

## Getting toward the Marrow: A Reading of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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Is this play in the Theatre of the Absurd? What theater is absurd?

### **Motifs: Truth and illusion:**

◦ Do George and Martha have a child or not? Did George kill his parents?

We find several themes: a) reality vs. façade b) repression vs. masks c) fact vs. fiction

#### ● Inability to communicate:

a) language games b) psychological violence c) use of clichés

#### ● Sex

a) sterility and impotence b) fear of castration (loss of masculinity) c) a means of fulfilling one's purpose d) fear of pregnancy/childbirth

#### ● Games and gamesmanship

Games: "Humiliate the host," "Get the guest," "Hump the hostess," "Bringing up baby" What's the inter-relationship of these games?

Gamesmanship: George and Martha play games, match wits and seek the upper hand What is the function of their games? Are there any rules to follow? What role do these games play in their life?

George/Martha, George/Nick, Nick/Honey: power struggle?

#### ● Marriage and family relationship

"Devils" of marriage: jealousy, pride, anger, hatred, brutality, frustration, defeat, despair

#### ● American Dream/values

Albee attacks many of the values that traditionally comprise American Dream: marriage, children, success, wealth, education, religion and so on.

#### ● History vs. Science; younger generation vs. older generation

Reorder the chromosomes? Future cloning? New civilization without humanities?

#### ● Allusions to Religion

a) references to God and Jesus b) pagan ritual: Walpurgisnacht

c) Exorcism: a Christian rite of driving out demons

#### ● American ideals of the past vs. Marxism/Communism

**Structure:** Fun and Games; Walpurgisnacht; The Exorcism

**Symbolism:** New Carthage; one room setting; shotgun/large red and yellow Chinese parasol

**Peeling labels:** image of surgery; Earth Mother Image

**image of surgery:** probing from the skin toward the marrow (exploring the various levels of consciousness, from the surface to the deeper levels of perception and experience)

Title: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Why Virginia Woolf? Who is she? What has she written?

Who is afraid? How does one conquer his/her fear?