

Twentieth Century American Drama
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Lecture - 26
The Glass Menagerie Part 1

We begin discussing a new play by Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*.

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Introduction



- The *Glass Menagerie* is a Memory Play – the narrative is drawn from the lead character’s memory.
- It was first premiered in the year 1944 and first published in the year 1945.
- Tennessee Williams reworked this play from one of his own short stories titled *Portrait of a Girl in Glass* and his screenplay titled *The Gentleman Caller*.
- The play won New York Drama Critic’s Circle Award in 1945.
- It was adapted to Hollywood twice – in 1950 and in 1987.
- An Indian adaptation of the play was released in 2004. It was a Malayalam language film titled *Akale*, which won National film Award for Best Supporting Actress for actor Sheela.



The Glass Menagerie has always been classified as a memory play, Tennessee Williams the dramatist the playwright himself. He chose to address this refer to this as a memory play and that is a term that he coined too. But now when we are looking back at this play it has larger implications with memory becoming a very major tool in helping us to look at not just this play, we find that most of the plays that we had been engaging with so far, the American drama of the early 10, Twentieth century.

Its largely about the recollections, memory plays a very important role in most of the plays that we had looked at so far. From the beginning whether it is the *Emperor Jones* or *Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*, and even in *You Cannot Take It With You*, we find that memory comes in as a very tangible presence dictating the terms of the play, dictating the ways in which the identities of the characters are formed and shaped.

We find that *The Glass Menagerie* becomes a trendsetter in that sense with the dramatist and the others referring to it as a memory play, where the narrative is drawn extensively

from the lead characters memory. The unreliability of memory and the poetic licence which is part of that process that becomes, that is something that gets celebrated in a massive way throughout this play.

This was a play which was premiered in 1944 and first published in 1945. And it was a major success even before it came out in an in print. Tennessee Williams apparently had reworked this play one from one of his own short stories, which was *The Portrait of a Girl in Glass*, and there was also screenplay titled, *The Gentleman's Caller*.

We find that this translation, this transition seems to be working quite seamlessly and it's very evident in the many techniques that he has used in the glass menagerie, the positioning of the narrator, and the way in which memory becomes an important tool in configuring the characters configuring the plot, . So, we find that this his exposure to these different genres and the cinematic eye that he has and the eye of fiction that he has everything comes together in a very seamless fashion in this play *The Glass Menagerie*.

It also went on to when the Drama Critic Circle Award in 1945, and it was adapted into Hollywood twice in 1950 and 1987. And later it there is also a connection that we can trace closer to home. There is an Indian adaptation of the play which was released in 2004, a movie adaptation. It was a Malayalam language film titled *Akale*, and it also the lead female character also got the best supporting actress award, the National Film Award, the National Film Award for the Best Supporting Actress, .

We find that this is a play in that sense which is very malleable, the characters are very malleable, and the plot is very malleable. It can easily get translated into any setting, even though it is across time, across a space, because the psychological turmoil. The aspects of memory which configure these characters they are quite relatable almost in a universal way in any different setting as we could see.

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Synopsis

The play draws its action from the memories of Tom Wingfield, the narrator. He is an aspiring poet frustrated with his boring job and his obligations towards his family. The play is his recollection of his mother Amanda and his elder sister Laura, both of whom he abandons by the end of the play.



So, if we could try and summarize this play before we dive into a close reading, this play draws much of its action from the memories of the central character Tom Wingfield, who is also the narrator. So, this seamless transition is also made possible by the effective way in which the play gets presented. He first appears on screen, first appears on stage as a narrator and very seamlessly he becomes a character in a play which he himself is narrating.

There are these monologues in between which are used as very convenient dramatic devices through which we get a sense of what is happening not just on stage, but also in the minds of these different characters. It is a very tainted kind of memory, a tainted kind of narrative that we get because we are seeing everything, we are seeing every character. We are experiencing every situation through the lens of this character who is re-telling the story.

Tom Wingfield, when the play opens, he is not a very successful person. He is a young man who is caught in the middle of many things, and they are going through very evidently going through a lot of financial struggles. He is stuck in a boring job. He works for a shoe company, which he does not like at all. He has obligations towards his family.

He is much attached to his sister very visibly and to his mother too, but it always comes out in frustrated articulations. And towards the end we find that he is actually unable to

do any of these things. He becomes just a replica of his father who had left the family 16 years back, we get to know from the play.

The play is his recollection of some instances of his interactions within the family. And now, we do not know what it is; it is a very a lot of mixed emotions over here, he has affection, he has regret, and there is also a lot of helplessness surrounding this play.

The sense of abandonment that the other characters experience and how Tom Wingfield was led to it. It also makes it difficult for us to judge any of those characters. The expectations of the mother, though it is unrealistic at some times, and the unreal world which the sister Laura chooses to inhabit, and the helplessness, and this constant tendency to escape from everything real that is there like in all the characters.

We find that Tom Wingfield actually gets out of that system, gets out of that family, we do not know whether he is successful the way he is placed now. We know that he had to escape from his family which was a very suffocating space for him.

This memory could also be seen, or this memory narration could also be seen as an act of atonement. We do not entirely know the future directions that the protagonist's life or the other characters' life would take, but nevertheless, it stops at an interesting point revealing to us more than anything the sheer helplessness in which the characters are stuck.

This play is set in the 1930s. Again, the depression, the way it manifests in individual lives in the larger society that takes a large share in terms of defining the background. The search for unemployment, the longing for a past which we do not know whether it was real or not, the longing to bring back a past which was more glorious than the present and this anxiety about the future all that gets replicated here in the 1930s, the great depression.

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THE GLASS MENAGERIE,
by Tennessee Williams, 1944

Set in St. Louis
Year 1937



SCENE I

The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centres of lower-middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism.

The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire-escape is included in the set - that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it.

The scene is memory and is therefore non-realistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic licence. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore rather dim and poetic.

At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the



So, we will now begin to take a closer look at the play. So, Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams. So, this is written in 1944, but it is set in Saint Louis in the year 1937. So, the play begins with this long narration. So, more than stage descriptions, we have Tom Wingfield as a narrator and a character. , he switches his positions as and when it is required, when the movement, when the movements across scenes are getting facilitated.

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poetic.

At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield tenement. This building, which runs parallel to the footlights, is flanked on both sides by dark, narrow alleys which run into murky canyons of tangled clothes-lines, garbage cans, and the sinister lattice-work of neighbouring fire-escapes. It is up and down these alleys that exterior entrances and exits are made, during the play. At the end of Tom's opening commentary, the dark tenement wall slowly reveals (by means of a transparency) the interior of the ground floor Wingfield apartment.

Downstage is the living-room, which also serves as a sleeping-room for Laura, the sofa is unfolding to make her bed. Upstage, centre, and divided by a wide arch or second proscenium with transparent faded portières (or second curtain), is the dining-room. In an old fashioned what-not in the living-room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living-room, facing the audience, to the left of the archway. It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap. He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say 'I will be smiling forever'.

The audience hears and sees the opening scene in the dining-room through both the transparent fourth wall of the building and the transparent gauze portières of the dining-room arch. It is during this revealing scene that the fourth wall slowly ascends out of sight. This transparent exterior wall is not brought down again until the very end of the play, during Tom's final speech.

The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever licence with dramatic convention is convenient to his purpose.

TOM enters dressed as a merchant sailor from alley, stage left, and strolls across the front



So, we will quickly read through this narration at the beginning where we are introduced to characters. We are being made familiar with the setting, the emotion, the physical setting as well as the emotional setting. The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centres of lower-middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one inter-fused mass of automatism.

This is in fact, a commentary that Tennessee Williams is giving too. So, this is another aspect of this memory play. The author also becomes a character over here. The author somehow sometimes inhabits the persona of the narrator and chooses to give his commentary on not just the setting of the play, but on the larger setting of the society, how things are being arranged now, how things are being re-imagined in this new economic order.

And this new economic order becomes not so much of an appealing site particularly when they are going through this period of depression. And even post-depression even after the 1930s, soon after that we know the Second World War happens. And it is never a happy period particularly these first couple of decades, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, when these plays are being written, when these plays are also brewing in these authors minds.

It is also the lived experience which gets translated into these into these pages which is why the dark irony in these plays the very grave ambience in this background, it is quite tangible over here, it is very palpable the emotions which the characters are going through because at some level it is an extension of the emotions that these authors are going through as well.

And notably, if you look at the other plays that we have discussed so far, the opening scene is always in a confined space, the opening scene is always within a room or in a backyard, there is a very palpable domesticity about the opening scenes. And also, how the opening the space is where the play open how they are also confined, how they are also surrounded by these huge consuming settings, which are part of the the urban growth, which are part of the new financial order.

So, the critique begins right there with the setting. A critique begins right there in the way in which these spaces are shaped and how the characters who are living in these spaces, the characters who inhabit these spaces are always already suffocated and frustrated because the space in some sense it functions as an objective correlative, . Replicating the emotions that the characters are going through as well; the characters are facing as well.

So, the apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. It is possible to say that this commentary at the beginning, this narratorial intervention at the beginning, in glass menagerie, it could perhaps serve as a commentary to the all that plays that we have taken a look at so far.

It is largely about the lives which are caught within such huge buildings and as he puts it they are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. So, we want to I would like to focus a bit on this structure, the fire-escape, which keeps coming back, which makes a recurrent which is a recurrent presence in this play. The fire-escape is included in the set that is the landing of it and steps descending from it.

There is a scene a bit later on right at the beginning. We find that Laura she is about to trip and fall on those fire steps, on those fire-escape steps. The fire-escapes, the fire-escape here is presented right at the beginning, even before anything or anyone else is introduced to us, we find that the fire-escape here is getting presented as a symbolic presence.

It is almost like a symbolic character, because it is and then the narrator. We have a narrator over here who always wants to give away his version of how he is looking at objects around him, how he is experiencing life around him.

He himself puts it there is a touch of accidental poetic truth because all characters in this play, they are constantly looking of ways to escape. The fire-escape being at the center a silent character in the peripheries, it accentuates this symbolic order.

The scene is a memory and is therefore, non-realistic. This entire scene whatever is happening in this play, it happens in the mind of the narrator, which is a very fascinating

way to approach this play itself. We do not know. There is a lot, there are a lot of realist aspects within the play realism is there in a very cool way in the techniques used throughout this play.

There is this larger irony that entire play is memory. It happens in the mind of this narrator, and we have absolutely no way of knowing whether it is actually happened or whether it is a figment of his imagination, but it is presented in a very realistic manner.

It borders on this memory and fiction. There is a lot of self-reflectivity here, where the play is drawing attention to the nature of these descriptions. The scene is memory and therefore, non-realistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic licence. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore, rather dim and poetic.

When we also have a lot of sophisticated tools to look at memory through the lenses of memory studies in particular. It is very interesting here to see that here, memory is seen as something which is seated predominantly in the heart. It is very interesting that this heart get mentioned and not brain. Heart is seen, it is seen as a, memory seen is a very emotional thing, in a very appropriate way over here.

It is drawing attention to the genre, to the techniques, and saying that if at all there is any unreliability, if there are omissions, if there are exaggerations, if there are disproportionate attachments to particular objects or particular settings then it is no one's fault, it is memory. It is a memory play. This is how memory is entailed to function because memory is seated predominantly in the heart.

The interior is therefore, rather dim and poetic because this is not happening in real time, in real space. It is out there in the memory space and in the memory time. But at the same time, the curtain falling, the curtain raising, all those real techniques which are there around the stage that also adds to this ironical bit about the realism and the memory sitting together.

At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield tenement. This building, which runs parallel to the footlights, is flanked on both sides by dark, narrow alleys which run into murky canyons of tangled clothes-lines,

garbage cans, and the sinister lattice-work of the neighbouring fire-escapes, . There is a fire-escape everywhere.

And look at this description, it is very realist. It is a memory play. There is this allowance that it seeks for itself by saying that it is a memory play, there could be exaggerations, there could be emissions. But we find that in terms of its technique, in terms of the craft which is getting used over here, it stays very true to the realist tenets, in terms of the descriptions, in terms of its early rootedness.

So, it is up and down these alleys that exterior entrances and exits are made, during the play. So, look at this constant shift between what is out there for real and what is part of the play. And everything is being made to deliberately converge towards how the play is getting staged. This constant attention to its form.

It is very interesting. It is perhaps much ahead of its times in terms of experimenting with this form of a presentation, where the narrator is drawing attention to it is the form of the play. While also drawing attention to the fact that the narrator himself could be real or a part of memory, and there are no claims being made to any kind of truth any kind of real presentation.

We find that this is also perhaps an offshoot of the many experiments in theatre which is happening more predominantly in Europe and UK during this time. And we find that the American drama of the Twentieth century, it draws from, it absorbs all of these different experimental traditions, and they tries to infuse the twentieth century American society, and it tries to infuse a dramatic life into this the real background in which most of these plays are also set.

So, downstage is the living-room which also serves as a sleeping-room for Laura. We have being introduced to different characters without necessarily spelling out the connections of those characters with the narrator. The sofa is unfolding to make her bed. Upstage, centre, and divided by a wide arch or a second proscenium with transparent faded portieres. The specific details and the graphic way in which the descriptions are progressing; is a dining-room.

In an old fashioned, what-not in the living-room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. This is at the core of this play. It draws its title from *The Glass Menagerie*. The

glass animals which represent the fragile lives that the characters are leading at different points of time. And the fragility of these characters and the lifelessness are and the unreal aspects of it, they all become very symbolic in this title. In the constant presence of these transparent glass animals.

A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living-room. It is a larger than life image. He is never there. But he is a constant presence over there. He is also this presence which keeps dragging them towards unpleasant as well as unreal, but very idyllic memory simultaneously.

So, a blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living-room, facing the audience, to the left of the archway. It is a face of a very handsome young man in doughboy's First World War cap. He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say 'I will be smiling forever'. It is in stark contrast to what the family is experiencing. It is almost it is there is an ironical tone about this play at every single step. Here, we could also notice that the narrator, while serving as a narrator he is also giving stage directions.

There are multiple roles which are being served in this first session which could be seen as a commentary, a monologue, a stage direction, a stream of consciousness narration whichever way one chooses to address it. And whichever way we enter or are approached, we have to enter this play. We find that all of those works quite well and that is perhaps the greatest beauty of a play like *The Glass Menagerie*.

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Downstage is the living-room, which also serves as a sleeping-room for Laura, the sofa is unfolding to make her bed. Upstage, centre, and divided by a wide arch or second proscenium with transparent faded portières (or second curtain), is the dining-room. In an old fashioned what-not in the living-room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living-room, facing the audience, to the left of the archway. It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap. He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say 'I will be smiling forever'.

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The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever licence with dramatic convention is convenient to his purpose.

TOM enters dressed as a merchant sailor from alley, stage left, and strolls across the front of the stage to the fire-escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. He addresses the audience.



“The audience hears and sees the opening scene in the dining-room through both the transparent fourth wall of the building and the transparent gauze portieres of the dining-room arch. It is during this revealing scene that the fourth wall slowly ascends out of sight. Very detailed, stage descriptions, just like the city has been described. This transparent interior wall is not brought down again until the very end of the play, during Tom’s final speech.

There is a sense of anticipation here too, that whoever is beginning. Tom has begun, Tom Wingfield has he is giving this narration and he will also be there at the end, and we do not know we are not being made conscious of these transitions.

The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever licence with dramatic convention is convenient to his purpose. Tom enters dressed as a merchant tailor from alley, stage left, and strolls across the front of the stage to the fire-escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. He addresses the audience.

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TOM: Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.

To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.

In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion.

In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis. . . .

This is the social background of the play.

[MUSIC]

The play is memory.

Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic.

In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings.

I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother Amanda, my sister Laura and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes.

He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from. But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for. There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than-life-size photograph over the mantel.

This is our father who left us a long time ago He was a telephone man who fell in love



And seamlessly the play begins now. So, the memory play begins here with a tinge of irony by drawing from, by drawing attention to its own form. But staying true to some of the realist tenets which are also very representative of early Twentieth Century American Drama.

When Tom Wingfield begins to speak over here, we find that he is retaining that mode that the ambience which has already been set. “Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. Magician will also it is a; it is a symbolic presence which will make a comeback soon as we can see. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.”

Here this technique, the memory play technique is being used to make the truth a bit more palatable. Because it is unpleasant to the core. If you look at the other plays that we have discussed Emperor Jones and Arthur Miller’s two plays, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, we find that there are unpleasant truths at the heart of it, .

Here, even when the play begins, we are being told that we this these different techniques this illusion is being experimented with in order to make this the, in order to disguise truth in a more pleasant manner. “To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind.

Their eyes had failed them or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.” This is about the 1930s depression, and how it affected the population financially, emotionally, as well as physically.

In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion. In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, and otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Saint Louis. This is the social background of the play.

We are getting more and more aware of the background, the historical background. Here, as we have mentioned before during the discussion of the other plays, the way in which America responded to these crisis, it was very different from the rest of Europe or for that matter is very different even from the way England responded. There were always sporadic disturbances.

This is the sporadic and continuous nature of these disturbances, it made it all the more difficult for them. There was no perhaps no outbreak of a revolution in a visible way like it happened here too, as the play also mentions in Spain or any part of Europe.

But we find that this sporadic and continuous disturbances, they were like this constant thorns in the American economy, in the financial stability, in the emotional journey of the citizens towards what they thought. This was this perfect dream, the perfect American dream.

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we live for. There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than-life-size photograph over the mantel.

This is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town. . . . The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words -

'Hello - Good-bye!' and no address.

I think the rest of the play will explain itself ...

[AMANDA's voice becomes audible through the portières. Amanda - from a genteel Southern family

LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'Où SONT LES NEIGES'.

He divides the portieres and enters the upstage area.

AMANDA and LAURA are seated at a drop-leaf table. Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils. AMANDA faces the audience. TOM and LAURA are Seated is profile.

The interior has lit up softly and through the scrim we see AMANDA and LAURA seated at the table in the upstage area]

AMANDA [calling] Tom? Yes, Mother.

AMANDA: We can't say grace until you come to the table!

TOM: Coming, Mother. [He bows slightly and withdraws, reappearing a few moments later in his place at the table.]



“The play is memory. Being in a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, and it is not realistic. In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings. I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother Amanda, my sister Laura, and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes.”

So, everything is very clearly spelled out. After the stage directions and the narratorial intervention we already are introduced to all the major characters. We are also being we were also told right at the outset that there will be a speech at the end by Tom Wingfield.

He is the most realist realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from. There are two worlds here, inside this play, one is a memory world and one is a real world. And the narrator is very conscious of this

divide that he is making, the divide which was already there either in reality or in his mind.

But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol. We find that this could also be later we will see that he is an aspiring poet, and he is stuck in a job a very boring job that he does not want to be a part of. He thinks he lives with a very uninspiring family.

This could be Tom Wingfield escapism to a world where he can create his own reality. So, there are multiple possibilities that this memory play is opening up before us and the transparency of this narrator from whatever we get to see of him is also further accentuating those possibilities.

This character is used as a symbol. He is a long delayed, but always expected something that we live for. And as we had discussed earlier too the replications of *Waiting For Godo*, may be found in more real and more grave terms in a number of instances in these plays particularly in the early twentieth century plays, .

We find that the replications of Godo, *Waiting For Godo* it could be found in various ways in these most of these plays. And finally, he says there is a fifth character in the play, who does not appear except in this larger than life size photograph over the mantle which we already noticed in the stage directions and the descriptions which were given at the beginning, where a commentary, a narratorial intervention, and stage directions we are all coming together.

This is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances. So, travel here this fantasy for travelling long distances that is seen as something very fantastic, but also something which will eventually cause a lot of grief to the people who are around these characters who are travelling.

This is something this fantasy about travelling to find fortune, travelling for pleasure, travelling to find their own life's purposes. It makes this; this is a theme which keeps coming back in various forms in different in many of these plays.

He gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town. The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan, on the Pacific

coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words, 'Hello, goodbye, and no address. I think the rest of the play will explain itself.

This is very comic, but there is a tragedy inherent in this, the way the father's image keeps coming back, the way he is smiling it is almost like mocking the situation in which the rest of the family is forced into. So, we are now first introduced of the first character, apart from the narrator Tom Wingfield, whom we meet over here is Amanda.

Amanda is in fact, a character who is living in the 1930s in the middle of all these depressing realities, and she seems to be from a genteel southern family. We could also perhaps a bit later talk about the north-south divide and how that dynamics plays out during this financial crisis in America.

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'Hello - Good-bye!' and no address.
I think the rest of the play will explain itself ...

[AMANDA's voice becomes audible through the portières. Amanda - from a genteel Southern family
LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'Où SONT LES NEIGES'.
He divides the portières and enters the upstage area.

AMANDA and LAURA are seated at a drop-leaf table. Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils. AMANDA faces the audience. TOM and LAURA are Seated is profile.

The interior has lit up softly and through the scrim we see AMANDA and LAURA seated at the table in the upstage area]

AMANDA [calling] Tom? Yes, Mother.
AMANDA: We can't say grace until you come to the table!
TOM: Coming, Mother. [He bows slightly and withdraws, reappearing a few moments later in his place at the table.]
AMANDA [to her son]: Honey, don't push with your fingers. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew !chew! Animals have sections in their stomachs which enable them to digest food without mastication, but human beings are



So, Amanda and Laura, both of them are introduced over here. And we find that they are at the dining table. And we also notice that Amanda comes across it is a very nagging presence which is found very overbearing by Tom, and they do not seem to be having this pleasant relationship, not even, it is not even bordering on anything cordially, it is outright, unpleasant, we discover in every single exchange, .

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supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A well-cooked meal has lots of delicate flavours that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function !



[TOM deliberately lays his imaginary fork down and his chair back from the table.]

TOM: I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that makes me rush through meals with your hawk-like attention to every bite I take. Sickening - spoils my appetite - all this discussion of - animals' secretion - salivary glands - mastication !

AMANDA [lightly]: Temperament like a Metropolitan star ! [He rises and crosses downstage.] You're not excused from the table.

TOM: I'm getting a cigarette.

AMANDA: You smoke too much.

[LAURA rises.]

LAURA: I'll bring in the blancmangé.

[He remains standing with his cigarette by the portières during the following.]

AMANDA [rising]: No, sister, no, sister - you be the lady this time and I'll be the darkey



Amanda is nagging his son to eat properly and he responds with a lot of exasperation. I have not enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of one's constant directions on how to eat. We find that Amanda is always picking on these little things, it could also be because she is lost control of all the bigger things. The father figure, he left about sixteen years back and we have no idea whether he is coming back or not, and she is been doing everything on her own.

Her daughter has a defect. She has a disability which also casts a lot of shadow on her prospects of finding a groom. And the son Tom Wingfield he has not yet got into anything successful, and he seems to be very ambitious, in a very abstract sense, but he seems not to be working towards it.

Amanda is this character who is almost like a go getter, but she is just stuck in these wrong timelines and these wrong circumstances. She seemed from whatever these recollections revealed to us, she seemed to have enjoyed a fantastic life during her youth.

Getting a lot of attention, and she also looks like she had a more privileged background than what her children are now getting. She wants to give them the similar kinds of experiences, but it is just that there, it is just that she cannot find a means to work through that.

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[He remains standing with his cigarette by the portieres during the following.]

AMANDA [rising]: No, sister, no, sister - you be the lady this time and I'll be the darkey
LAURA: I'm already up.

AMANDA: Resume your seat, little sister. I want you to stay fresh and pretty for gentleman callers!

LAURA: I'm not expecting any gentleman callers.

AMANDA [crossing out to kitchenette. Airily]: Sometimes they come when they are least expected! Why, I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain -[Enters kitchenette.]

TOM: I know what's coming

LAURA: Yes. But let her tell it.

TOM: Again?

LAURA: She loves to tell it.

[AMANDA returns with bowl of dessert.]



We find that she is always picking on these little things because she has completely lost control over all the bigger things and she has absolutely no say on how Tom is going about his life either. We find that even with Laura, he seems, who seems to be crippled literally metaphorically. That is a term that the play uses. Even Laura who seems to be crippled seems to be going away from Amanda's clutches of control when it comes to real matters.

So, Amanda's language also reflects that she is always living in another time and place. Her language always has a sense of unreality. She refuses to inhabit, she refuses to accept, the reality that she encounters around her, but chooses to inhabit a different place and time where things were totally different. And even with her own children, she refuses to accept the reality in which they are all stuck in.

We find that in the middle of this the breakfast, they, he suddenly starts, she suddenly starts with, "I remember, once Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain which is where she lived and she was apparently coated by a number of suitors with even 17 gentlemen callers coming in on a single day, as we would get to know very shortly. And when Tom says I know what is coming we know that, this is a routine, it is a drill, it is a regular drill where she will narrate these glorious stories from her glorious past and which has absolutely no resonance to the way in which they are living now."

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AMANDA: One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain, your mother received seventeen! gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.



TOM [remaining at portières]: How did you entertain those gentleman callers?

A M A N D A: I understood the art of conversation !

TOM: I bet you could talk.

AMANDA: Girls in those days knew how to talk, I can tell you.



So, Laura and Tom they both know that she loves to tell the story and she continues with it. One Sunday afternoon in a Blue Mountain your mother received 17 gentlemen callers. Why, sometimes there were not chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

Look at the vocabulary used over here. It is clearly evident that she was raised in one of those very well to do families in the south. The terms that with the vocabulary which Amanda uses, it is also showcasing this wide gulf between these different Americas, the different settings, and the struggles, and the emotional expectations that people from these different settings have.

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TOM: Yes?

[IMAGE: AMANDA AS A GIRL ON A PORCH GREETING CALLERS.]

AMANDA: They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure although I wasn't alighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet all occasions.

TOM: What did you talk about?

AMANDA: Things of importance going on in the world ! Never anything coarse or common or vulgar.



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AMANDA: They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure although I wasn't alighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet all occasions.


TOM: What did you talk about?

AMANDA: Things of importance going on in the world ! Never anything coarse or common or vulgar.

[She addresses Tom as though he were seated in the vacant chair at the table though he remains by portieres. He plays this scene as though he held the book.]



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My callers were gentleman -all! Among my callers were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta - planters and sons of planters!


[Tom motions for music and a spot of light on AMANDA. Her eyes lift, her face glows, her voice becomes rich and elegiac.

SCREEN LEGEND: 'Où SONT Les NEIGES']

this is Amanda's reality


There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank.

Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds.



She gives a very detailed description of how things were with her during that time and she is also giving these details of the callers how there were these prominent young planters from Mississippi delta planters, and sons of planters.

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There were the Cutrere brothers, Wesley and Bates. Bates was one of my bright particular beaux! He got in a quarrel with that wild Wainwright boy. They shot it out on the floor of Moon Lake Casimo. Bates was shot through the stomach. Died in the ambulance on his way to Memphis. His widow was also well provided for, came into eight or ten thousand acres, that's all. She married him on the rebound - never loved her - carried my picture on him the night he died !And there was that boy that every girl in the Delta had set her cap for! That brilliant, brilliant young Fitzhugh boy from Greene County!

TOM: What did he leave his widow?

AMANDA: He never married ! Gracious, you talk as though all of my old admirers had turned up their toes to the daisies !

TOM: Isn't this the first you've mentioned that still survives ?



And more and more details about who all came to see her as a gentleman caller and what they went on to become. So, all of them were either very money, very wealthy people or they became wealthy later on and this is Amanda's reality. This is a reality that Amanda

chooses to inhabit, a reality from which she on which she has no stakes and from which she can she cannot draw anything. There is sadness and pathos in this play as well.

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TOM: What did he leave his widow?



AMANDA: He never married ! Gracious, you talk as though all of my old admirers had turned up their toes to the daisies !

TOM: Isn't this the first you've mentioned that still survives ?

AMANDA: That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune - came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold!



She ends up doing is that while this at some level comes across as very selfish, it seems that she is always talking about her own glorious past without even at the risk of being inconsiderate of what her children are going through. But in the as a play progresses, we realize that, as a play progresses, we realize that this inhabitation in the past it comes from this anxiety about the future or the lack of future era of for her children.

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And I could have been Mrs Duncan J. Fitzhugh, mind you! But - I picked your father !



LAURA [rising]: Mother, let me clear the table.

AMANDA: No, dear, you go in front and study your typewriter chart. Or practise your shorthand a little. Stay fresh and pretty! It's almost time for our gentlemen callers to start arriving. [She flounces girlishly toward the kitchenette.] How many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon?
the typewriter - preparing the audience for the next scene

[Tom throws down the paper and jumps up with a groan.]



Laura is this character, this quiet character who plays with these, who preserves these glass figurines, the glass menagerie, the animal, the glass animal collection. And time and again we find at the beginning in scene one that. She is also asked to work on her typewriter chart to practice her shorthand. And the typewriter, the presence of the typewriter over here is preparing the audience for the next scene. Something very unpleasant is about to happen. We find that all the objects that are placed in this setting, they all serve a purpose.

They are not just there as props. They have a deeper emotional role to play as well. If we situate this in the context of their memory play, all the objects which are being remembered, all the places, all the sites, all the experiences which are being remembered and presented in this memory play are also those items, those experiences, which have very direct relevance to the plot, to how the characters, how the plot everything gets shaped and reshaped.

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LAURA [alone in the dining-room]: I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother.

closes her mind to this reality

AMANDA [reappearing, airily] What? Not one - not one? You must be joking!

[LAURA nervously echoes her laugh. She slips in a fugitive manner through the half-open portières and draws them in gently behind her. A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face against the faded tapestry of the curtains.]

[MUSIC: 'THE GLASS MENAGERIE' UNDER FAINTLY. Lightly.]

Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true ! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!

ornauo:



Laura chooses to live in her own world, but she is conscious of the realities much more than how Amanda is. There is a reality that Laura here articulates that I do not believe we are going to receive any that we that; she knows that no one is going to come and call on her. There are there is not going to be any gentleman callers visiting.

But Amanda chooses to close her mind to this reality. This shift between reality and the ideal past that she chooses to inhabit, it becomes all the more ironic when we look at it

from the perspective of a memory play. There are these multiple things coming together memory, the reality and also an idyllic past within the memory. There are different kinds of unrealities too that we encounter as we progress through this play.

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[LAURA nervously echoes her laugh. She slips in a fugitive manner through the half-open portières and draws them in gently behind her. A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face against the faded tapestry of the curtains.]



[MUSIC: 'THE GLASS MENAGERIE' UNDER FAINTLY. Lightly.]

Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!

LAURA: It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue Mountain. ... [Tom utters another groan. LAURA glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile. Her voice catching a little.] *Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid.*



“Laura wants to call his parents say, not one gentleman caller is going to call. Mother’s afraid I am going to be an old maid. And that is what the anxiety, the crux of the anxiety is. If Laura is not doing anything else in life, and if she is continuing to be stuck in this place in her life where she is at the moment, Amanda is anxious, concerned. Almost paranoid, that, she will just stay as an old maid which seems to be the greatest catastrophe that could befall a young woman in the 1930s.”

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THE SCENE DIMS OUT WITH 'GLASS MENAGERIE'

Music

'Laura Haven't you Ever Liked Some Boy?'



With this heart stroke of reality, in fact, reality mixed with fantasy, we come to the end of this scene 1. We can find that there is no mention of the scene numbers. It is just shown like the scene dimming out with the glass menagerie. This dimming out and then the scene coming back that is also a technique used to foreground the aspects of memory play.