

The glass menagerie by tennessee williams – scene one

Literature



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Tennessee Williams led an unusual and for the most part miserable life, never being able to fit in with the boundaries of society. He portrays his feelings about society and poverty and how it binds us to a routine sort of life and through Tom shows how we can break away from it all- but also shows us the price we end up paying for running away.

The opening scene of the play begins with a narrative on the lifestyle and living condition of the Wingfield apartment. The description of the building and apartment alone, gives us an idea of appalling living conditions were during the year of the Great Depression. Tennessee Williams uses words such as "hive-like" and "cellular living-units" and "warty growths" that gives us a sketch of what living conditions were like.

Tennessee Williams also mentions a fire escape, which is added to the sets of the play. This fire escape has great significance, as it is an "accidental poetic truth." The fire-escape leading out of the Wingfield's apartment represents exactly what the name states. It is an escape from the fires of frustration that have "enslaved" the American people. This is why it is an "accidental poetic truth."

We are also told that the play is a memory play it has been styled and fashioned in such a way that it constantly reminds the audience that it is a memory play. Tennessee Williams admits that parts of the play are "exaggerated" and "non-realistic", contributing to the effect of the play being a memory. This also explains the fact of why the lighting is "dim", as this offers the effect of the past and memory. They also use imaginary food and utensils, as during memories details are never remembered.

Tom enters dressed as a merchant sailor. The possible reason he was dressed like this is to prepare the audience for what will happen as the play proceeds, that is to say that Tom will leave. When Tom begins to address the audience directly, it is understood that Tom is a narrator as well as a character in the play. We realize that this play, being a memory is going to be bias, because everything will be filtered through Tom's mind and how he remembers things. The dual use of Tom as a narrator who is withdrawn from the play and a character, who takes part in the play emotionally as well as physically, makes the play even more interesting but makes it hard for us to understand Tom and why he is the way he is.

As Tom he begins his speech in his narrative role to the audience, he talks about casting illusions around truth. " He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion." I think that these lines reveal one of the major themes in the entire play-the difficulty Tom, Amanda and Laura have with grasping reality and truth. They often- each in their own way sneak away from reality.

In this scene it is Amanda who escapes the clutches of reality, only to find herself in the past. Because Laura persuades Tom to let Amanda keep on talking, we realize that this isn't the first time that Amanda has talked about her gentlemen callers. As Amanda reminisces about her faded southern past we notice that she is very theatrical, she uses many exclamations and exaggerates a lot too.

Tom and Amanda's fight in this scene tells us that they don't get along much. Tom dislikes Amanda for treating him like a child, whilst Amanda

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pushes Tom towards perfection, which eventually pushes Tom away from her and Laura as he ends up leaving.

The scene ends with Laura saying that "mother's afraid I'm going to become an old maid", this gives us an insight to Laura and the fact that she has such a low self-esteem which is caused by the fact that she is crippled, and her mother's choice to ignore this default in her daughter.

The father's picture is blown up, to show that he is a memory that even when tried, cannot be forgotten. The last the family ever heard of the absent father were the words "hello... goodbye" in a postcard from Mexico, showing how little remorse he felt for leaving his family. Although it is easy to say that Tom followed his footsteps, Tom had never ending guilt on his conscience for the rest of his life- proving that he was not his father and that he did care plenty about Laura and he regretted leaving her as he mentions in his ending speech, "Oh, Laura, Laura I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful then I intended to be!"