

**Twentieth Century American Drama**  
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**Lecture - 34**  
**Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* Part 5**

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GEORGE (Shaking his head) Oh . . . Martha.  
MARTHA My arm has gotten tired whipping you.  
GEORGE (Stares at her in disbelief) You're mad.  
MARTHA  
For twenty-three years!  
GEORGE  
**You're deluded . . . Martha, you're deluded!**  
MARTHA IT'S NOT WHAT I'VE WANTED!  
GEORGE  
I thought at least you were . . . on to yourself. I didn't know. I . . . didn't know.  
MARTHA (Anger taking over) I'm on to myself.  
GEORGE (As if she were some sort of bug) No . . . no . . . you're . . . sick.  
MARTHA (Rises – screams) I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SICK!



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MARTHA (Rises – screams) I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SICK!  
GEORGE All right, Martha . . . you're going too far.  
MARTHA (Screams again) I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SICK. I'LL SHOW YOU.  
GEORGE (He shakes her) Stop it! (Pushes her back in her chair) Now, stop it!  
MARTHA (Calmer) I'll show you who's sick. (Calmer) Boy, you're really having a field day, huh? Well, I'm going to finish you . . . before I'm through with you . . .  
GEORGE . . . you and the quarterback . . . you both gonna finish me . . . ?  
MARTHA . . . before I'm through with you you'll wish you'd died in that automobile, you bastard.  
GEORGE (Emphasizing with his forefinger) And you'll wish you'd never mentioned our son!  
MARTHA (Dripping contempt) You  
GEORGE Now, I said I warned you.  
MARTHA I'm impressed.  
GEORGE I warned you not to go too far.  
MARTHA I'm just beginning.



The final lecture on the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee and we will complete act 2 and act 3 today. Here we see certain references that we still in act 2. The George tells Martha that you are mad and that you are deluded so and that you are

sick. We see madness, delusions, sickness, this become a very important categories of being in the play. That this is how people are. Madness, delusions, sickness, they are not feeling well, numbed. George says, that I have numbed enough.

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GEORGE (Emphasizing with his forefinger) And you'll wish you'd never mentioned our son!

MARTHA (Dripping contempt) You

GEORGE Now, I said I warned you.

MARTHA I'm impressed.

GEORGE I warned you not to go too far.

MARTHA I'm just beginning.

GEORGE (Calmly, matter-of-factly) **I'm numbed enough** . . . and I don't mean by liquor, though maybe that's been part of the process—a gradual, over-the-years going to sleep of the brain cells—**I'm numbed enough, now, to be able to take you when we're alone,** I don't listen to you . . . or when I do listen to you, I sift everything, I bring everything down to reflex response, so I don't really hear you, which is the only way to manage it. But you've taken a new tack, Martha, over the past couple of centuries— or however long it's been I've lived in this house with you—that makes it just too much . . . too much. I don't mind your dirty underthings in public . . . well, I do mind, but I've reconciled myself to that . . . **but you've moved bag and baggage into your own fantasy world now, and you've started playing variations on your own distortions, and, as a result . . .**



And that he says that Martha has been living in her fantasy world for some time now and she is playing on variations of a distortion and as a result. it is like they have produced fantasy variations, fantasy distortion and now they are kind of distorting it further and further to produce more narratives in a sense and we will see how one false narrative can lead to another false narrative very soon. That one distortion leads to another distortion very soon.



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GEORGE  
You're a spoiled, self-indulgent, willful, dirty-minded, liquor-ridden. . .

MARTHA  
snap! It went snap. Look, I'm not going to try to get through to you anymore. . . I'm not going to try. There was a second back there, maybe, there was a second, just a second, when I could have gotten through to you, when maybe we could have cut through all this crap. But that's past, and now I'm not going to try.

GEORGE  
Once a month, Martha! I've gotten used to it . . . once a month and we get misunderstood Martha, the good-hearted girl underneath the barnacles, the little Miss that the touch of kindness'd bring to bloom again. And I've believed it more times than I want to remember, because I don't want to think I'm that much of a sucker. I don't believe you . . . I just don't believe you. There is no moment . . . there is no moment anymore when we could . . . come together.

MARTHA (Armed again) Well, maybe you're right, baby. You can't come together with nothing, and you're nothing! snap! It went snap tonight at Daddy's party. (Dripping contempt, but there is fury and loss under it) I sat there at Daddy's party, and I watched you . . . I watched you sitting there, and I watched the younger men around you, the men who were going to go somewhere. And I sat there and I watched you, and you weren't there! And it snapped! It finally snapped! And I'm going to howl it out, and I'm not going to give a damn what I do, and I'm going to make the damned biggest explosion you ever heard.



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what I do, and I'm going to make the damned biggest explosion you ever heard.

GEORGE (Very pointedly) You try it and I'll beat you at your own game.

MARTHA (Hopefully) Is that a threat, George? Humh?

GEORGE That's a threat, Martha.

MARTHA (Fake-spits at him) You're going to get it, baby.

GEORGE Be careful, Martha . . . I'll rip you to pieces.

MARTHA  
You aren't man enough . . . you haven't got the guts.



GEORGE Total war?

MARTHA Total. (Silence. They both seem relieved . . . elated. NICK reenters)

NICK (Brushing his hands off) Well . . . she's . . . resting.

GEORGE (Quietly amused at NICK'S calm, off-hand manner) Oh?

MARTHA Yeah? She all right?



And, here again we see that George threatens Martha that, I will beat you at your own game. They are still playing these games that the games never end. And Martha says, is that a threat George? George says, that is a threat Martha. Then Martha says, by fake spitting you are going to get it baby. George says, be careful Martha, I will rip you to pieces.

So, we will see like this is almost something they are doing to encourage each other that we are going to like, let us see who can be more torturous, who can be more torturing

each other in a sense. Martha says, that you have not got the guts and George says, total war. Martha says, total and it is silence and they both seem relieved elated and Nick reenter.

So, it is very interesting that they are relieved after a conversation like it. Is almost like they have given each other free reign to do whatever they want to do and that is kind of relieving, because they are like almost children that are going back to their game like, let us see who can hit the hardest kind of thing and they are related. You have to see that.

So, the thing that I was pointing out about Martha and George being seasoned couple comes in here. That even though they are fighting it is like almost they have woven fighting into the fabric of their being in a sense, and now they are relieved they are related by the chance to fight like that.

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(Swings around to face her . . . says, with great loathing)

No . . . show him, Martha ... he hasn't seen it. Maybe he

hasn't seen it. (Turns to nick) You haven't seen it yet, have you?

**NICK (Turning away, a look of disgust on his face) I ... I have no respect for you.**

**GEORGE And none for yourself, either. . . . (Indicating MARTHA) I don't know what the younger generation's coming to.**

**NICK You don't . . . you don't even. . . .**

**GEORGE Care? You're quite right. ... I couldn't care less. So, you just take this bag of laundry here, throw her over your shoulder, and. . . .**

**NICK You're disgusting.**

**GEORGE (Incredulous) Because you're going to hump Martha, I'm disgusting? (He breaks down in ridiculing laughter)**

**MARTHA (To GEORGE)**

You Mother! (To NICK) Go wait for me, hunh? Go wait for me in the kitchen. (But NICK does not move.

MARTHA goes to him, puts her arms around him) C'mon, baby . . . please. Wait for me ... in the kitchen ... be a good baby.



And part of that game playing is the fact that Nick and Martha getting very cozy with each other and George is trying to react as less as possible to that and Nick turning away look of disgust on his face says “I have no respect for you, because George is not resisting”. The fact that he is hitting on George’s wife and George says “And none for yourself either indicating Martha”.

He is indicating Martha and says like, what the younger generation. This union of Nick and Martha kind of shows that thing that we were pointing about that. The both the older generation and the younger generation, they are both kind of crippled.

They are both kind of the older generation and the younger generation they are both kind of corrupted. There is no sense of any deliverance anywhere to be found. It is a corrupt world that you are living in. he says that I could not care less and Nick says that you are disgusting and George says because you are going to hump Martha, I am disgusting? He breaks down in ridiculous laughter.

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backing off slowly) O.K. . . . O.K. . . . You asked for it . . . and you're going to get it.

GEORGE (Softly, sadly) Lord, Martha, if you want the boy that much . . . have him . . . but do it honestly, will you? Don't cover it over with all this . . . all this . . . footwork.

MARTHA (Hopeless) I'll make you sorry you made me want to marry you. (At the hallway) I'll make you regret the day you ever decided to come to this college. I'll make you sorry you ever let yourself down.



(She exits) (Silence. GEORGE sits still, staring straight ahead. Listening . . . but there is no sound. Outwardly calm, he returns to his book, reads a moment, then looks up . . . considers. . . .)

GEORGE "And the west, encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommodate itself to the swing of events, must . . . eventually . . . fall."

(He laughs, briefly, ruefully . . . rises, with the book in his hand. He stands still . . . then, quickly, he gathers all the fury he has been containing within himself. . . . he shakes . . . he looks at the book in his hand and, with a cry that is part growl, part howl, he hurls it at the chimes. They crash against one another, ringing wildly. A brief pause, then HONEY enters)

HONEY (The worse for wear, half asleep, still sick, weak, still staggering a little . . . vaguely, in something of a dream world) Bells. Ringing. I've been hearing bells.

GEORGE Jesus!



So, you see that we are coming to this idea that, the society is a bad society, but we often see the writers when they write about tortures, about profanities and everything, just to put up that what is going on in the society which end up condemning the artwork.

We will saw like, we talked about Manto getting banned and constantly having charged with obscenities and profanities to which he said, that the world, the society, the partition is an obscene and profane act. If I am writing about it, it is I who I am committing the obscenities and profanities and in Manto's writing we see often the people who pass as rational.

The leaders who accept this kind of partition are the ones who are committing the most atrocious acts. But, since he is writing about it, he will be the one who is called the bad

person and we know that George is also a historian. If a historian is writing about the times, if the times themselves turn out to be corrupted, we cannot lay the fault on the historian. And he is reading from a book right now one of the history books in quotes and the west, encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with the morality too rigid to accommodate itself to the swing of events, must eventually fall so.

We have this idea with this the fall of the Berlin wall that is going to come. But, if we remember the fall of the Berlin wall happens much later, which kind of gives us a more positive understanding of what a fall can be. That it is not necessarily, falls and not necessarily bad, they can also be a good a sense of fall. A sense of movement away from something else.

And, while here in this book a fall is lamented, in a sense, we see that falls not necessarily and in the play also we do not see such lamentation of the fall, but if you look about it, it is like as I was mentioning in a manner that this is like a play of the beasts the play of the witches, of the devils and everything. And this, if you read Marlow's Doctor Faustus, it is about tormented devils. It is a 16th century play. It is about tormented devils, who are tormented themselves, that would go on to torment others.

But what Albee here seems to be suggesting is that, what if they get used to that, in a very sadistic manner. What if tormenting others becomes very part of it, what if that becomes play for them if they are so sadistic that tormenting becomes play, so then torment does not become torture anymore. What is torture becomes play, what is torture becomes fun. That binary between pain and pleasure, torture and fun kind of gets deconstructed in a manner.

And that is what he is doing. It is almost like, these devils are so used to torturing each other, now that has become part of their play that has become part of their game. The evil people were probably sent to hell to be punished, but what if they slowly got used to that punishment and now like drawing enjoyment from their punishment, drawing enjoyment from their wound, in a sense? That remains a possibility that is being explored in the play.

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GEORGE Jesus!

HONEY

I couldn't sleep ... for the bells. Ding-ding, bong ... it woke me up. What time is it?

GEORGE (Quietly beside himself) Don't bother me.

HONEY (Confused and frightened) I was asleep, and the bells started ... they BOOMED! Poe-bells ... they were Poe-bells ... Bing-bing-bong-boom!

GEORGE

boom!

HONEY I was asleep, and I was dreaming of ... something ... and I heard the sounds coming, and I didn't know what it was.

GEORGE (Never quite to her) It was the sound of bodies...

HONEY And I didn't want to wake up, but the sound kept coming...

GEORGE ... go back to sleep...

HONEY ... and it FRIGHTENED ME!



The idea of punishment, the idea of saying to someone becomes sort of immaterial, that Nick, that George would say something to Nick, that hey, do not do this, I feel bad or try to punish him for that makes no sense. Because, punishment itself is a sort of joy. If you punish, he will probably get more joy.

If like we have seen right, when Martha is supposed to tell a secret or George is supposed to tell a secret, the other person says no, do not do it, do not do it. What that resistance does is create a sense of excess pleasure in the transgression. But since, George here is not putting up that resistance, Nick does not feel that kind of resistance, and that resistance would give him sort of more pleasure in his transgressions.

At the same times we see like, these are plays, these are like even transgressions have become so mundane they become so normal in the society. If you see the play also, if you read through it you will see that such transgressions are part of the fabric of being in the play, but these transgressions have also become mundane.

It is only when George and Martha can imagine a drama up new transgressions, new forms of transgressions that can pinch them, can hurt them do they feel, jubilant do they feel nice. Because otherwise, what occupies them is this numbness as this meant as they mentioned, this numbness. Even what was pain once can turn into a form of numbness.

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HONEY (You can see George)

I DON'T WANT ANY ... NO ... !

GEORGE

You don't know what's been going on around here while you been having your snoozette, do you.

HONEY NO! ... I DON'T WANT ANY ... I DON'T WANT THEM. ... GO WAY (Begins to cry) I DON'T WANT ... ANY ... CHILDREN. ... I ... don't ... want ... any ... children. I'm afraid! I don't want to be hurt. ... PLEASE!

GEORGE (Nodding his head ... speaks with compassion) I should have known.

HONEY (Snapping awake from her reverie) What! What?

GEORGE I should have known ... the whole business ... the headaches ... the whining ... the ...

HONEY (Terrified) What are you talking about?

GEORGE (Ugly again) Does he know that? Does that ... stud you're married to know about that, hunh?

HONEY About what? Stay away from me!

GEORGE Don't worry, baby ... I wouldn't ... Oh, my God, that would be a joke, wouldn't it! But don't worry, baby. HEY! How you do it? Hunh? How do you make your secret little murders stud-boy doesn't know about, hunh? PILLS? PILLS? You got a secret supply of pills? Or what? Apple jelly? will POWER?



(Refer Slide Time: 08:28)

There are a couple or people in there. ...

(MARTHA'S laughter again) ... they are in there, in the kitchen. ... Right there, with the onion skins and the coffee grounds ... sort of ... sort of a ... sort of a dry run for the wave of the future.

HONEY (Beside herself) I ... don't ... understand ... you. ...

GEORGE (A hideous elation) It's very simple. ... When people can't abide things as they are, when they can't abide the present, they do one of two things ... either they ... either they turn to a contemplation of the past, as I have done, or they set about to ... alter the future. And when you want to change something ... you bang! bang! bang! bang!

HONEY Stop it!

GEORGE

And you, you simpering bitch ... you don't want children?

HONEY

You leave me ... alone. Who ... who RANG?

GEORGE

What?





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What?  
**HONEY**  
What were the bells? Who rang?  
**GEORGE** You don't want to know, do you? You don't want to listen to it, hunh?  
**HONEY** (Shivering) I don't want to listen to you. ... I want to know who rang.  
**GEORGE** Your husband is ... and you want to know who rang?  
**HONEY** Who rang? Someone rang!  
**GEORGE** (His jaw drops open ... he is whirling with an idea) ... Someone...  
**HONEY** RANG!  
**GEORGE** ... someone ... rang ... yes ... yessss...  
**HONEY** The ... bells ... rang ...  
**GEORGE** (His mind racing ahead) The bells rang ... and it was someone...  
180 Act Two  
**HONEY** Somebody....



And, Honey here starts talking about hearing certain bells and George and Honey are now alone on the stage. And, Honey says here, at a point, and we are discussing right this how this play feeds off, how there is this idea of (Refer Time: 8:39) in the play, how things are being made on the go as it were.

Honey constantly says, I was hearing bells, I was hearing bells and George was first irritated with it. Then, he pays attention to her, like what are you saying and picks up after her and says. Honey says, who rang? Someone rang. George with his jaws drops open he is whirling with an idea someone Honey rang. George says, someone rang, yes, yes. Honey says, the bells rang and George is saying the bells rang and it was someone. He is getting an idea.

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GEORGE (He is home, now) ... somebody rang ... it was somebody ... with ... I'VE GOT it! I'VE GOT IT!  
MARTHA ...! Somebody with a message ... and the message was ... our son ... OUR SON! (Almost  
whispered) It was a message ... the bells rang and it was a message, and it was about ... our son ... and the  
message ... was ... and the message was ... our ... son ... is ... dead!



HONEY (Almost sick)

Oh ... no.

GEORGE (Cementing it in his mind) Our son is ... dead ... And ... Martha doesn't know. ... I haven't told ...  
Martha.

HONEY No ... no ... no.

GEORGE (Slowly, deliberately) Our son is dead, and Martha doesn't know.

HONEY Oh. God in heaven ... no.

GEORGE (To HONEY ... slowly, deliberately, dispassionately) And you're not going to tell her.

HONEY (In tears) Your son is dead.

GEORGE I'll tell her myself ... in good time. I'll tell her myself.

HONEY (So faintly) I'm going to be sick



And we see what that idea is and George says he is home now. He is like at home with an idea is that almost like a eureka moment. Somebody rang it, for somebody with I have got it I have got it Martha. Somebody with a message and Martha is not on the stage, but he is still talking to her. We see that how many times George is talk talking of Martha when she is not on the stage, which gives either that he might be missing her.

Even though these games that they are playing is hurtful, it is painful, but at least that is something they can still give to each other in this world that is so numbing. That is so like, that takes away the venom out of everything. That is continuously injecting each other with it.

And, again like with that venom idea, we see that the injection that kind of creates numbness, the alcohol that creates numbness, and amongst all of that we see the kind of poison through words that keeps flow. That we keep consuming this poison of words that we keep consuming throughout the play.

And, so he says “that somebody rang, because somebody have got it like our son is dead”. That is the thing that there was a message that has come and it announces that their son is dead. Again in a previous scene we had also seen how George plans this when Martha is not on stage. There is a planned quality about it and then he goes on and says this.

The audience is already in on it, like we saw like, when Nick was narrating about Honey, about her hysterical pregnancy, the phantom pregnancy, the audience already knew about it. But, what we do not know, what we did not know, what how devastating this could be to one person. And that is what we are watching, that is what we are also witnessing.

Because the facts themselves they are not that like we can also say, this is false, we are not to be alarmed by it, but when somebody else is alarmed we are consuming their pain. This watching this play is also a form of consuming pain and which again brings us to the idea of sadism, masochism in the play. That if the gaze of the people in the stage are very sadistic, very masochistic.

This play also the fact that it is so popular, it is getting still it is being taught, it is being performed. It shows that we also have a certain kind of convoluted nature of consuming the pain of others. That we read literature which conveys the pain of others, the suffering others, but we also consume that. We consume literature that deals with pain, that deals with suffering in a very.

Sometimes it can be a very sympathetic manner, but sometimes it can be a very sadistic manner. And, this play kind of with it is structuring, with it is with it is layering, it kind of exposes that sadistic gaze on us. This gaze that kind of looks at suffering in a certain manner.

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GEORGE (Quite by himself now) Good . . . good . . . you go right ahead.  
(Very softly, so MARTHA could not possibly hear) Martha? Martha? I have some . . . terrible news for you.  
(There is a strange half-smile on his lips) It's about our . . . son. He's dead. Can you hear me, Martha? Our boy is dead. (He begins to laugh, very softly . . . it is mixed with crying)

**CURTAIN**

**ACT THREE**

**THE EXORCISM**

MARTHA enters, talking to herself. MARTHA

Hey, hey. . . Where is everybody . . . ? (It is evident she is not bothered) So? Drop me; pluck me like a goddamn . . . whatever-it-is . . . creeping vine, and throw me over your shoulder like an old shoe . . . George? (Looks about her) George? (Silence) George! What are you doing: Hiding, or something? (Silence) GEORGE!! (Silence) Oh, fa Chri

(Goes to the bar, makes herself a drink and amuses herself with the following performance) Deserted! Abandon-ed! Left out in the cold like an old pussycat, ha! Can I get you a drink, Martha? Why, thank you, George; that's very kind of you. No, Martha, no; why I'd do anything for you. Would you, George? Why, I'd do anything for you, too. Would you, Martha? Why, certainly, George. Martha, I've misjudged you. And I've misjudged you, too, George. WHERE IS EVERYBODY!!! Hump the Hostess! (Laughs greatly at this, falls



And, if we can master up certain sympathy for us, for the characters in this play, that is good, but in the sense they do not demand that kind of sympathy. What they demand is vitriol, with this numbness, what the demand is more vitriol. That is how Act-2 ends with George thinking how he will tell Martha that their son is dead. We know that George and Martha do both know that they do not have a son, but somehow still, this is how in a childlike way.

This is George's effort to connect with Martha. I mean he was trying to connect with Nick also, but that did not happen. That was a connection to suffering through a sort of disillusionment, but that did not happen, but he is still connecting with Martha. He is still coming up with games to play with Martha.

That relationship is not lost. Despite what it might seem it is a failed relationship or anything. With, have to like think, rethink what a relationship between a couple might mean and this is one of those relationships that problematize how we think about couples, how we think what couples are and how they act.

We have the curtain and we have act three which is called the exorcism. In the previous play we had this idea of witches and devils and now we have this idea of the exorcism. And, the exorcism was also first thought about to be the title of the play, but it was later changed to who is afraid of Virginia Woolf.

An exorcism would mean, driving away a ghost right. An exorcism would mean driving away something that has unlawfully taken possession of something. It could be a body, it could be a house. It is a form of cleansing, it is a form of purging, and it is a form of catharsis.

We mentioned how catharsis was impossible in the last act that we were doing. In the last act that it is producing more bile, more tension, it is producing more hatred. But, the reference to exorcisms kind of points us to the fact that there is going to be some kind of purging in the end that what has inadvertently come in it will be driven out, what has taken possession or something mean spirited.

We see the team, like that they are and they are consuming spirits right. They are consuming spirits all the time. If they are not occupied by the spirit of something else

they are do are occupied by the spirits of the drink, they are drinking. They have been drinking spirit all night. They are occupied by the spirits.

The exorcism takes multiple meanings, multiple meanings and I would like you to think up if you can think of any further elaborations of how this title might go on with the play. It is about hospitality and exorcism being the opposite in a sense but very different from what the act of hospitality is.

If hospitality is welcoming someone in, then exorcism is casting that person out in a forceful manner. We do not exorcise people things or spirits that are willing to go, no. The spirits that are not willing to go, those are the ones we exorcise. That are difficult to get out.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:11)

MARTHA (She softer, too) Your potential's fine. It's dandy. (Wiggles her eyebrows)  
Absolutely dandy. I haven't seen such a dandy potential in a long time. Oh, but baby, you sure are a flop.

NICK (Snapping it out) Everybody's a flop to you! Your husband's a flop, I'm a flop...

MARTHA (Dismissing him) You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you're all flops. (More or less to herself) I disgust me. I pass my life in crummy, totally pointless infidelities... (Laughs ruefully) would-be infidelities. Hump the Hostess? That's a laugh. A bunch of boozed-up... impotent lunk-heads. Martha makes goo-goo eyes, and the lunk-heads grin, and roll their beautiful, beautiful eyes back, and grin some more, and Martha licks her chops, and the lunk-heads slap over to the bar to pick up a little courage, and they pick up a little courage, and they bounce back over to old Martha, who does a little dance for them, which heats them all up... mentally... and so they slap over to the bar again, and pick up a little more courage, and their wives and sweethearts stick their noses up in the air... right through the ceiling, sometimes... which sends the lunk-heads back to the soda fountain again where they fuel up some more, while Martha-poo sits there with her dress up over her head... suffocating—you don't know how stuffy it is with your dress up over your head—suffocating! waiting for the lunk-heads; so, finally they get their courage up... but that's all, baby! Oh my, there is sometimes some very nice potential, but, oh my! My, my, my. (Brightly) But that's how it is in civilized society. (To herself again) All the gorgeous lunk-heads. Poor babies. (To NICK, now; earnestly) There is only one man in my life who has ever... made me happy. Do you know that? One!

NICK  
The... the what-do-you-call-it? ... uh ... the lawn mower, or something?



“Martha saying that you are all flops. I am the earth mother and you are all flops. All the gorgeous lunkheads, poor babies to Nick. Now earnestly there is only one man in my life who has ever made me happy. Do that one, do that one?”

It is like she is saying she is mother earth. We get this idea that mother earth, with the idea of mother earth, we have this idea of production of reproduction that mother earth is giving us things, she is producing multiple things, there are food and everything, but we see that Martha has not produced a child. This is a very again like a distortion a kind of

distorted thinking that she is mother earth. When and we see that George said, that Martha does not have pregnancies, so how can she be a mother.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:08)

Act Three

MARTHA No; I'd forgotten him. But when I think about him and me it's almost like being a voyeur. Hunh  
No; I didn't mean him; I meant George, of course. (No response from NICK) Uh... George; my husband.

You're kidding. Ami?

NICK (Disbelieving)

MARTHA

You must be. Him?

Him.

NICK

MARTHA

Sure; sure.

NICK (As if in on a joke)

You don't believe it.

MARTHA



She says, that till day only one person has made me happy or one. Nick says that, “what is it someone from your young time says and Martha says no, I had forgotten him. Shit. Nick talks about it being a lawn mower”. There is a reference to a lawn mower in the play, I would ask you to read the play and you will get this reference better.

Martha says “no, I had forgotten him, but when I think about him and me it is almost like being a voyeur”. We see this term voyeur being mentioned in the play and I was talking about the importance of voyeurism in the play. The voyeuristic gaze of the characters that are constantly alluded to the voyeuristic gaze of the audience that is constantly being alluded to and here we have a reference to being a voyeur. “I did not mean him, I meant George of course, no response from Nick. George my husband.”

That is how she says it and we realized that the problematic this very complicated relationship of George and Martha. Martha is saying this when George is not on the set again. This is very interesting. This is not something she is staying to make George here, to make up with him, no.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:11)

MARTHA... George who is out somewhere there in the dark... George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who under-  
stands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK (Echoing, still not believing) Sad.

MARTHA... whom I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes, this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

NICK (Puzzled) Sad.

MARTHA  
... who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension...  
George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

MARTHA



Martha says, “George is out somewhere there in the dark. So George has gone outside. George, who is good to me, and whom I revile, who understands me, and whom I push off, who can make me laugh and I choke back in my throat, who can hold me at night so that it is warm, and whom I will bite so there is blood, who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules, who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy.

George and Martha sad, sad, sad. She says that I do not wish to be happy and yes I do wish to happy”. This ambivalence, this mixing of truth and fiction, of lies and truth, everything mixing. So happy and not happy, we do not, we cannot, we want to be happy, we do not want to be happy and they sad.

And we have this refrain coming up, like we had this refrain who is afraid of Virginia Woolf same. In a similar manner we have a different of George and Martha “sad, sad, and sad coming up. Martha says, whom I will not forgive for having come to rest for having seen me and having said yes, this will do.”

“Who have who has made the hideous, the hurting, and the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha sad, sad, sad. Martha says, then who tolerates which is intolerable, who is kind which is cruel, who understand which is beyond comprehension.”

This part of the play, this a Nick says, George and Martha sad, sad, sad. This part of the play, kind of gives you that kind of deconstructed idea, that we love the ones, so we hate the ones who love us. That hate can be a response to love and, but there is also love. This difference making this difference of love and hate when they are very ambivalent emotions, that if read Freud.

Freud would say that there is always an undercurrent of ambivalence that we feel in our social life. That, the people whom we love in our unconscious or in a subconscious we have an amount of hatred for them also, that we do not express. when somebody very near to us dies, we are afraid that person will haunt us, will come back as a ghost, because when that person was alive we each wished ill on that person, even though we said that we love that person.

The return of a ghost of a loved one in our dreams, it could also signify the fact that we had a secret dislike for them while they were alive. And after their death they have come to know of that dislike and now they are coming back to haunt us. Because after that everyone gets to know everything, there are no secrets of the dead. They would come back and they would haunt us and they want to do bad things to us.

So, that is the ambivalence that seems to be accepted here and if you think about it, if we think about this term of exorcism, about driving out ghosts, about spirits, having consumed spirits, It is to have the spirits not also become part of the bodies of these people. Are not these haunted people, are not these like ghosts that are haunting others. Sartre in one of his writings says, that hell is other people.

That, it is other people who are hell. This example this experience of hell and this is what we have here. This hellish experience that these people go through which is made possible by the presence of other people.

But, again like we see that that there is this ambivalence that, love and hate, true and false, reality and illusion, they all kind of come together fall apart and they are used to certain effects. They are used to certain effects to show how we experience life and how we live our lives.



(Refer Slide Time: 21:01)

Some day . . . hah! some night . . . some stupid, liquor-ridden night . . . I will go too far . . . and Til either break the man's back . . . or push him off for good . . . which is what I deserve.

NICK

I don't think he's got a vertebra intact.

MARTHA (Laughing at him) You don't, huh? You don't think so. Oh, little boy, you got yourself hunched over that microphone of yours . . .

NICK Microscope . . .

MARTHA

. . . yes . . . and you don't see anything, do you? You see everything but the goddamn mind; you see all the little specks and crap, but you don't see what goes on, do you?

NICK

I know when a man's had his back broken; I can see that.

MARTHA

Can you!



(Refer Slide Time: 21:05)

-----  
Can you!

NICK

You're damn right.

MARTHA

Oh . . . you know so little. And you're going to take over the world, hunh?

NICK All right, now . . .

MARTHA

You think a man's got his back broken 'cause he makes like a clown and walks bent, hunh? Is that really all you know?

NICK I said, all right]

MARTHA Ohhhh! The stallion's mad, hunh. The gelding's all upset. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

NICK (Softly; wounded) You . . . you swing wild, don't you.

MARTHA (Triumphant) HAH!

NICK Just . . .



(Refer Slide Time: 21:13)

**YOU KNOW?**  
NICK I said, all right]  
MARTHA Ohhhh! The stallion's mad, hunh. The gelding's all upset. Ha, ha, ha, ha!  
NICK (Softly; wounded) You . . . you swing wild, don't you.  
MARTHA (Triumphant) HAH!  
NICK Just . . . anywhere.  
**MARTHA HAH! I'm a gatling gun. Hahahahahahaha!**  
**NICK (In wonder) Aimless . . . butchery. Pointless.**  
**MARTHA Aw! You poor little bastard.**  
**NICK Hit out at everything.**  
(The door chimes chime)  
MARTHA



And, we see that Martha is now constantly insulting Nick. She calls him a house boy. He is and she has been making fun of George, still now telling that he is emasculated he is like the worse, he is like an insect, but now suddenly she is defending him before Nick. When Nick thought that he has probably the like asserted some right over, like some superiority of a George, it is when Martha comes back to tell her that he has not he says “she says that you think a man’s got his back broken, because he makes like a clown and walks bent? Is that really all”.

“Nick says I said all right, he cannot take any more. He was being very cocky some time back, but now he is not and Martha says, the stallions mad, the geldings all upset, ha. Nick says softly wounded, you swing wild do not you. Martha says triumphant, Nick just anywhere, I am a gatling gun.” Gatling gun is like one of those machine guns that kind of shoot and they also shoot so hard that the hand will also move with them. The aimlessness is kind of built into the structure of the gun.

“Nick says in wonder; aimless, butchery pointless. Martha says, aw you poor little bastard. Nick says, you hit out and everything.” Aimlessness becomes a very important thing in the play. That, people are hurting people and it is not even something personal. That, Martha does not have anything personal against Nick.

She did not even know him some time back properly. But, it is something that it is almost like a spider, if you fall into a spiders web, the spider does not care who you are

or it often like if it is if you are within it is purview it will probably eat you up, if you are on it is way it will it eat you up. the house, it becomes like something of a spiders web in the play, where like that they have come in and they will now be made they will be fisted upon. There is no other option that.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:08)

Go answer the door.

NICK (Amazed) What did you say?

MARTHA

I said, go answer the door. What are you, deaf?

NICK (Trying to get it straight) You . . . want me . . . to go answer the door?

MARTHA

That's right, lunk-head; answer the door. There must be something you can do well; or, are you too drunk to do that, too? Can't you get the latch up, either?

NICK Look, there's no need. . .

(Door chimes again)

MARTHA (Shouting) Answer it! (Softer) You can be houseboy around here for a while. You can start off being houseboy right now.

NICK Look, lady, I'm no flunky to you.

MARTHA (Cheerfully) Sure you are! You're ambitious, aren't you, boy? You didn't chase me around the



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NICK Look, lady, I'm no flunky to you.

MARTHA (Cheerfully) Sure you are! You're ambitious, aren't you, boy? You didn't chase me around the kitchen and up the goddamn stairs out of mad, driven passion, did you now? You were thinking a little bit about your career, weren't yew? Well, you can just houseboy your way up the ladder for a while.

NICK There's no limit to you, is there?

(Door chimes again)

MARTHA (Calmly, surely) No, baby; none. Go answer the door. (NICK hesitates) Lock, boy; once you stick your nose in it, you're not going to pull out just whenever you feel like it. You're in for a while. Now, git!

NICK Aimless . . . wanton . . . pointless. . .

MARTHA Now, now, now; just do what you're told; show old Martha there's something you can do. Hunh? Atta boy.

NICK (Considers, gives in t moves toward the door. Chimes again) I'm coming, for Christ's sake!

MARTHA (Claps her hands) Ha ha! Wonderful; marvelous. (Sings) "Just a gigolo, everywhere I go, people always say. . ."

NICK STOP THAT!

MARTHA (Giggles) Sorry, baby; go on now; open the little door.



And, it is not aimless in the fact that they have come into their house and they are just getting embroiled in it. And, Martha is calling Nick a houseboy now. And Nick keeps mentioning these things that, she is aimless, wanton, and pointless. Aimlessness is also



So, there would be this idea that a god is killed and the blood of the god or the blood of the king in certain senses is spilled over the land and with new crop circle the god is brought alive again. The god Adonis, is one of those gods of fertility rights. It was thought that he was dying with every crop circle as it came to an end, with each firming cycle coming to an end, then his blood would be spilled on the land and with the next cycle again he would come up.

This is again some kind of like that being bathed in blood, baptized in blood, baptized in fire kind of thing. That, after they have a strong heat like, the strongest heat, they can take the relationship again comes back, again stands up in a form. George can already see that. That he is doing this service to their relationship by coming up such stories and he has brought flowers for Martha and Martha's pansies, rosemary, violence, my wedding bouquet.

It is reminding them of their marriage in a fond manner. And, while Nick is being sidelined. Again, like if you see, so Nick is now being the lost one against whom Martha and George slowly find their footing. They become the more seasoned people, the more seasoned couple against Nick, who is like at a loss right now. He does not know what has happened. He is very new to this kind of devilish treacherous games that they are playing.

And Nick says that you are vicious and George finishing it for him children. You see pointlessness, children, these are ideas that are coming together. That is right, vicious, children, with their, so sad games. Hopscotching their way through life etcetera, etcetera is that it. And Nick says something like it. George say, screw baby. Martha says, he cannot. Him full booze.

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NICK Something like it.  
GEORGE Screw, baby.  
MARTHA  
Him can't. Him too fulla booze.  
GEORGE Weally? (Handing the snapdragons to NICK) Here; dump these in some gin. (NICK takes them, looks at them, drops them on the floor at his feet)  
MARTHA (Sham dismay) Awwwwwwww.  
GEORGE What a terrible thing to do ... to Martha's snapdragons.  
MARTHA  
Is that what they are?  
GEORGE  
Yup. And here I went out into the moonlight to pick 'em for Martha tonight, and for our sonny-boy tomorrow, for his **birfday**.  
MARTHA



So, he is there now he is being like the part of their jokes. His all jokes are coming at him. He is being deflated a lot. And he was inflated in the first two acts, now they are taking terms and deflating him, that he is not a good performer and everything. And, George says “yup, and here I want out went out into the moonlight to pick them out from Martha tonight, for our sonny boy tomorrow, for his birfday. birfday again like a term that is very childlike, childish.”

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(Passing on information)  
There is no moon now. I saw it go down from the bedroom.  
GEORGE (Feigned glee) From the bedroom! (Normal tone) Well, there was a moon.  
MARTHA (Too patient; laughing a little) **There couldn't have been a moon.**  
GEORGE Well, there was. There is.  
MARTHA There is no moon; the moon went down.  
GEORGE There is a moon; the moon is up.  
MARTHA (Straining to keep civil) I'm afraid you're mistaken.  
GEORGE (Too cheerful) No; no.  
MARTHA (Between her teeth) There is no goddamn moon.  
GEORGE My dear Martha ... I did not pick snapdragons in the stony dark. I did not go stumbling around Daddy's greenhouse in the pitch.  
MARTHA Yes . . . you did. You would.  
GEORGE Martha, I do not pick flowers in the blink. I have never robbed a hothouse without there is a light from heaven.



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GEORGE (With great logic) That may very well be, Chastity; the moon may very well have gone down ... but it came back up.

MARTHA The moon does not come back up; when the moon has gone down it stays down.

GEORGE (Getting a little ugly) You don't know anything. IF the moon went down, then it came back up.

MARTHA BULL!

GEORGE

Ignorance! Such ... ignorance.

MARTHA Watch who you're calling ignorant!

GEORGE Once ... once, when I was sailing past Majorca, drinking on deck with a correspondent who was talking about Roosevelt, the moon went down, thought about it for a little ... considered it, you know what I mean? ... and then, POP, came up again. Just like that.

MARTHA

That is not true! That is such a lie!

GEORGE

You must not call everything a lie, Martha. (To NICK) Must she?



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IGNORANCE! SUCH ... IGNORANCE!

MARTHA Watch who you're calling ignorant!

GEORGE Once ... once, when I was sailing past Majorca, drinking on deck with a correspondent who was talking about Roosevelt, the moon went down, thought about it for a little ... considered it, you know what I mean? ... and then, POP, came up again. Just like that.

MARTHA

That is not true! That is such a lie!

GEORGE

You must not call everything a lie, Martha. (To NICK) Must she?

NICK Hell, I don't know when you people are lying, or what!

MARTHA



“George again says more stuff that is very like very again that, if it is true or not. He says that he was sailing past Majorca and Martha says that is it is not true that is such a lie. And like, that this is a game that Martha is not playing with him. That this is a lie, this is a game I will not play, and I will call it as lie.

George says, you must not call everything a lie Martha. To Nick she says he says, must she? Nick says; hell, I do not know when you people are lying or what.” This is exactly

the condition that Albee also wants us to feel. That we do not know when they are lying or when they are telling the truth. That is the sense of confusion.

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You're damned right!

GEORGE You're not supposed to.

MARTHA

Right!

GEORGE At any rate, I was sailing past Majorca. . . .

MARTHA

You never sailed past Majorca. . . .

GEORGE Martha. . . .

MARTHA

You were never in the goddamn Mediterranean at all . . . ever. . . .

GEORGE I certainly was! **My Mommy and Daddy took me there as a college graduation present.**

MARTHA



The play creates with it is aimlessness, with it is play, it creates a sense of disorientation, it creates a sense of disorientation and effective disorientation in the audience, that we do not know what is real and what is not real anymore.

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MARTHA

Nuts!

NICK

Was this after you killed them?

(GEORGE and MARTHA swing around and look at him; there is a brief, ugly pause)

GEORGE (Defiantly) Maybe.

MARTHA

Yeah; maybe not, too.

NICK Jesus!

(GEORGE swoops down, picks up the bunch of snap-dragons, shakes them like a feather duster in NICK'S face, and moves away a little)

GEORGE HAH!

NICK Damn you.

GEORGE (To NICK)





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(GEORGE swoops down, picks up the bunch of snap-dragons, shakes them like a feather duster in NICK'S face, and moves away a little)

GEORGE HAH!

NICK Damn you.

GEORGE (To NICK)

Truth and illusion. Who knows the difference, eh, toots? Eh?

MARTHA

You were never in the Mediterranean . . . truth or illusion . . . either way.

GEORGE If I wasn't in the Mediterranean, how did I get to the Aegean? Hunh?

MARTHA OVERLAND!

NICK



And, so he is continuing on that story which Martha has said, that it is not true. And then George at point says truth and illusion, who knows the difference, Toots and that is it right and Martha says you were never in the Mediterranean, truth or illusion either way. Martha stresses here instead of, with this comment he says that you cannot stress the difference between truth and illusion.

“Martha, when she says that when never in the Mediterranean truth or illusion either way she does not kind of discredit him, but says that yes you can be in places through illusion. That, in your illusion you can feel like oh I have visited this place, that I was saying that the novel even it is has it is own regime of truth. That what happens in the novel actually happens in the novel. It has it is own category of truth. Well, in real life we have our own categories of truth.”

So, illusion can also have it is own category of truth, if one can build it up properly, if one can convince oneself properly, if one can detail it properly, is not that what life like novels are to us. They are life like because the illusion has been made so well that we do not know it is an illusion. We often see many V R technologies, many like many places, like theme parks, where the illusion is created so well that we do not know it is an illusion.

We watch the movie “The Truman Show” by Jim Carrey, there is Jim Carrey in the movie. It is a very nice movie. It deals with this idea of truth and illusion. That, an

illusion done properly it will be difficult to tell it from the truth. It will like a magician's act you need to put up that illusion in a proper manner.

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Yeah!

GEORGE Don't you side with her, houseboy.

NICK I am not a houseboy.

GEORGE Look! I know the game! You don't make it in the sack, you're a houseboy.

NICK

I AM NOT A HOUSEBOY!

GEORGE No? Well then, you must have made it in the sack. Yes? (He is breathing a little heavy; behaving a little manic) Yes? Someone's lying around here; somebody isn't playing the game straight. Yes? Come on; come on; who's lying? Martha? Come on!

NICK (After a pause; to MARTHA, quietly with intense pleading) Tell him I'm not a houseboy.

MARTHA (After a pause, quietly, lowering her head) No; you're not a houseboy.

GEORGE (With great, sad relief) So be it.

MARTHA (Pleading) Truth and illusion, George; you don't know the difference.

GEORGE No, but we must carry on as though we did.

The Exorcism Amen.



So, there are ways you can be in a place in your illusion and it is no less of a being than being there in truth. Here Martha says pleading; truth and illusion George, you do not know the difference. George; no, but we must carry on as we did, but they do not. And they are saying that we must carry on as we did, but they are not actually carrying on.

We see everything is being problematized. Everything is being problematized. The categories are falling on each other. It is very different to disentangle them. Truth illusion, they are entangled, entangled miserably. It is like knots that you cannot take out.

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MARTHA (A little afraid) Truth or illusion, George. Doesn't it matter to you ... at all?

GEORGE (Without throwing anything) SNAP! (Silence) You got your answer, baby?

MARTHA (Sadly) Got it.

GEORGE

You just gird your blue-veined loins, girl (Sees NICK moving toward the half) Now, we got one more game to play. And it's called bringing up baby.

NICK (More-or-less under his breath) Oh, for Lord's sake...

MARTHA George...

GEORGE

I don't want any fuss. (To NICK) You don't want any scandal around here, do you, big boy? You don't want to wreck things, do you? Huh? You want to keep to your time table, don't you? Then sit! (NICK sits) (To MARTHA) And you, pretty Miss, you like fun and games, don't you? You're a sport from way back, aren't you?

MARTHA (Quietly, giving in) All right, George; all right.

GEORGE



George says that; you just gird your blue veined loin's girl. Sees Nick moving towards the half. Now, we got one more game to play and it is called bringing up the baby, it is called bringing up baby.

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NICK Look; she's had a rough night, now; she's in the can, and she's...

GEORGE Well, we can't play without everyone here. Now that's a fact. We gotta have your wife. (Hog-calls toward the hall) soooowwiiiiieee! soooowwiiiiieee!

NICK (Ay MARTHA giggles nervously) Cut that!

GEORGE

(Swinging around, facing him)

Then get your butt out of that chair and bring the little dip

back in here. (As NICK does not move) Now be a good puppy.

Fetch, good puppy, go fetch.

(NICK rises, opens his mouth to say something, thinks better of it, exits) One more game.

MARTHA (After NICK goes) I don't like what's going to happen.

GEORGE (Surprisingly tender) Do you know what it is?



“What is bringing up baby? And, Martha says she is not willing to play it anymore, but George says well we cannot play without everyone here. It is almost like, now that is a fact, we going to have your wife. Hog calls towards the hall. Soooowwiiiiieee!

Sooowwwiiiiiee! Makes a weird noise, imitates a swine, and says we cannot play without everyone here.”

It is again like the audience, the importance of the audience, the importance of having an audience for these acts. Who knows if Martha and George can have these acts when they are alone at home? What if this is a play that they are actually like parasites, they are the parasites in their home who are feeding on their guests in a sense to get this and they need everyone there.

“They this playing to the audience becomes very important in the play. and it is like asking the wife to come, Honey to come back, and like calls a puppy, puppy girl and calls Nick a puppy, like good go puppy fetch, see like childish animals, child animals, children animals, these categories also become very important.”

(Refer Slide Time: 32:08)

Fetch, good puppy, go fetch.

Fetch, good puppy, go fetch.

(NICK rises, opens his mouth to say something, thinks better of it, exits) One more game.

MARTHA (After NICK goes) I don't like what's going to happen.

GEORGE (Surprisingly tender) Do you know what it is?

MARTHA (Pathetic) No. But I don't like it.

GEORGE Maybe you will, Martha.

MARTHA No.

GEORGE Oh, it's a real fun game, Martha.

MARTHA (Pleading) No more games.

GEORGE (Quietly triumphant) One more, Martha. One more game, and then beddie-bye. Everybody pack up his tools and baggage and stuff and go home. And you and me, well, we gonna climb them well-worn stairs.

MARTHA (Almost in tears) No, George; no.

GEORGE (Soothing) Yes, baby.



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GEORGE (Soothing) Yes, dady.  
MARTHA  
No, George; please?  
GEORGE It'll all be done with before you know it.  
MARTHA  
No, George.  
GEORGE No climb stairs with Georgie?  
MARTHA (A sleepy child) No more games . . . please. It's games I don't want. No more games.  
GEORGE  
Aw, sure you do, Martha . . . original game-girl and all, 'course you do.  
MARTHA



“How the child and the animal sometimes cross each other in a way. And, Martha is like a sleepy child. No more games please, it is games I do not want, no more games.”

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No, George.  
GEORGE  
You'll have a ball.  
MARTHA (Tenderly; moves to touch him) Please, George, no more games; L . . .  
GEORGE (Slapping her moving hand with vehemence) Don't you touch me! You keep your paws clean for the undergraduates!  
MARTHA (A cry of alarm, but faint)  
GEORGE (Grabbing her hair, pulling her head back) Now, you listen to me, Martha; you have had quite an evening . . . quite a night for yourself, and you can't just cut it off whenever you've got enough blood in your mouth. We are going on, and I'm going to have at you, and it's going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant. Now I want you to get yourself a little alert. (Slaps her lightly with his free hand) I want a little life in you, baby. (Again)  
MARTHA (Struggling) Stop it!  
GEORGE (Again) Pull yourself together! (Again) I want you on your feet and slugging, sweetheart, because I'm going to knock you around, and I want you up for it. (Again; he pulls away, releases her; she rises)  
MARTHA All right, George. What do you want, George?



“But the more people plead that I do not want any more games, the more games there come up. Because, again like see mention there is a sadistic. But again this sadism draws a sort of pleasure from it right. You do not know that what is happening here. George has brought Martha flowers before he wants to tell her something that is going to be terribly

painful for her.” Even though it is not a real thing, it is a false thing, because we do not they have a son. The death of a son should not come across as traumatic.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:54)

MAK I HA A cniid: (Quieter) A cniid. And i naad my cniid.  
GEORGE Our child.  
MARTHA (With great sadness) Our child. And we raised him . . . (Laughs, briefly, bitterly) yes, we did; we raised him . . .  
GEORGE With teddy bears and an antique bassinet from Austria . . . and no nurse.  
MARTHA  
. . . with teddy bears and transparent floating goldfish, and a  
pale blue bed with cane at the headboard when he was older, cane which he wore through . . . finally . . . with his little hands . . . in his . . . sleep . . .  
GEORGE . . . nightmares . . .  
MARTHA  
. . . sleep . . . He was a restless child . . .  
GEORGE . . . (Soft chuckle, head-shaking of disbelief) . . . Oh Lord . . .  
MARTHA . . . sleep . . . and a croup tent . . . a pale green croup tent, and the shining kettle hissing in the one light of the room that time he was sick . . . those four days . . . and animal crackers, and the bow and arrow he kept under his bed



We see the non-existent child, how they dreamily talk about that nonexistent child, how they make weave truths around him, that “yes we raised him”. “George says; with teddy bears and an antique bassinet from Austria and no nurse. Martha with teddy bears and transpare not floating goldfish, and a pale blue bed with cane at the headboard when he was older, cane which he wore through finally, with his little hands in his sleep, George nightmares.”

We are talking about improv, that a person says and the other person. Even though that person might not necessarily say yes, and picks up from that or contradicts that to create this improv. George and Martha are both weaving this story and they are both taking it forward in a manner and we see that being a couple is also like that. You have this collective stories and it is about taking that story forward, it is about what I have doing with your life, how do what stories do we tell ourselves about being together.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:55)

MARTHA

No. A carrot. **And his eyes were green** . . . green with . . . if you peered so deep into them . . . so deep . . . bronze . . . bronze parentheses around the irises . . . such green eyes!

GEORGE . . . blue, green, brown. . . .

MARTHA

. . . and he loved the sun! . . . He was tan before and after everyone . . . and in the sun his hair . . . became . . . fleece.

GEORGE (Echoing her) . . . fleece. . . .

MARTHA . . . beautiful, beautiful boy.

GEORGE Absolve, Domine, animas omnium fidelium defunctorum ab omni vinculo delictorum.

MARTHA

. . . and school . . . and summer camp . . . and sledding . . . and swimming. . . .

GEORGE Et gratia tua illis succurrente, mereantur evadere iudicium ultionis.

MARTHA (Laughing, to herself) . . . and how he broke his arm . . . how funny it was . . . oh, no, it hurt him! . . . but, oh, it was funny . . . in a field, his very first cow, the first he'd ever seen . . . and he went into the field, to the cow. where the cow was grazing. head down. busy . . . and he moo'd at it! (Laughs ibid) He moo'd at it . . .



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George cried! Helpless . . . George . . . cried. **I carried the poor lamb. George snuffling beside me, I carried the child, having fashioned a sling . . . and across the great fields.**

GEORGE In Paradisum deducant te Angeli.

MARTHA

And as he grew . . . and as he grew . . . oh! so wise! . . . he walked evenly between us . . . (She spreads her hands) . . . a hand out to each of us for what we could offer by way of support, affection, teaching, even love . . . and these hands, still, to hold us off a bit, for mutual protection, to

protect us all from George's . . . weakness . . . and my . . . necessary greater strength . . . to protect himself . . .

and us.

GEORGE In memoria aeterna erit Justus: ab auditione mala non timebit.

MARTHA So wise; so wise.

NICK (To GEORGE) What is this? What are you doing?

GEORGE Shhhhhh.



And, that is telling stories and that stories also have nightmares. “It is not necessarily a very good story, there are references to nightmares like who loved, whom his their son loved more? Did he love the father more or the love the mother more? Who coddled him, who suffocated him,” it is all mentioned in this lines.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:14)

(Waiting out the interruption, not really paying it any  
mind) Of course, this state, this perfection . . . couldn't last. Not with George ... not with George around.  
GEORGE (To the others) There; you see? I knew she'd shift.  
Be still!  
Sorry . . . mother. Can't you be still? Dominus vobiscum.  
HONEY  
GEORGE (Mock awe)  
NICK  
GEORGE (Making a sign at NICK)  
MARTHA  
Not with George around. A drowning man takes down those nearest. George tried, but, oh, God, how I fought  
him. God, how I fought him.  
GEORGE (A satisfied laugh) Ahhhhhhh.  
MARTHA



We see that George suddenly, it is like pronouncing some Latin lines slowly and which refers us to a sort of clerical act of exorcism as the play it is tells this the act the title of this act suggests.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:33)

revenge. . . .  
GEORGE ... A son who is, deep in his gut, sorry to have been born. . . .  
(BOTH TOGETHER)  
MARTHA I have tried, oh God I have tried; the one thing ... the one thing I've tried to carry pure and  
unscathed through the sewer of this marriage; through the sick nights, and the pathetic, stupid days, through  
the derision and the laughter . . . God, the laughter, through one failure after another, one failure  
compounding another failure, each attempt more sickening, more numbing than the one before; the one  
thing, the one person I have tried to protect, to raise above the mire of this vile, crushing marriage; the one  
light in all this hopeless . . . darkness . . . our SON.  
GEORGE Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremenda: Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra:  
Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem. Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo, dum discussio venerit, atque  
ventura ira. Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra. Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae; dies magna et  
amara valde. Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem. Requiem aeternam dona eis. Domine: et lux  
perpetua luceat eis. Libera me Domine de morte aeterna in die illa tremenda: quando caeli mo vendi sunt et  
terra: Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.  
(End together)  
HONEY (Her hands to her ears) stop it!! stop it!!  
GEORGE (With a hand sign) Kyrie, eleison. Christe, eleison. Kyrie, eleison.



It is going on and “Martha says that; I have tried, God I have tried; the one thing, the one thing I have tried to carry pure and unscathed through the sewer of this marriage. The marriage is called a sewer. Through the sick nights, and the pathetic, stupid days, through the derision and the laughter, God; the laughter, through the one failure after



another, one failure compounding another failure, each attempt more sickening, more numbing than the one before, the one thing, the one person I have tried to protect, to raise above the mire of this vile, crushing marriage; the one light in all this hopelessness, darkness, our son.”

We have George pronouncing Latin lines below. To signify sort of exorcism, kind of thing and these are words, but they do not have a son. We are left wondering that what is exactly that sustained them, what is exactly that sustains them. The other option would be like; this something that they are doing. This is also a way of asserting proximity with each other, asserting closeness with each other.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:34)

NICK

GEORGE

I'M RUNNING THIS show! (To MARTHA) Sweetheart, I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you ... for us, of course. Some rather sad news.

(HONEY begins weeping, head in hands)

MARTHA (Afraid, suspicious) What is this?

GEORGE (Oh, so patiently) Well, Martha, while you were out of the room, while the ... two of you were out of the room ... I mean, I don't know where, hell, you both must have been somewhere (Little laugh). ... While you were out of the room, for a while ... well, Missey and I were sittin' here havin' a little talk, you know: a chaw and a talk ... and the doorbell rang...

HONEY (Head still in hands)

Chimed.

GEORGE

Chimed ... and ... well, it's hard to tell you, Martha.



“George has says; I am running this show. That he is now in control. He finally, feels in control that and he says I have some rather sad news. This is also the time that Martha kind of knows that George is going to play something with that, is important with the son. She is also saying that it is the son who has gotten me through this marriage. Playing up the importance of the son in the play.” We see how the play is also structured.

If we take away, if you did not know that is what happened, that they do not have a son, then you can see how to a mother who is saying that a son has carried me across this loveless marriage, this marriage loveless marriage, this marriage just feels like a sewer, how the story of death of a son would come to her to hit her.

But in a sense it is a play, it is acting. That and that is something Albee never wants us to lose sight of that these people are acting. This is not true. And, says that “I have some rather sad news”. Martha has also prepared the stage for George here, to give this sadness, to create the most impact he wants to make.

Martha knows that George has not been able to like the last thing that he quite did was hurt Nick with the story of Honey, but this is almost like they are calling up and the couple are coming together again and they are hurting the person that matter most to them and it ends with giving George again the power to hurt Martha, to hurt her.

(Refer Slide Time: 37:01)

MARTHA (A strange throaty voice)  
Tell me.  
Please . . . don't.  
Tell me.  
HONEY  
MARTHA  
GEORGE . . . and . . . what it was ... it was good old Western Union, **some little boy about seventy.**  
MARTHA (Involved) **Crazy Billy?**  
GEORGE Yes, Martha, that's right . . . crazy Billy . . . and he had a telegram, and it was for us, and I have to tell you about it.  
MARTHA (Ay if from a distance) Why didn't they phone it? Why did they bring it; why didn't they telephone it?  
GEORGE Some telegrams you have to deliver, Martha; some telegrams you can't phone.  
MARTHA (Rising) What do you mean?  
GEORGE Martha ... I can hardly brine myself to sav it . . .



(Refer Slide Time: 37:10)

GEORGE (Sighing heavily) All right. Well, Martha . . . I'm afraid our boy isn't coming home for his birthday.

MARTHA

Of course he is.

GEORGE No, Martha.

MARTHA

Of course he is. I say he is!

GEORGE

He . . . can't.

MARTHA

He is! I say so!

GEORGE Martha . . . (Long pause) . . . our son is . . . dead.

(Silence) He was . . . killed . . . late in the afternoon. . .

(Silence) (A tiny chuckle) on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket, he swerved, to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight into a . . .



And, says that a person from western union about seventy Crazy Billy. Again the reference that craziness the madness, it is a mad person who came and gave the news. And, what is it? That boy is not coming home for his birthday. It seems like a ritual, the boy comes every year and they are anticipating that coming.

George says after a long pause; Martha our son is dead. He was killed late in the afternoon. Silence and then a tiny chuckle; see this is what makes it weird. On a country road, with his learners permit in the pocket, he swerved to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight.

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MARTHA (Rigid fury) **YOU ... CAN'T ... DO ... THAT!**  
GEORGE ... large tree.  
MARTHA YOU CANNOT DO THAT!  
NICK (Softly) Oh my God. (HONEY is weeping louder)  
GEORGE (Quietly, dispassionately) I thought you should know.  
nick Oh my God; no.  
MARTHA (Quivering with rage and loss) **NO! NO! YOU CANNOT DO THAT! YOU CANT DECIDE THAT FOR YOURSELF! I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THAT!**  
GEORGE We'll have to leave around noon, I suppose. ...  
MARTHA I WILL **NOT LET YOU DECIDE THESE THINGS!**  
GEORGE  
... because there are matters of identification, naturally, and arrangements to be made. ...



He knows what he is doing, that this is something Martha used to hurt. George now, George is using that and Martha says; “You cannot do that”, and you cannot do that in a sense that the audience would be like; hey this is a story we just heard.

“You cannot do that”, but that is exactly what Martha’s reaction to George. It is also the audience’s reaction to George. “You cannot do that”, one can recycle a story like that, but nonetheless Martha does not take it as it is something false. But, it is what it says by this act is that hitting out at each other that is what is stressed by this.

“No, no Martha says; quivering with rage and loss”. Like the stage description tells us, that even though the things might not be real, the emotions they have feeling are real. There is something reality about the emotions they evoke in each other. We saw that also in some previous discussions from Act 1, how the emotions are told, the evocation is real.

There are mothers who lost lose their child’s and there is a pain of losing a child that that is enacted by actors on stage in for plays where probably, let us remember James Hinges, playboys of the western world; where Maurya is actually lamenting her sons. The death of her sons. Even though it is a lamentation by an actor who has not lost her actual sons.

But that is something “you can do as an actor. You can still believe that you have lost a son. You can still act like you have lost a son and acting like you have lost the son is no real less sometimes, in that matters of the stage than losing your son.” If in this play of James Synge, the playboys of the Riders to the Sea; sorry not playboys of the western world, it is riders to the sea. James Synge's riders to the sea, that it happens that Martha, is we do not we read the play and we soak up her pain we do believe that it is a woman who has lost a child.

We can also do that here, but as mentioned, this is a play that tries to that not try so that deliberately tells you it is a play. Deliberately communicates it is a play. While Synge does not do that in his play, this is something Albee does. Albee tells you like, Martha is not actually a woman who has lost her child, she is acting like she has lost a child, but she can make it true nonetheless.

Again, like the power of fiction to create certain truths that is not. So instead of like, that asserting or diminishing the power of truth, it is bolstering the power of truth, it is showing that there are multiple truths and each of them can be real in a sense that not one has to be real. Martha says “I will not let you decide these things right, not have your authority over this.”

(Refer Slide Time: 40:43)

MARATHA (Up; facing him) SHOW IT TO ME! SHOW ME THE TELEGRAM!

GEORGE (Long pause; then, with a straight face) I ate it.

MARTHA (A pause; then with the greatest disbelief possible, tinged with hysteria) What did you just say to me?

GEORGE (Barely able to stop exploding with laughter) I ... ate ... it!

(MARTHA stares at him for a long moment, then spits in his face)

GEORGE (With a smile) Good for you, Martha.

NICK (To GEORGE) Do you think that's the way to treat her at a time like this? Making an ugly goddamn joke like that? Huhh?

GEORGE (Snapping his fingers at HONEY) Did I eat the telegram or did I not?

HONEY (Terrified) Yes, yes, you ate it. I watched ... I watched you ... you ... you ate it all down.

GEORGE (Prompting) ... like a good boy.

HONEY

... like a ... g-g-g-good ... boy. Yes.

MARTHA (To GEORGE, coldly) You're not going to get away with this.



But George has done this, George has done this, “Martha says you cannot do this, you cannot do this, no, but George has done this and George says that he has eaten the

telegram. Martha says, show me the telegram by which the news came, the crazy that Crazy Billy had delivered. And, George with a stressed face says, I ate it. Martha says; what did you just say to me?"

George and Martha is like with a pause then with the greatest disbelief possible. This is her reaction to this thing that he has eaten a telegram, it is like it is a very strong reaction, a pause, then with the greatest disbelief possible tinged with hysteria. "What did you just say to me? George barely able to stop exploding with laughter, I ate it. Martha then spits in his face, see and George says with a smile good for you Martha."

So, why is this idea of eating up a telegram kind of bringing up such a very disparate reaction in Martha? It is something else becomes very important. Goya has a painting called Saturn eating his own child.

We see a huge figure is kind of holding another smaller figure in his hands, another full grown man nonetheless, and with the head is chopped off in the mouth and the thing that is eating is very like to get that intersectional relationship that you can make of it.

This is almost and that is about a father eating up a child. Fathers eating up their own children. , it could be about in *The Fly* by Katherine Mansfield, we see such a figure of the boss who has sent his son to the war. This is father eating up the child. The pale man eating up the child. The Goya's pale man, there is also like that is the reference here in a sense, if you look at it and that is why like it there is a lot of violence in the act of eating.

So, here even though eating the telegram becomes very childish things, but if you look at the painting and draw it with like that you can probably get a sense of why Martha, why does it become so traumatic act for him. It is like Goya. Goya's painting Saturn, eating his own child and strongly suggest that you take a look at that photo.

(Refer Slide Time: 43:07)

MARTHA (To GEORGE, coldly) You're not going to get away with this.

GEORGE (With disgust) **YOU KNOW THE RULES, MARTHA! FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, YOU KNOW THE RULES!**

MARTHA NO!

NICK (With the beginnings of a knowledge he cannot face) What are you two talking about?

**GEORGE I can kill him, Martha, if I want to.**

**MARTHA HE IS OUR CHILD!**

**GEORGE Oh yes, and you bore him, and it was a good delivery...**

**MARTHA HE IS OUR CHILD!**

**GEORGE AND I HAVE KILLED HIM!**

**MARTHA NO!**

**GEORGE YES!**

(Long silence)

NICK (Very quietly) I think I understand this.



Honey says, “Terrified Honey is also now participating, she also knows how to participate in this games. George says; snap is snapping his fingers to Honey; did I eat the telegram or did I not? And, Honey terrified says yes, yes, I you ate it, I watched, I watched you ate it all down.” Something very violent about this act of eating. That violence will not get communicated to us if we think only in terms of George eating a telegram, we will have to think of eat in terms of the painting I just told you about.

George says; “I can kill him Martha if I want to. That is the violence of the power that fathers hold over their children. That is the power of authority over the children, and how authority follows certain paths that sends the children to doom.”

There is this weight for the lost child. The wars what they do, wedged by older people, which causes this loss of children. That children get lost, children get murdered from households, they get lost and that is what it does. And, those wars are wedged by people in authority, people who are in positions of authority.

They send these positions of authority who would otherwise call every one of their subjects children would send exactly these children to death. And that is the exactly this potential of, this negative potential of authority that George is talking about. It is also a force of history in a sense. The history that is consisted of wars, and victories, and the history of the victor.

George says, “I can kill him Martha if I want to. Martha says he is our child. George says; yes, and you bore him and it was a good delivery. Martha keep saying he is our child and George says and I have killed him, Martha says no, George says yes”. This is like an assertion of power over their relationship.

The play is slowly coming over to an end, and there is a sort of denouement that happens, this cathartic effect that is happening, and with tragedies also we will see that this catharsis comes with the death of the tragic hero. That, it is made possible by the death of the tragic hero. The fall of the tragic hero, which makes this catharsis possible. And, here we have this death of the child that is making it possible in a sense.

(Refer Slide Time: 45:41)

ICS.  
MARTHA  
GEORGE  
MARTHA  
I don't suppose, maybe, we could..  
No, Martha. Yes. No. Are you all right? Yes. No.  
GEORGE  
MARTHA  
GEORGE  
MARTHA  
GEORGE (Puts his hand gently on her shoulder; she puts her head back and he sings to her, very softly)  
Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf Virginia Woolf Virginia Woolf,  
MARTHA  
I...am... George...



This catharsis and if we read through the rest of the play that the violence comes down, there is this violence is slowly coming down. People are slowly tired. It is almost like they are getting sleepy, they have to sleep and they are getting tenderer. The like the drawness, it was if it was an act of whipping themselves off an act of rawness, this kind of slowly becomes maybe a process of embalming, but we must remember that the night is dying, that the next day is coming.

The Walpurgisnacht, that with the next day, this process will end this process of weeping, this process of death and this kind of the play of devils and witches, and “George here says; that is, is it just us? Martha says yes. And, George says; I do not suppose. Maybe we could and George says no. Martha yes.



No are you alright, yes, no. this idea yes, no, this ambivalence it always haunts them or continues to haunt them. And, George puts his hand gently on his shoulder, she puts her head back and he sings to her very softly who is afraid of Virginia Woolf Virginia Woolf Virginia Woolf. And, Martha says, I am George and we see the vulnerabilities coming up as they are softening up.”

(Refer Slide Time: 47:00)

GEORGE

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf. . . .

MARTHA I . . . am . . . George. . . I . . . am. . . . (GEORGE nods, slowly) (Silence; tableau)

CURTAIN

About the Author

EDWARD ALBEE was born March 12, 1928, and began writing plays thirty years later. His plays are, in order of composition: *The Zoo Story*; *The Death of Bessie Smith*; *The Sandbox*; *The American Dream*; *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (adapted from Carson McCuller's novella); *Tiny Alice*; *Malcolm* (adapted from James Purdy's novel); *A Delicate Balance*; *Everything in the Garden* (adapted from a play by Giles Cooper); *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*; *All Over*; *Seascape*; *Listening*; *Counting the Ways*; *The Lady from Dubuque*; *Lolita* (adapted from the novel by Vladimir Nabokov); and *The Man Who Had Three Arms*.

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As George keeps singing who is afraid of Virginia Woolf, Martha says “I am George, I am”. It ends with a tone of vulnerability, with a tone of softening up, that this danuma, after the death of the child we see that Nick and Honey also take their leave and the play what is called the danuma slowly comes down, and it comes with a sort of reconciliation between them.

If we read the play *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne. It is also a play which has this sort of reconciliation. Though, there we find that it is the woman who is humiliated, whose humiliation makes possible this reconciliation. Here we see that it is a couple who both humiliate each other and make this reconciliation possible.