

The glass menagerie: atmosphere

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There are many factors which can contribute to the pervading atmosphere of any play. But in this play there are peculiar, original ways in which Williams's goes about this. The Glass Menagerie would seem like a harder play to create a dense atmosphere for because of the small amount of characters and the only one setting. A major difference in this play is evident directly from the beginning. This is the narration that the audience is given by one of the main characters, Tom.

It is strange because once his narration is given, Tom jumps directly into the dialogue. This resembles very much a film, because with camera and voice over techniques the narration is made a lot easier. We also know that Williams started by writing screenplays and so this use of Tom would have come from his Hollywood experiences. The mood created by Tom is ambiguous and it depends on the reader. The social history which is described by Tom, "... the huge matriculating in a school for the blind... is in the negative while the vivid description of the play is written in a very melancholy but interesting tone, "... it is sentimental... " Williams gives very strict stage directions and this can only contribute to the atmosphere, even without lines being read.

" Atmospheric touches and subtleties of direction play a large part... " the opening description of the set and how it should be set out is one of the largest factors of atmosphere. Williams uses words and phrases such as " dark, grim rear wall... " and " murky canyons of tangled... inister lattice work... " With directions like this, the modern director is obviously going to create a almost gothic picture of scary darkness, and it is because of these directions that atmosphere is formulated so easily. The fact that this is " a

memory play" automatically gives atmosphere to the audience. Even Williams himself tells us that " this play can be presented with unusual freedom from convention" is allowing the director to cut the strings a little and maybe take the play into areas which might have a greater effect on the audience.

A good example of this is found in the directions also, " memory is seated predominately within the heart. " The immotive and exaggerated nature of the play will no doubt transfer to the atmosphere. The use of the screen is also a large part of the atmosphere. It is a very unusual device and it is obvious that because of his film experience Williams has included the screen. So he is capable in some ways of being able to manipulate the play in similar ways to a film.

For example, a film can suddenly cut to a completely different place, with different characters. The screen allows extra freedom with emotions. It also compliments very well the " memory" aspect of the play in which actions or scenery can be unnatural. It can be said that the screen has a symbiotic relationship with the memory, we know as humans that memory is not straightforward and direct, and that the mind can paint wonderful pictures. It is this sense of mind, which the screen adds to the atmosphere.