By Sherry Guzman

Edward Albee’s ‘A Delicate Balance’ is about the balance between illusion and reality. The central characters, played by Joaquin Phoenix and turquoise, are Agnes and Tobias, a comfortable-looking couple in their early thirties.

As the play opens, they sit in their drawing room, Tobias indulging indolently while Agnes babbles idly about the rather remote possibilities of incipient insanity. In this apparently easy scene, the action of the play is already evident. A glance here, a tinge of sarcasm there, reveals a hidden, yet unexpected, fault in the foundation of their relationship.

Early in the first act, we also meet Claire, Agnes’ sister-who-lives-with-them. Claire, played by Rosamarie Murphey, is a combination chronicler, commentator, and court jester, and is the source of much of the humor in the play. She is a drunk, (not an alcoholic, she insists, for this implies an inability to control one’s drinking), whereas dreams are a definite cause of alcoholism. Her drinking is not due to any weakness in her character, but because she is simply a person who needs a drink to make her feel normal.

In the play’s first act, and in one scene in which the sickness in their relationship is fully revealed, Claire, played by Rosamarie Murphey, is a chronicle of the lives of Agnes and Tobias. She is a chronicler, commentator, and court jester, and is the source of much of the humor in the play. She is a drunk, (not an alcoholic, she insists, for this implies an inability to control one’s drinking), whereas dreams are a definite cause of alcoholism. Her drinking is not due to any weakness in her character, but because she is simply a person who needs a drink to make her feel normal.

The revelation of the sickness is followed by its exorcism in the final scene between Tobias and Claire. Claire, played by Rosamarie Murphey, is a chronicle of the lives of Agnes and Tobias. She is a chronicler, commentator, and court jester, and is the source of much of the humor in the play. She is a drunk, (not an alcoholic, she insists, for this implies an inability to control one’s drinking), whereas dreams are a definite cause of alcoholism. Her drinking is not due to any weakness in her character, but because she is simply a person who needs a drink to make her feel normal.

Soon after Claire’s somewhat unsteady appearance, Agnes announces that Tobias, her daughter, is coming home, her fourth nephew on the roof. In the midst of all this, Tobias and Agnes ‘Very Best Friends in the World’, Sam and Edna, walk in completely unannounced. Insisting that they were scared and had no other place, they go to bed in Julia’s room.

Julia, played by Kathleen Maguire, is the center of the second act. She and Tobias are trying to get rid of them. On learning that they intend to move in, she goes into hysterics and threatens to shoot them. Sam and Edna have become important in the play.

Two clinicians

The two great dramatic scenes come in the last act. The first is the scene between Tobias and Claire, in which the sickness in their relationship is fully revealed. Their marriage, since the death of a younger son, occasionally hinges on the shell of which Julia’s empty life is the product of manifestation and Tobias had become important by failing to assert himself in any way that could be felt at his family, had, in a sense, become an illusion. Agnes helps him to make a decision about Sam and Edna. The illness of their children is followed by its exorcism in the final scene between Tobias and Sam, Tobias cries that he doesn’t want Sam and Edna, they bring the plague. But only by lighting the plague, rather than fleeing it, can one become immune, so Tobias makes his decision. The balance tips back to reality, and the family, exhausted but calm, prepares to begin the day.

‘Savages’ play

Like ‘Virgins Wool’, ‘A Delicate Balance’ is a play about people biting, clawing, and clawing each other to bits. However, it is also a group of initially tepid people whose lives are built on appearances. In a few hours, they force each other to plumb the depths of their emotions, and then something that is superfluous, and start again with the little that is left.

‘The play lacks the power of ‘Virgins Wool’, the dialogue is never off, and often funny, and the acting is excellent in all the parts. It is an interesting and worth seeing.

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Architects to present exhibit on crane failure

Undergraduate students in the Department of Architecture are exhibiting a project dealing with the failure of the crane on Eastgate Tower. The exhibit displays the site of the accident and an elevated section of the crane boom. The exhibit is appearing adjacent to the elevator on the fourth floor of Building Seven.

The Tech selects Board members

The Board of Directors of The Tech has selected Steve Corbath The Tech's 1966 Managing Editor while Associate News Editors for Volume 81.

January 21, 1967

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