
Analysis Of The Glass Menagerie

Our final reading was *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. From this text we were instructed to choose a monologue for our finale presentation. I chose a monologue for James D. O'Connor (Jim) a man who works with Tom our main protagonist. Tom's sister went to the same high school as Jim. But, Jim doesn't remember Laura until she says something to him about it. "Do you still sing?" The story is made more dynamic by the fact that Jim was meant to be a "Gentleman Caller" for Laura. Tom never told Jim that when he invited him over for dinner.

The story is made more interesting by the crazy and comical way Tom and Laura's mother Amanda prepares for the evening. She makes a fancy dinner and complains about not having time to buy new furniture. She purchases items that the family can hardly afford on only Tom's wages. Their father left years earlier, leaving the family to fend for themselves while he traveled the world. Over all this has been my favorite play that we've read this semester. The concept that the father left in it's own right is sad but when Tom follows in his footsteps it becomes tragic. It's heartbreaking to see this memory that Tom has of his sister and Mother progress into such an unhappy ending. The fact that the ending of this memory play isn't happy makes it even more real. The text is relatable, Tom's selfishness is justified by our own subconscious, what would we each do if put in his situation. Tom's Memory is the main focus of the play and also his character is the most appealing to me. However I chose to challenge myself with one of Jim's monologues. In this paper I will analyse the text using six of the twelve guideposts we used in class as they relate to Jim's Character and the way I've chosen to play him.

The first guidepost we used was "relationship" what was Jim's relation to each of the characters in the text. Specifically Laura who will be Jim's scene partner for the monologue I've chosen. What is Jim's relationship with Laura? She has had a crush on him since high school. There is evidence in the text that suggests that Jim and Laura could be romantically interested in each other. Jim even kisses her in the heat of a moment. Even though this is the case there are two sides to Jim, opposites that I'll discuss later. His character is given more depth if the kiss was out of passion to help her come out of her shell rather than to seize a romantic opportunity he saw. This conclusion that he is not romantically interested in Laura is emphasized by the news that Jim is engaged to be married. The following quotations are from my acting journal, these are written as if I was Jim, I think that writing like this helps me get into character.

"My emotional attitude is that I'm trying to prove to Laura and myself that we can both rise above our stations. I'm optimistic that Laura isn't as helpless as she seems. By proving to her that she is beautiful, this will somehow make my own self esteem higher. I like to think of my relationship with Laura as this reminder to my time in highschool. She reminds me of the confident person I use to be, and gives me the confidence to be that person again. But, I'll never be in love with Laura, although I am grateful for our paths crossing again because she has reaffirmed that I can reach my goals."

The second guidepost was; "What are you fighting for? What is the Conflict?" Jim is fighting for influence over Laura. He wants to make her believe that she is beautiful. "Has anyone ever told

you that you're pretty? You are." His motives are derived from self interest though. He will get personal gain from the situation by improving his own public speaking. He's preparing himself for the future by practicing having influence over people. He believes in the future of Television and soon he'll have to influence producers. The problem with this, the conflict is that if Laura can't be convinced than it could hurt Jim's confidence.

The third guidepost we discussed was "the moment before." This can be the immediate moment before as well as some background on Jim. Here's what I gathered about Jim. He was one of the popular kids in high school but not because he bullied or disrespected others. In fact he was a nice guy. He didn't care that Laura has a small physical defect. It didn't matter he still treats her with respect. He was predicted to be the most successful in his class but that hasn't happened for him yet. He's taking night classes to improve himself. He is engaged, though he doesn't mention this soon enough in the play. It's almost cruel how he toys with Laura's emotions. He has a large amount of motivation to rise above his station and create a better life for himself.

Immediately before the monologue I've chose Jim and Laura had a conversation about Laura's lack of confidence in herself. Jim asked her to dance and he pushes her out of her comfort zone, it seems to be going well until he leads her right into the Glass menagerie and her favorite piece of glass, a tiny unicorn, is broken. She says it's alright and says that she'll pretend he had an operation to make him feel less "freakish". This sparks a thought in Jim's mind and that's where my monologue picks up.

The fourth guidepost is "Humor." Humor is found in everyday life. We inject every situation with humor so that we don't have to bear the seriousness of it. That is a human characteristic. So it's important to keep the humor in a scene. "One would think actors are trying to reverse the life process by what they do on stage. They take humor out instead of put it in. That's what makes acting un-lifelike... Sometimes we lighten the burden for others because of the weight we are dumping on them." In the monologue I have chosen, Jim gives Laura some really serious information. He tells her that she is pretty, this isn't a moment I would add humor to. But, in the spirit of doing what I'm told I will try to lighten the seriousness of the conversation with a small amount of humor. Perhaps when I say "wonderful people" I can try to sound sarcastic. Sarcasm is funny even if it's just in a mean way it's still humor. I could also add a laugh after I say "they're common as weeds." This would add a small amount of humor to the situation which would make it seem more realistic to those watching.

The Fifth guidepost we practiced with in class is "opposites" The first side of Jim that I could think of is that he might have a part of himself that is attracted to the idea of Laura. So he would be genuinely excited and passionate about the things he's talking about. So for the in class activity I chose Excitement and Lust as my first definition. The opposite of that for me was calm and compassionate. Although I was having a hard time in class relaying these emotions I do think they would work if applied in different ways than I used them. At that point I had decided that maybe I had bit off more than I could chew. Jim was going to be a really hard character for me to play. I want my final Jim to embrace both sides, I want him to be both passionate and calm, understanding and protective of Laura, excited and serious.

The final guidepost is "discoveries" this is when you learn something new every time you do the scene. It's not you as the actor learning something new, but it's your character making discoveries. When I portray Jim he's going to have to make all these realizations in his mind as

he scene moves along. It's very important to not fake these, they have to be real. I think using a circle of attention might be helpful for this particular task. I need to see in the audience that they each understand that they have self worth. I'm convincing Laura but I'm also convincing each audience member. It's very important that they believe I'm going through these experiences for the first time.

These six guideposts have helped me analyse the text on a deeper level and will make presenting the monologue easier. I have really enjoyed The Glass Menagerie and this class. Even if I crash and burn when presenting this monologue I know that I have taken in a lot of new skills and have practiced applying them. Nothing is perfect and neither am I, but all I can do is try as hard as I can and overcome one of the hardest projects I've undertaken thus far in my life.

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