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Analysis: The Glass Menagerie

The most urgent theme in *The Glass Menagerie* is the struggle that the characters experience to accept and admit the reality. The family members of Wingfield have a challenge in their effort to overcome some difficulties. The characters view the world through the prism of their past, and that is reason for their inability to be truly happy. As a result, Amanda, Laura, and Tom end up embracing private world full of illusions in the struggle to gain comfort that is insufficient in the real world.

Tom is probably the most active member of the family, because he can easily survive in the real world thanks to his ability to mingle with people. However, Tom presents both real and childish emotions. His character has dual nature, which makes it hard to state his real attitude towards denial, because he makes judgments depending on emotions. In the memory, he confronts the past that was more honorable than the present. Although he tries various ways to keep himself busy and eliminate much thought, Tom still faces a great struggle in his conscious. Tom is a poet, and he reads literature and writes on adventures, dreams, and higher things. He has a passion for following politics of Europe and reads D.H. Lawrence. On the one hand, these activities and interests allow him to escape for some time. However, on the other hand, he eventually finds himself bound to the filthy petty world of the Wingfield household. He mistreats

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his sister to escape the reality that he feels a passionate love towards her. Much of what he does is to escape the reality in his thoughts about his mother, sibling, and his job in the warehouse.

Amanda is a child from a famous Southern family in which she was brought up in a traditional way. She has suffered social and economic reversal at a point in her life; hence, she has experienced different types of hardships in her life. She has hard times as she tries to come to terms with the new modern societal status that disregards the traditional way of upbringing. There is a turbulent relationship in the family and mingling with men, because they still defend their values of upbringing. She nags Tom and refuses to see Laura as a personality. She is ready to go the extra mile to serve her loved ones, as in the case where she subjects herself to a humiliating labor of sales of subscription for Laura's marriage prospects, but she never complains. She is not an evil woman, but she is deeply flawed, and this is the main reason for the comedy, tragedy, and flair in her character.

Amanda resembles her children who live in the world of fantasy as a way to escape the reality. She convinces herself that she is not in a fantasy world by making efforts to mingle with people outside her family. Her monologues to her children and Jim reflect a psychological failure, though the words she uses are colorful. She retreats from facts by deliberate delusion and denial of truth. The woman escapes the fact that her son is a writer who loves to drink, whereas the daughter is a cripple. She defends this by claiming that parents are only able to see positive aspects in their children:

Amanda (Lightly: Temperament like a metropolitan star)

He rises and crosses downstage

You're not excused from the table.

Tom: I am getting a cigarette.

Amanda: You smoke too much (Williams 1178)

She blinds herself about her personal status by admitting her old age, but she thinks and acts like the pretty Southern Belle by dolling up and playing as a charismatic host. She does not accept that she lives in denial.

Laura is a cripple, both physically and emotionally, and tries her best to avoid hurting anybody. She faces many challenges that she covers up by displaying pure compassion:

Tom (Hoarsely: Mother, I – I apologize, Mother. (Amanda draws a quick, shuddering breath. Her face works grotesquely. She breaks into childlike tears.)

I'm sorry for what I said, for everything that I said, I didn't mean it.

Amanda (Sobbingly): My devotion has made me a witch and so I make myself hateful to my children! (Williams 1189)

She sympathizes with Tom's unhappiness and even cries out about it. Though she makes very few lines in the play, her selflessness is clear, and she is the major axis to which the play develops. She prefers walking around the streets in the cold just to escape a typing class and avoids talking with people. Unlike other characters, she is like a transparent glass that takes whichever color dependent on the light. Glass animals populate Laura's private world, and this symbolizes her real life that is very fragile and fanciful. Both Tom and Jim perceive her as alienated to the world.

In conclusion, the members of the Wingfield family struggle with denial to fit in the society. Though Tom can function in the real world, in the end he loses motivation to fantasies through drunkenness and literature. In turn, Laura is purposed to commit to ordinary friendships, romantic relationship, and professional success. The relationship that Amanda has to the reality complicates her life partially, as she longs for financial and social stability. Her attachment to the

traditional values is her major obstacle that does not allow her to discover truth about life, because she expects to live as the pampered belle. She compares herself with Tom and Laura and concludes that she is responsible for the mistakes and sadness in her children. Though she is pathetic to her children, she can do nothing to help them, because she requires being pathetic to herself as the suffering they undergo is due to her escape from reality.

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Works cited

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