

**Twentieth Century American Drama**  
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**Lecture - 27**  
**The Glass Menagerie Part 2**

We continue to discuss Tennessee Williams play, *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.



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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.



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## Memory Play

- many uses of memory for the purposes of wish fulfillment, conflict resolution, and resilience
- Begins with a recollection by the narrator – shifts into the play without an interrupting narrator
- Coined by Williams
- Similar to stream of consciousness
- Memory – a device of oppression
- Non-realist?



This is a play that where it is seen as a Memory Play. There are many uses of memory for various purposes over here, it could be a wish fulfillment, it could be conflict resolution, it could also be resilience this will become more and more evident as we progress through the play. The play begins with the recollection by the narrator.

It shifts into the play without an interrupting narrator. This is a very interesting which we had already noticed where the narrator becomes a commentator to narrator becomes someone who is giving stage directions as well. He is also configuring the characters in a ways to suit his emotional temperament.

This is a term coined by Williams. This could be seen as continuation of the stream of consciousness technique where we find that the narrator is taking the cause of the play forward depending on these random associations in his mind. Memory here also becomes a device of oppression.

We find that while the realist techniques are being used, the play also borders on a lot of non-realist elements because it is entirely based on one character's memory on the narrator's memory who also holds the reins of this play in some sense. The memory the way it functions in this play it largely functions as a device of oppression by not allowing the characters to move forward.

For instance, even when Tom Wingfield is out of this family setting, it is his memories which are holding him almost like a captive like a hostage within this family situation itself. Laura and Amanda are both oppressed by their own memories one with this idyllic past, and the other one in this fantasy world which also becomes an extension of her memory right.

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## Major Characters



- **Tom Wingfield** – The narrator of the play. An aspiring poet who works at a shoe warehouse to support his family. He is frustrated with his routine job and his obligations towards his family. He finds escape through films, literature, and alcohol.
- **Amanda Wingfield** – Tom's mother who was abandoned by her husband. She often clings to her comfortable past in which she was charming and admirable by her many suitors. She wishes for the same kind of comforts for her children.
- **Laura Wingfield** – Tom's elder sister. She has braces in her legs and has a very shy personality. She withdraws herself from the outside world and spends her time taking care of her collection of glass figurines.



These are the major characters. Tom Wingfield, who is the narrator of the play. He is an aspiring poet; he works in a shoe warehouse. But he is frustrated with his routine job, and he wants to do something more creative something more interesting for which he does not get ample support from his family there is this instance where he is trying to get some creative work done.

But his mother is also really annoyed at him for retaining a copy of D. H Lawrence from the library. There are these different moral compulsions at work which is not allowing him to either fulfill his obligations to his family, or seek his own fortune or do whatever his heart wants.

He finds this his escape through these various modes, he watches films every night, and sometimes reads literature which is seen as filthy by his mother, and of course, there is alcohol. This escapism is also symbolically presented in the recurrent presence of the fire escape, the steps near the fire escape.

Amanda Wingfield is Tom's mother. She seems to have had a very elite, genteel, upbringing in the south. But she was abandoned by her husband because he wanted to travel, he fell in love with the distances and left the family that is what the play tells us. There is this very comfortable glorious past to which she clings onto because that is where she finds her identity that is where her identity continues to be anchored in.

She thinks that she had a past where she was this very charming presence and she had up to 17 suitors on a single day. She is wishing the same kind of comforts for her children, but she is also anxious that they are not really going to make it because they do not have the charm, they do not have that dogged perseverance that she thinks that she had.

Laura Wingfield is Tom's elder sister. And she wears braces on her legs. She is seen as a cripple by the society, she sees herself crippled too. But her mother refuses to acknowledge this reality, and seems to believe that with the extra charm she will be able to make up for whatever she does not have at the moment. Her personality is very shy.

She chooses to live in her own unreal world. She finds comfort in these collection of the glass figurines from which the title is also drawn from *The Glass Menagerie*. And she willingly withdraws a very deliberately withdrawals from every single connection that will keep her in touch with reality the way she stopped going to her typewriting lessons.

She instead just took walks in the parks in that process losing the families money, and also putting her mother to a lot of stress and anxiety.

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- **Jim O' Connor** – A high school acquaintance of Tom and Laura. He was an athlete and a popular guy in high school. Tom brings him home in hopes of making him a suitor for Laura. Laura liked him during school days.
- **Mr. Wingfield** – Tom's father and Amanda's husband who abandoned his family 16 years before the play's action. He was a handsome and charming man. He doesn't appear in the play but is often referred to by Amanda and his portrait hangs in the living room.



Jim O Connor a character who is introduced at the beginning with as the only realist character over here. He is a school acquaintance of Tom and Laura. He was a very popular guy in school. Laura had a crush on him during the school days, but it never became anything. Tom brings him home hoping that he would be a potential suitor for Laura, but things did not work out well because he is already engaged and that also leads to a lot of conflict within the family.

Jim O Connor is that character who comes across who makes a comeback from the high school lives of characters as a haunting presence. This is something that we find in the *Death of a Salesman 2*; these characters from high school who make a comeback. At that time the unequal ways in which the opposition in the social hierarchy, it becomes a source of conflict another source of conflict within these families.

There is Mr. Wingfield who is introduced as a fifth character who is there, but not really there. He is just an exaggerator a larger than life photograph in the living room. He had abandoned the family. He is presented as a very handsome and charming man whose charms are being invoked whenever Amanda is inhabiting this unreal past.

He is never in the, he does not make any appearance in the play. We do not get to know him except for this, the way in which he is presented as a an extremely good

looking man, a very charming, but entirely useless for his family, someone who abandoned his family to pursue his own pleasures. We will never get to know what kind of person he was, and why he really abandoned his family because the only interpretation the only way in which we are introduced to this character is through the eyes of Tom Wingfield, the narrator.

We can draw some parallels with the earlier plays that we had read in terms of the father figures, how out of sheer desperation and helplessness they just abandon everything, and find recourse in sometimes in suicide, sometimes they just choose to run away .

This is seems to be a recurrent thing in the plays of the 1930s and 1940s where the male figures when they fail to take up their responsibility, when they fail to fulfill their responsibilities and familial obligations, it leads them to take a lot of desperate actions .

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### Plot Summary



- The play is set in St. Louis in 1937. Tom Wingfield, the protagonist and the narrator of the play is living in a dingy apartment with his mother Amanda and his elder sister Laura. He is an aspiring poet working at a shoe warehouse. It is implied that Tom and Laura's father ran off 16 years ago.
- Amanda, who was once a beautiful young, longs for the comforts and admiration she had in her youth. She constantly worries about the future of her shy daughter Laura, who limps as a result of a disease in her childhood.
- Tom who hates his banal job finds escape in alcohol, movies, and literature.



As we noted before, the play is set in Saint Louis in 1937 in a dingy apartment and these are the characters who are being introduced to us.

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- After a lot of pressure from his mother for finding a suitor for Laura, Tom invites Jim, his co-worker and his high school acquaintance, home for a dinner.
- Laura, who liked Jim during high school, is overcome by shyness and unable to join the dinner. She claims to be ill.
- After dinner when power fails, Laura and Jim are left alone in a candlelit living room. After conversing with her, Jim recognizes Laura's shyness and inferiority complex. He tries to give her confidence and encourages her to think better of herself.
- After this Jim and Laura share a dance, in which Jim accidentally knocks a unicorn from Laura's collection of glass figurines and breaks its horn. But Laura forgives him saying she is happy that the unicorn is a "normal" horse now.



This play is not much about the actions which happen; it is more about the psychological turmoil and maybe a kind of an act of atonement that Tom Wingfield is hoping out of this.

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### Historical Context

- The play is set in late 1930s (1937).
- **The Great Depression:** America was struggling with the after effects of The Great Depression (1929-1933)
- High unemployment and poor working condition and wages forced labour unions to move to strikes frequently and use it as a bargaining tool.
- **Merchant Marines :** Working- class men were looking for other means of employment that would escape them from their economically poor situation. Most men were drawn towards Merchant Marines, which began in US in 1936 for the purpose of delivering troops and military supplies to Navy ships during war time.
- In the play it is implied that Tom joins one such Merchant marines after running off from his family.



We need to be aware of the historical context of this play before we continue to go back and do a close reading. The play is set in the late 1930s, particularly in 1937. This is again the time of Great Depression when America was struggling with the after effects of the great depression. The real time in which the play is being written

that is also the war time. This is a twin kind of trauma which gets replicated in different ways in this play.

There is this a huge massive unemployment that these different families are facing, there are poor working conditions and forced labour, a lot of strikes. Some of them even use that as a bargaining tool, and there is a general unhappiness among the workforce. This is the same unhappiness and frustration that we find gets replicated in Tom Wingfield's character too.

When Tom Wingfield first shows up, he is in this Merchant Marine uniform. There were always these working-class men who were looking for a career somewhere out there someone which would give them an escape from their immediate realities. So, a lot of them found refuge in these Merchant Marine jobs which began in the US in the 1936. It was primarily for the purpose of delivering troops and military supplies to navy ships during war time.

Like *All My Sons*, we find that there is a kind of prosperity that war gives to. It is a very uncomfortable kind of prosperity in some sense, but it also gives an escape route from the various other financial and emotional and familial realities that these young men are facing. The play also implied from the beginning that he also joins one such Merchant Marine company in order to run away from his family.

We do not know whether how to classify these different acts of running away, how his father runs away and how the Tom Wingfield also runs away unable to fulfill their obligations to their families. This is the helplessness which this play tries to capture by staying rooted in reality, but also using the memory troops.



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## Memory Play

- A Memory Play is a play in which the action is drawn from the lead character's memory.
- The word Memory Play was coined by Tennessee Williams for describing his play *The Glass Menagerie*.
- Memory Plays are used for showing the emotional turmoil of characters that are struggling to cope with the difficulties of reality.
- Although Memory Plays give prominence to emotions more, it reflects the realities of society during periods like The Great Depression.
- Through its depiction of emotional realities of the characters, it shows how people tried hard to negotiate within the family and with the outside world.



So, coming back to the idea of the Memory Play again. A Memory Plays the emotional turmoil, it becomes easier to capture the emotional turmoil that the characters are going through. Although Memory Play technically is meant to give more prominence to the emotions to the psychological trauma.

We find that in the play set in the 1930s and 1940s, it also captures the reality of the great depression really well, and this is that combination, the combination of this historical background. And what happens in the memory in the minds of these characters, it makes this a telling commentary on the psychological life as well as the public life of the characters.

We are also being introduced, we are being made familiar with a lot of pathetic lives where people try hard to negotiate within the family and outside the world. It is this trap that they are caught into what they are trying to escape is this in between space where they are unable to bring together the expectations of the family, and the opportunities that they get outside.

We find Tom Wingfield being placed in such perfect in such a situation where he is unable to grapple with the realities within his home or outside over there. While he is aware of his the his obligations, he cannot find a means to reach that or a means to bridge the gap between the expectations and what is available to him from outside.

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• Williams describes Memory Play as :

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

• Some other examples of Memory Plays:

1. Works of Harold Pinter - *Old Times*, *No Man's Land*, *Betrayal*, *Landscape*, etc.
2. Works of Brian Friel – *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Faith Healer*.
3. The Play *Da* written by Hugh Leonard.



This is how Tennessee Williams describes a Memory Play. The scene is a memory and therefore, non-realistic. This is how Tennessee Williams himself describes the Memory Play as he was the one who coined the term. “The scene is memory, and therefore, non-realistic memory takes a lot of poetic license. 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 rather dim and poetic”.

There are other plays to which have followed a similar format like Harold Pinter - *Old Times*, *No Man's Land*, *Betrayal*, *Landscape*. Brian Friel also has launched *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Faith Healer* which also function as Memory Plays. And there is also play by Hugh there is also a play by Hugh Leonard titled *Da*. This becomes a very favorite trope for a lot of these playwrights to experiment with these spaces between reality and what happens in the mind as a memory.

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## The Glass Menagerie as a memory Play

- *The Glass Menagerie* is called a Memory Play because the action of the play is drawn from the protagonist's memories of his past and his recollection of his mother Amanda and his elder sister Laura.
- Like Williams' definition of Memory Play, *The Glass Menagerie* focus on the emotional realities of the characters rather than the factual reality.
- Tom Wingfield, the narrator of the play whose memories serves as the foundation of the play's narrations, states in the beginning:  
"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".



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## Major Themes

- Difficulty of accepting reality
- Illusions and Disillusionment
- Abandonment
- Escape



These are some of the major themes that this play addresses. There is a difficulty in accepting reality. We find that all characters face that in various ways. Even Jim O Connor who is seen as the most realist of these characters even he chooses to inhabit a tiny pocket of time where he wants to hide the fact that he is already engaged to be married.

There is also this oscillation between illusion and disillusionment which plays out differently in different characters life. But at the end of it, they are all equally

disappointed, they are equally helpless. The theme of abandonment in real as well as metaphorical ways, and finally, the theme of escape which is the fire-escape being the most symbolic presence of this.

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## 1. Difficulty of Accepting Reality

- The characters in the play find it difficult to accept and live in reality.
- Tom is frustrated with his banal job at shoe warehouse, which he had to unwillingly do in order to support his family. He aspires to become a poet and live a life of adventures. He retreats into fantasies provided by movies and literature.
- Amanda finds it difficult to accept the reality of her poverty stricken present as well as the crippled state of her daughter who has no suitors. She retreats into her memories of past, in which she was a young and beautiful woman whom everybody admired.
- Amanda's detachment from reality is well portrayed in the dinner scene, in which she wears her frilled gown that she used to wear in her youth and speaks in a southern accent.



All these characters they find it very difficult to accept and live in reality. In fact, we find that if we go through the play and close read it, at every stage, we can find characters who are embodying these different themes though perhaps in a slightly dissimilar ways.

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THE SCENE DIMS OUT WITH 'GLASS MENAGERIE'



Music

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

On the dark stage the screen is lighted with the image of blue roses.

[Gradually LAURA'S figure becomes apparent and the screen goes out.

The music subsides.

LAURA is seated in the delicate ivory chair at the small claw-foot table.

She wears a dress of soft violet material for a kimono - her hair tied back from her forehead with a ribbon.

Symbolic - being trapped, aspiring to escape  
Tom - job, situation, family, life itself



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She is washing and polishing her collection of glass.

AMANDA appears on the fire-escape steps. At the sound of her ascent, LAURA catches her breath, thrusts the bowl of ornaments away and seats herself stiffly before the diagram of the typewriter keyboard as though it held her spellbound.

Something has happened to AMANDA. It is written in her face as she climbs to the landing: a look that is grim and hopeless and a little absurd.

She has on one of those cheap or imitation velvety-looking cloth coats with imitation fur collar. Her hat is five or six years old, one of those dreadful cloche hats that were worn in the late twenties and she is eloping an enormous black patent-leather pocketbook with nickel clasps and initials. This is her full-dress outfit, the one she usually wears to the D.A.R.

Before entering she looks through the door.

She purses her lips, opens her eyes very wide, rolls them upward, and shakes her head.

Symbolic - being trapped, aspiring to escape  
Tom - job, situation, family, life itself  
Amanda - gentleman caller who will rescue  
Laura - away from the real, outer world



We here find that again Amanda first appears on the fire-escape steps this is there is some sort of a crisis which is about to begin. As we discussed before the fire-escape this is the symbolic presence of being trapped, of an aspiring to escape. Tom, Amanda, and Laura, they are all facing this in different forms or the other.

Tom wants to escape the job the situation the family situation that he is in. He wants to escape from every single aspect of the life in which he is with which he is part of at the moment. Amanda is always waiting for this gentleman caller who will rescue, that this gentleman caller almost has this a godhood kind of quality who may or may not come.

Laura wants to move away from this real world, , she wants to go to some outer world which has absolutely no semblance of reality that is what gets manifested in the way she is presenting when she is the way she is obsessing over these glass figurines.

When this play begins, we find that Amanda is not her usual self. She is not trying to, she is not chirpy over here, she is not there is some real crisis that she is facing over here.

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Then she slowly lets herself in the door. Seeing her mother's expression LAURA touches her lips with a nervous gesture.]



LAURA: Hello, Mother, I was - [She makes a nervous gesture toward the chart on the Wall. AMANDA leans against the shut door and stares at LAURA with a martyred look.]

AMANDA: Deception? Deception? [She slowly removes her hat and gloves, continuing the sweet suffering stare. She lets the hat and gloves fall on the floor - a bit of acting.]

LAURA [shakily]: How was the DAR. meeting? [AMANDA slowly opens her purse and removes a dainty white handkerchief which she shakes out delicately and delicately touches to her lips and nostrils.] Didn't you go to the DAR. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA [faintly, almost inaudibly]: - No. - No. [Then more forcibly.] I did not have the



She keeps talking about deception; “Deception? Deception? She slowly removes her hat and gloves continuing the sweet suffering stare.”

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AMANDA [faintly, almost inaudibly]: - No. - No. [Then more forcibly.] I did not have the strength - to go to the DAR. In fact, I did not have the courage! I wanted to find a hole in the ground and hide myself in it for ever! [She crosses slowly to the wall and removes the diagram of the typewriter keyboard. She holds it in front of her for a second, staring at it sweetly and sorrowfully - then bites her lips and tears it into two pieces.]



LAURA [faintly]: Why did you do that, Mother? [AMANDA repeats the same procedure with the chart of the Gregg alphabet.] Why are you ??

AMANDA: Why? Why? How old are you, Laura?

LAURA: Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA: I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken. [She crosses slowly to the sofa and sinks down and stares at LAURA.]



This is making Laura very worried too she begins to shake, and she is trying to understand what happened. Amanda and Laura have this conversation over here. Perhaps one of the most real conversations that they have in this play. “I thought that you were an adult it seems that I was mistaken.” It is also one of those very few times when she Amanda inhabits a slice of reality a pocket of reality.

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LAURA: Please don't stare at me, Mother.

[AMANDA closes her eyes and lowers her head. Count ten.]

AMANDA: What are we going to do, what is going to be. come of us, what is the future?

[Count ten.]

LAURA: Has something happened, Mother? [AMANDA draws a long breath and takes out the handkerchief again. Dabbing process.] Mother, has - something happened?



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LAURA: Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

AMANDA: As you know, I was supposed to be inducted into my office at the D.A.R. this afternoon. [IMAGE: A SWARM OF TYPEWRITERS.] But I stopped off at Rubicam's business college to speak to your teachers about your having a cold and ask them what progress they thought you were making down there.

LAURA: Oh...

AMANDA: I went to the typing instructor and introduced myself as your mother. She didn't know who you were. Wingfield, she said. We don't have any such student enrolled at the school!

I assured her she did, that you had been going to classes since early in January.



She gives. If you recall there was a typewriter where Laura was asked to practice in scene 1. This typewriter becomes a cite of contestation over here. So, apparently Amanda went to the typing instructor and introduced myself as your mother.

She did not know who you were. Wingfield, she said. We do not have any such student enrolled at the school. "I assured her she did, that you had been going to classes since early in January."

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'I wonder,' she said, 'if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days' attendance?'

'No,' I said, 'Laura, my daughter, has been going to school every day for the past six weeks !'

'Excuse me,' she said. She took the attendance book out and there was your name, unmistakably printed, and all the dates you were absent until they decided that you had dropped out of school.

I still said, 'No, there must have been some mistake I There must have been some mix-up in the records !'

And she said, 'No - I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys ! The first time we gave a speed-test, she broke down completely - was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room! After that morning she never showed up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer' -while I was working at Famous and Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those - Oh!

I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet !

I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water !



“I wonder, she said, if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school only after a few days attendance? No, I said, Laura, my daughter has been going to school every day for the past 6 weeks. Excuse me, she said, she took the attendance book out and there was your name, unmistakably printed.

And all the dates you were absent until they decided that you had dropped out of school. I still said, No, there must have been some mistake. There must have been some mix-up in the records.

And she said, No – I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she could not hit the right keys. The first time we gave a speed-test; she broke down completely - was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room. After that morning she never showed up anymore. We phoned the house, but never got an answer - while I was working at Famous and Barr. I suppose demonstrating those - Oh.

I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet.”

This is a moment when reality strikes. Amanda is having all those unpleasant and harsh thoughts about future.



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I still said, 'No, there must have been some mistake' I there must have been some mix-up in the records !'



And she said, 'No - I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys ! The first time we gave a speed-test, she broke down completely - was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room! After that morning she never showed up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer' -while I was working at Famous and Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those - Oh!

I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet !

I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water !

Fifty dollars' tuition, all of our plans - my hopes and ambition for you - just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that. [LAURA draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet She crosses to the victrola and winds it up.]

reality strikes - thoughts about future  
gentleman caller - emerges as the only option

What are you doing?

LAURA: Oh I [She releases the handle and returns to her seat.]



“Fifty dollar’s tuition, all of our plans - my hopes and ambitions for you - just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that. Laura draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet she crosses to the victrola and winds it up.” Here this moment when she inhabits reality for a very brief time also catapults her back to the idea of the gentleman caller as the only option available.

There is absolutely no way in which her daughter can find security, financial security by finding herself a job because she had dropped out of school, she was getting panic attacks while she was there.

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crosses to the victrola and winds it up.] **reality strikes - thoughts about future**  
What are you doing? **gentleman caller - emerges as the only option**



LAURA: Oh I [She releases the handle and returns to her seat.]

AMANDA: Laura, where have you been going when you've gone on pretending that you were going to business college?

L A U R A: I've just been going out walking.

AMANDA: That's not true.



While she is trying to understand what Laura had been doing all these whiles when she pretended to attend those classes.

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LAURA: It is. I just went walking.



AMANDA: Walking? Walking? In winter? Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat? Where did you walk to, Laura?

LAURA: All sorts of places - mostly in the park.

AMANDA: Even after you'd started catching that cold?

LAURA: It was the lesser of two evils, Mother. [IMAGE: WINTER SCENE IN PARK.] I couldn't go back up. I threw up -on the floor!



She says, "I have just been going out walking mostly in the park".

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AMANDA: From half past seven till after five every day you mean to tell me you walked around in the park, because you wanted to make me think that you were still going to Rubicam's Business College?



LAURA: It wasn't as bad as it sounds. I went inside places to get warmed up.

AMANDA: Inside where?

LAURA: I went in the art museum and the bird-houses at the Zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the jewel-box, that big glass-house where they raise the tropical flowers.

AMANDA: You did all this to deceive me, just for deception? [LAURA looks down.] Why?



She says “I went to the art museum the bird houses.” The big glass house where they raise the tropical flowers. This is also very interesting because it is some level maybe she sees herself also as a tropical flower who can be raised only in this unreal world who can thrive who can even survive only in this glass house unreal world, .

This glass house again resonates with the title of the play *The Glass Menagerie*, the glass figurines, the world where Laura would ideally want to inhabit, but again it is not a habitable world. We know that there is absolutely no way in which we can have access to that world except through this through one’s imagination.

Amanda is using a very strong word over here deception. And we find that both her children in some form or the other in varying degrees. They betray her just the way her husband had, they abandon her, they deceive her, they move away from her control, just the way her husband did.

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LAURA: Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum !



AMANDA: Hush !

LAURA: I couldn't face it.

[Pause. A whisper of strings.

LEGEND: 'THE CRUST OF HUMILITY'.]

AMANDA [hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook]: So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him? We won't have a business career - we've given that up because it gave us nervous



Laura and Tom, they both have their own justifications for that. And one could be fairly certain that perhaps even the father had his own justifications and interpretations to this act of escapism that he had resorted to 16 years back. Laura is, Amanda is looking very disappointed and this is the kind of suffering that Laura cannot take it either.

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[Pause. A whisper of strings.



LEGEND: 'THE CRUST OF HUMILITY'.]

AMANDA [hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook]: So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him? We won't have a business career - we've given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion ! [Laughs wearily.] What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South - barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife ! - stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room - encouraged by one in-law to visit another - little birdlike women without any nest - eating the crust of humility all their life !

Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of !

It isn't a very pleasant alternative, is it? Of course - some girls do marry!



This brief moment when Amanda is inhabiting this reality, she says, “What are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse

ourselves with the Glass Menagerie darling? Eternally playing those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him?"

We would not have a business career - we have given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion. "What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who are not prepared to occupy a position. I have seen such pitiful cases in the South - barely tolerated spinsters living up on the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife - stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room - encouraged by one in-law to visit another - like bird like women without any nest - eating the crust of humility all their life."

Here when we also briefly recall another wonderful story of the American South, a Rose for Emily by William Faulkner where the lives of women in the American South are portrayed so beautifully where what happens to a woman even when she tries to live independently without the presence of a male figure.

It is that paranoia that anxiety which comes out through Amanda's words. This could be it may or may not be true it could be a very different setting that they are inhabiting but this is the anxiety which is eating Amanda up.

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what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South - barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife ! - stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room - encouraged by one in-law to visit another - little birdlike women without any nest - eating the crust of humility all their life !



Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of!

It isn't a very pleasant alternative, is it? Of course - some girls do marry!

[LAURA twists her hands nervously.]

Haven't you ever liked some boy?

LAURA: Yes. I liked one once. [Rises.] I came across his picture a while ago.



“Is that the future that we have mapped out for ourselves? I swear it is the only alternative I can think of. It is not a very pleasant alternative, is it? Of course - some girls do marry.”

This is how they land on this possibility as the gentleman caller as the only emerging possibility as the only future that they could have.

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AMANDA [with some interest]: He gave you his picture?



LAURA: No, it's in the year-book.

AMANDA: [disappointed]: Oh - a high-school boy.

[SCREEN IMAGE: JIM AS HIGH-SCHOOL HERO BEARING A SILVER CUP.]

LAURA: Yes. His name was Jim. [LAURA lifts the heavy annual from the claw-foot table.] Here he is in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

AMANDA [absently]: The what?



It is in such ways that we need to press and we need to position Jim O Connor, he is the only way in which they could redeem themselves, they could have a future.

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AMANDA [absently]: The what?



LAURA: The operetta the senior class put on. He had a wonderful voice and we sat across the aisle from each other Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the Aud. Here he is with the silver cup for debating! See his grin?

AMANDA [absently]: He must have had a jolly disposition.

LAURA: He used to call me - *Blue Roses*.

[IMAGE: BLUE ROSES.]



That is the kind of importance that a Jim who was also this high school hero figure for Laura that is how he enters this scene.

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AMANDA: Why did he call you such a name as that?



LAURA: When I had that attack of pleurosis - he asked me what was the matter when I came back. I said pleurosis he thought that I said Blue Roses ! So that's what he always called me after that. Whenever he saw me, he'd holler, Hello, Blue Roses ! I didn't care for the girl that he went out with. Emily Meisenbach. Emily was the best-dressed girl at Soldan. She never struck me, though, as being sincere. . . . It says in the Personal Section - they're engaged. That's - six years ago ! They must be married by now.

AMANDA: Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. [Gets up with aspark of revival.] Sister, that's what you'll do !

[LAURA utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for a piece of glass.]



She also remembers that she Jim used to call her as blue roses. There is this slightly sad story a background story to this. "I said pleurosis and he thought I said Blue Roses." They never went out together. He was with another girl. She thinks they must be married by now, but then it surprises her as well as the audience when he shows up again as a one potential suitor.

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[LAURA utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for a piece of glass.]



LAURA: But, Mother

AMANDA: Yes ? [Crossing to photograph.]

LAURA [in a tone of frightened apology]: I'm - crippled !

[IMAGE: SCREEN.] Resorts to the world of illusion again

AMANDA: Nonsense ! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word. Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect - hardly noticeable, even ! When people have some slight disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it - develop charm - and



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AMANDA: Yes ? [Crossing to photograph.]



LAURA [in a tone of frightened apology]: I'm - crippled !

[IMAGE: SCREEN.] Resorts to the world of illusion again

AMANDA: Nonsense ! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word. Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect - hardly noticeable, even! When people have some slight disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it - develop charm - and vivacity and - charm! That's all you have to do ! [She turns again to the photograph.] One thing your father had plenty of - was charm!

[Tom motions to the fiddle in the wings.]



There is again this brief moment when they inhabit the world of reality where Laura says “I am crippled”. Amanda is reprimanding her. “Laura I have told you never, never to use that word. Why, you are not crippled, you just have a little defect - hardly noticeable.”

We find that Amanda is now back to occupying her world of illusion that is where she thrives. “This is perhaps this is the world from which Tom is fleeing to you”. It, is quite possible to assume that it is this oscillation between reality and the mythical idyllic world of the past that Tom Wingfield also finds difficult to inhabit and difficult to accommodate.