently kills both his mother and father both his parents.

And so we see there that the final what happens to that boy final as a punishment he is kind of given an injection, and he kind of goes into a stupor and lulls down. And we see that the way that injection that medicine works for the child is the same way drinking works for these adults. They constantly lull themselves into a form of sleep into a form of slumber with the help of this drink in a way to manner of trying to escape reality.

They say that a nightcap would kill either of it he does not think. A nightcap is something of like a drink taken with some hot substance, so that it helps you sleep better. But then Martha says” a nightcap? Are you kidding? We have got guests. Then George says disbelieving what we have got? What guests, guests?” So, this idea that guests are coming. And George does not know who is coming. So, these are strangers coming to their house.

This idea is like Jacques Derrida’s *Of hospitality*. This is a classic scenario of hospitality that here is a couple who are going to welcome into their house strangers or foreigners who are coming for the first time. Derrida would say that the question of hospitality is

the question of foreigner, it is how you welcome a foreigner into your home, into your homeland, or it could be anything. How you welcome a foreigner, and we will see that how this thing goes.

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GEORGE Good Lord, Martha ... do you know what time it ... Who's coming over?

MARTHA

What's-their-name

GEORGE Who?

MARTHA WHAT'S-THEIR-NAME!

GEORGE Who what's-their-name?

MARTHA I don't know what their name is, George. . . . You met them tonight . . . they're new . . . he's in the math department, or something. . . .

GEORGE

Who . . . who are these people?

MARTHA You met them tonight, George.



And they do not actually know that who are coming over, and they are like what is their name. And we will see that there is this constantly this of not being able to remember names on plays is, like the plays started with a sort of guessing level what is the name of the movie, then we have what is the name of the people. So, there is this connection of between remembering names that is made in the play.

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MARTHA You met them tonight, George.
GEORGE I don't remember meeting anyone tonight. . . .
MARTHA Well you did . . . Will you give me my drink, please. . . . He's in the math department . . . about thirty, blond, and. . . .
GEORGE
. . . and good-looking. . . .
MARTHA
Yes . . . and good-looking. . . .
GEORGE
It figures.
MARTHA . . . and his wife's a mousey little type, without any hips, or anything.
GEORGE (Vaguely) Oh.
MARTHA You remember them now?
GEORGE Yes. . . . Martha . . . Because of the . . .



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It figures.
MARTHA . . . and his wife's a mousey little type, without any hips, or anything.
GEORGE (Vaguely) Oh.
MARTHA You remember them now?
GEORGE Yes, I guess so, Martha. . . . But why in God's name are they coming over here now?
MARTHA
(In a so-there voice)
Because Daddy said we should be nice to them, that's why.
GEORGE (Defeated) Oh, Lord.
MARTHA May I have my drink, please? Daddy said we should be nice to them. Thank you.
GEORGE
But why now? It's after two o'clock in the morning, and. . . .
MARTHA



We see that it is after 2 o' clock in the morning. This idea of being late it is and it is if the play goes on in a way that it is almost so late that it is often early that it is so late, it get so late that it, it gets early. It takes place in a liminal time. It is so late that it is often early. There is a point where George says that we could have welcomed them on Sunday.

Martha says well "if you think about it, it is already Sunday". We are taking this play is taking place at a liminal time in a time where kind of like things are some things are can take place, some things are more permissible than probably other times. This is a time,

like in Macbeth we see there is a time that is mentioned as when the roosters come back home, and the spirits come out of the grave. It is like that.

There are certain Shakespearean overtones here especially with *Hamlet*. We have an enactment of a play through which Hamlet tries to play within a play with through which Hamlet tries to prick the conscience of the king. We have something like that. We have play acting within the play. The audience are watching a play, and the characters on the stage are also enacting fun and games and plays among them like they are playing.

We will do this play, and games, and games have the connotation of play. And plays again have connotations of drama, play drama. We can see how games plays drama these become very complicated and entangled categories which can be very difficult to separate. It has a very Hamlet like quality in it as the stage different games and plays on the stage which is very edifying for the audience, which is very edifying for the people who are seeing it in a very Hamlet's way here.

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Well, never mind... Besides, it is Sunday. Very early Sunday.
GEORGE I mean... it's ridiculous...
MARTHA
Well, it's done!
GEORGE (Resigned and exasperated) All right. Well... where are they? If we've got guests where are they?
MARTHA
They'll be here soon.
GEORGE
What did they do... go home and get some sleep first, or something?
MARTHA
They'll be here!
GEORGE I wish you'd tell me about something sometime... I wish you'd stop springing things on me all the time.
MARTHA I don't spring things on you all the time.



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GEORGE Yes, you do . . . you really do . . . you're always springing things on me.

MARTHA (Friendly-patronizing) Oh, George!

GEORGE Always.

MARTHA Poor Georgie-Porgie, put-upon pie! (As he sulks) Awwwww . . . what are you doing? Are you sulking? Hunh? Let me see . . . are you sulking? Is that what you're doing?

GEORGE (Very quietly) Never mind, Martha . . .

MARTHA AWWWWWWWWW!

GEORGE


Just don't bother yourself . . .

MARTHA

awwwwwwww! (No reaction) Hey! (No reaction) HEY!

(GEORGE looks at her, put-upon) Hey. (She sings) Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf.

Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf . . . Ha, ha, ha, ha! (No reaction) What's the matter . . . didn't you think that was funny? Hunh? (Defiantly) I thought it was a scream . . . a real scream. You didn't like it, hunh?



“You see that where are they? They are getting slowly exasperated when the guests will come. And part of waiting for the guest is a sort of kind of sort of haste that when will they arrive, when will they arrive that is when we also have guests at our house when we are looking forward to having guests over at our house, we would say when will they come, when will they come.

But in a weird subversion here, George actually does not want them to come, but still we find them asking the same questions that when will they come.” So, you can see that the same question often goes for like when you are too eager to have someone over or when we are totally not eager to have someone over, but the questions somehow sound the same when they come out.

We see already that there are certain cracks between the relationship of Martha and George appearing. George says “I wish you would tell me about something sometime. I wish you would stop springing things on me all the time. We can see there is this lack of consent that works in the relationship that Martha is made a decision at 2 o’ clock that people would come over to their house which George does not know.”

And again referring back to the Derrida takes *Of hospitality*, Derrida locates that who has this right of giving hospitality, who extends hospitality. We see often that he says that in traditional manner, it is the patriarch of the house who extends the hospitality, is the person who plays the role of the father within the household who extends this hospitality.

But here we see that if we see George as the patriarch in the house which is not we will see different ways that George is emasculated in the play which kind of takes away this idea that he could be the patriarch who does the hosting. So, his emasculation different references to emasculation in the play are also important that he is quite not the host.

The scene in *Macbeth*, where Macbeth is hosting a banquet where banquet host comes up, and it is failure of Macbeth to do the hosting to become the patriarchal figure and the king he has become the king, the king is the ultimate patriarchal figure. So, it is his failure to assume the role of that patriarchal figure.

“Again like if you see here poor Georgie-Porgie, put upon pie. What are you doing? Are you sulking? Let me see are you sulking.” So, these are like childish way of talking to another person as mentioned that he is probably feeling deep hurt, but she would be like childish are you not quite kind of acknowledging his hurt, quite not acknowledging his pain because that might also mean trouble for him.

And we see in the play sometimes they the couple do come together to acknowledge their pain each other’s pain and that is the moment when that they are most vulnerable, but this vulnerability is not sustainable for long. And we see them that kind of getting into their shells and kind of fighting and launching against each other. And we see this song coming up for the first time *Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Virginia Woolf Virginia Woolf, “I thought it was a scream, a real scream. You did not like it?”

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GEORGE It was all right, Martha. . . .
MARTHA
You laughed your head off when you heard it at the party.
J
GEORGE I smiled. I didn't laugh my head off ... I smiled, you know? ... it was all right.
MARTHA (Gazing into her drink) You laughed your goddamn head off.
GEORGE It was all right. . . .
MARTHA (Ugly) It was a scream!
GEORGE (Patiently) It was very funny, yes.
MARTHA (After a moment's consideration) You make me puke!
GEORGE What?
MARTHA
Uh . . . you make me puke!
GEORGE (Thinking about it . . . then . . .) That wasn't a very nice thing to say, Martha.



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Uh ... you make me puke!

GEORGE (Thinks about it ... then ...) That wasn't a very nice thing to say, Martha.

MARTHA

That wasn't what?

GEORGE

... a very nice thing to say.

MARTHA I like your anger. I think that's what I like about you most

... your anger. You're such a ... such a simp! You don't even have the ... the what? ...

GEORGE ... guts?

MARTHA

PHRASEMAKER! (Pause ... then they both laugh) Hey, put some more ice in my drink, will you? You never put any ice in my drink. Why is that, humh?

GEORGE (Takes her drink) I always put ice in your drink. You eat it, that's all. It's that habit you have ... chewing your ice cubes ... like a cocker spaniel! You'll crack your big teeth.

...



George says “well I did not find it too funny”. We will have to remember that this party when it was happening, it was happening in the presence of who is called daddy as the father of Martha. He is the president of the college. So, maybe if he is the one who came up with the line, everyone around him would have to act like wow it is so funny, it is so funny. But now when he is at home George is like well it is probably not that funny.

Martha says “here you make me puke”. So, see how fast this transitions make suddenly it is like he makes her feel like puking. “He says that was not a very nice thing to say Martha. And Martha says in the end I like your anger.” We can see the play as kind of in a weird manner Martha’s attempts to spur George into action.

He has kind of fallen into a sort of inactivity in a following stupor; he is become so calm with himself. Martha’s things are like he wants she wants to pick him into some sort of action. And she says “I like your anger”. We are not too sure often that if Martha’s doing all this only to hurt George, or to get some retaliation from George also, that retaliate hit back at me.

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MARTHA I like your anger. I think that's what I like about you most
... your anger. You're such a ... such a simp! You don't even have the ... the what? ...

GEORGE ... guts?

MARTHA

PHRASEMAKER! (Pause ... then they both laugh) Hey, put some more ice in my drink, will you? You never put any ice in my drink. Why is that, hunh?

GEORGE (Takes her drink) I always put ice in your drink. You eat it, that's all. It's that habit you have ... chewing your ice cubes ... like a cocker spaniel! You'll crack your big teeth.

MARTHA THEY'RE MY BIG TEETH!

GEORGE

Some of them ... some of them.

MARTHA

I've got more teeth than you've got.

GEORGE Two more.



And she tells him “you are such a simp”. And again like George calls Martha cocker spaniel which is again dehumanization. And their references to them are my big teeth. Martha is the she wolf and there says like they are my big teeth. And George also says Martha’s big teeth.

The big bad wolf in the Red Riding Hood myth, he tells her that riding hood tells grandma how big teeth do you have. So, this reference to big teeth kind of takes us back to that mythological world that make believe world, and how life in a sense has been thought in a certain way to follow these mythological patterns that it follows it goes around in these mythological patterns.

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GEORGE I suppose it is. I suppose it is pretty remarkable . . . **embracing how old you are**

MARTHA

you CUT that out! (Pause) You're not so young yourself.

GEORGE (With boyish pleasure . . . a chant) I'm six years younger than you are, . . . I always have been and I always will be.

MARTHA (Glumly) Well . . . you're going bald.

GEORGE

So are you. (Pause . . . **they both laugh**) Hello, honey.

MARTHA



Hello. C'mon over here and give your Mommy a big sloppy kiss.

GEORGE

... oh, now . . .

MARTHA I WANT A BIG SLOPPY KISS!

GEORGE (Preoccupied) I don't want to kiss you, Martha. Where are these people? Where are these people you invited over?



Martha saying “you cut that out. You are not so young yourself, references to aging come up. And aging is a process of vulnerability. As I said it is a process of lateness, it is like things have gotten too late, it is age, but they would not like to accept that they have aged but they have. And George says that I am six years younger than you are, but Martha retaliates with you are going bald.”

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take you, by force, right here on the living room rug, and then our little guests would walk in, and . . . well, just think what your father would say about that.

MARTHA You pig!

GEORGE (Haughtily) Omk! Omk!

MARTHA Ha, ha, ha, ha! Make me another drink . . . lower.

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 you the prize years ago . . . There isn't an abomination award going that you . . .

MARTHA




And they and they said they both have a laugh. We see that this thing it is it has this moments of relaxation, then again it becomes serious. It takes almost it has a very in a

flux it has a very dynamic quality you do not know what will happen next. And there are close references to improv that come in the play, will get there. We will get there how the play makes references to improv. How it is it almost feels like that improvising on stage. And as we know improv is also another form of theatre which and ok we will come to that.

Again a reference to pig, dehumanization. And says “make me another drink, lover. My God, you can swill it down, cannot you? Martha imitating a tiny child I am firstly.” There is this weird need for the adults to be childlike to feel childlike almost in a form of security of that their adult life kinds of takes away from them by exposing them to this reality around them.

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I swear ... if you existed I'd divorce you. . . .

GEORGE Well, just stay on your feet, that's all. . . . These people are your guests, you know, and. . . .

MARTHA

I can't even see you ... I haven't been able to see you for years. . . .

GEORGE ... if you pass out, or throw up, or something. . . .

MARTHA


... I mean, you're a blank, a cipher. . . .

GEORGE ... and try to keep your clothes on, too. There aren't many more sickening sights than you with a couple of drinks in you and your skirt up over your head, you know. . . .

MARTHA

... a zero. . . .

GEORGE ... your heads, I should say. . . .



This play of reality and illusion that I said that that is so critical in this play that has been pointed out by many critics that this reality and illusion that we take part in illusions because we are fed up with the reality. But the illusions that we take part in also tell something deep about the kind of reality we are running away from.

It kind of instead of effacing that reality the illusions what they do is strengthen the sense of reality. This is the reality that we are trying to run away from. So, it does not take the fact that an illusion is coming in, it does not take away anything from the reality of the situations.

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... a zero. . . .

GEORGE . . . your heads, I should say. . . .

(The front doorbell chimes)

MARTHA

Party! Party!

GEORGE (Murderously) I'm really looking forward to this, Martha. . . .

MARTHA (Same) Go answer the door.

GEORGE (Not moving) You answer it.

MARTHA

Get to that door, you.

(He does not move) I'll fix you, you. . . .

GEORGE (Fake-spits) ... to you. . . .

(Door chime again)

MARTHA



We will see that Martha in her tied heads, you will note that what the bad things she calls George are. She calls him a blank, a cipher. And he also tries to get back at her saying that there are more sickened there are really more sickening sights than you in a sense. Martha says you are a zero.

They are already starting to fight. They are already starting to like lock their horns before the guests have arrived. So, we can see that there is already something of like a pressure cooker situation that is brewing in the house which these unsuspecting guests will come into.

It is almost like a spider's web that the spiders have woven their house and the unsuspecting flies who think that this is a place of hospitality. Nick and Honey would come in and get entangled, literally entangled and literally and metaphorically entangled in these events. We see like George murderously saying "I am really looking forward to this Martha. The sub versions that was pointed out that a person who is like really looking forward to having guests would also say I am really looking forward to this, but it is how we say it."

The stage directions come in are very there are many stage directions in the play there are constantly like how this dialogue should be delivered and everything. This murderously, it is important here that its being said murderously that we know that he is not literally meaning it what he is trying to say.

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GEORGE (Murderously) I'm really looking forward to this, Martha. . .

MARTHA (Same) Go answer the door.

GEORGE (Not moving) You answer it.

MARTHA

Get to that door, you.

(He does not move) I'll fix you, you. . .

GEORGE (Fake-spits) ... to you. . .

(Door chime again)

MARTHA

(Shouting . . . to the door) COME IN! (To GEORGE, between her teeth) I said, get over there!

GEORGE (Moves a little toward the door, smiling slightly) All right, love . . . whatever love wants. (Stops) Just don't start on the bit, that's all.

MARTHA

The bit? The bit? What kind of language is that? What are you talking about?



We will start with the point where we see Honey and Nick have come into their house.