

The her shell, away
from profession real



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The playwright Tennessee Williams has been described as a genius playwright for capturing the ideas of his society in his lifetime effectively through his works of arts. In this paper the focus will lead to a discussion of the significance of the glass figurines and their symbolic value to the whole play as representation of the most central symbol uniting and supporting the riding themes of impossible escape from reality and the difficulties of accepting reality as guided by the question.

The play Glass Menagerie is a memory play, which is given form by the narrator's surrounding events and environment. From the play we learn that the narrator who is also an actor works in the shoe warehouse to support his windowed mother, Amanda and fatherless sister, Laura. The depiction of life by William in the play is that of daily desire to have the best, an indication of unsatisfied life full of despair, disappointment and disillusion. Tom, the main protagonist is a disillusioned character who in the family takes up the role of the male figure hence we connect with his source of sorrow and pain (Sparknotes 293).

The Play

As indicated in the play, Tom is most interested in drinking, movies and literature, thus he irks her mother that they keep on quarrelling. On the other hand her mother is a character who lives by thriving on her old memories. We get it from her speech that she was brought up in a good family, where life was good and thus she continues to brag that she had quite a number of suitors which is a complete contrast to her daughter's, Laura situation.

She is supposed to lead the family out of the current abyss but the playwright portrays her as a far illusion to hope and betterment rather than a reality. In this stance, we can see the results in that her family is almost at the verge of breaking up. Tom is no better than Laura though he is capable of running away just like his father as foreshadowed in the play. Laura in her character traits is depicted as a personality who has no desires of her own thus driven by the will of others and their means plus mechanisms. She is not free to pursue what would be hers rightfully probably as a result of poor upbringing and shyness. In that connection she ends up hopeless as her supposed suitor, Jim O'Connor, confesses that he is engaged thus shattering the family's hopes of marrying off Laura. Laura as a major character is seen in possession of glass figurines that she values more than anything else.

The collection of the glass figurines is a representation of the plays central most theme. These glass figurines are a clear depiction of Laura as the most affected personality in William's play. Laura is far removed from reality and real life thus she retreats to her shell, away from profession real jobs, real relationship with people and love relationships. Unlike her brother Tom and

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Amanda her mother, she cannot hold against the currents or the fires of daily life thus leaving her to the world of imaginations and illusions. Although she is as a result of the Wingfield's poor family upbringing she does not play her part like Tom because she is shy as Jim tells her, a point posited by the symbol of the blue roses (O'Connor 77).

The Symbolic representation and significance

It is symbolic that these figurines have been put in the play by the playwright to illustrate removal from reality and reflection of wishes that the Wingfield's desire but cannot have.

In this sense therefore, William effectively, puts himself above as a genius playwright who captures the concerns of the society in a unique way during the middle of the twentieth century. The significance of these glass figurines is symbolic of how Laura looks for alternative way of coming into terms with the jumbled things in the family. Just like her brother, life to her has been riddled with alcohol that has seen the departure of her father leaving them in a sorry state and dependent on Tom (Williams and Ehrenhaft 66). In almost all works of art the necessity of symbols and imageries is a prerequisite to easier, hidden conveyance of the intended message.

This arises from the fact that an artist is the voice of the society and draws from the daily happenings of the human experiences. In this effort to depict the society as it is, the medium, literature, must gear to point out to the issues in the society with the given and available structures that define the form and the content of the art. On the other hand, some of the daily happenings of the society require the delicate yet fresh way of

announcement thus the reader as the consumer of the art connects with what the artist intends in his or her message. In addition, the artist may want to ridicule, satirize, or disapprove anything in the human nature necessitating use of symbols and imageries for the authoritative command of the artist. Thus, the glass menagerie as a symbol is a representation of the personalities of the characters in the play.

The glass is defined as an illuminating source, transparent and at the same time capable of reflecting and refracting. To a large extent it can be applied to symbolize Laura as one who is different at different situations and yet she is delicate at any time just like the glass. Laura's world is imaginative and very brittle thus as the glass can be broken, her life is resembled with the glass.

On the other hand Tom and Amanda can be identified through this symbol on the fact that what they portray to us is different from what is real to them. Tom actually wants to leave everything that is connected and has the Wingfield's attachment (Krasne 178). Amanda on the other hand, lives in a life that she was not used to noting that she is from a rich background. In this sense, she never accepts the reality that this is her poor family opposite of how she was brought up and the fact that she even cannot be able to bring bread to her family is a reflection of her sorry state in her life as a woman. This symbol captures the internal struggles and conflicts of the characters and their desire to be free from the heavy life experiences they are facing. On the other hand, the glass unicorn is a symbol of Laura's peculiarity and uniqueness.

The unicorn a type of a horse that ceased to exist reminds the audience that Laura has just been brought up in the confines of their apartment and thus is rare to the outside world thus when she encounters Jim she cannot resist his charm and eventually ends up kissing him. In this encounter, Jim kills the unicorn beak which is symbolic of what Laura has undergone. This represents Laura's inability to remain in such a mythical state when the other parts of the world are changing and embracing new things. When Jim breaks, the unicorn it depicts what he has done to Laura removing her from her encasing and setting her onto the world of reality. However, she decides to go back to her world after realizing that Jim is not the man of her life thus she gives him the unicorn as a souvenir of their encounter though she had confessed of liking him back in high school. Thus, things to her turn back to normal (Bloom 68).

Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, a work of art becomes vivid and memorable from the creative use of symbols and images. Williams as a great playwright has used symbols and images to effectively represent and send his ideas and notions to the reader thus it is the work of the reader to decode the underlying meaning and appreciate or criticize it. In the Glass Menagerie, play, lack of symbolism or images would have rendered the work of art hard to understand and to communicate the intended message. It is futile to try to explain the whole messages in words as it would lead to time wasting and extra long plain text that raises no artistic interests.

It is imperative of the artist to convince the reader of what he or she is speaking therefore the structures available to literature design the form of

presentation and thus symbols and imagery are part of these thus making William a complete convincing playwright.

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