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**‘THEN YOU’LL BE FREE TO GO WHEREVER YOU PLEASE, ON LAND,
ON SEA, WHICHEVER WAY THE WIND BLOWS YOU!’: FEMALE
OSCILLATION BETWEEN DISABILITY AND FREEDOM IN TENNESSEE
WILLIAMS’ *THE GLASS MENAGERIE***

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Abstract: *The present paper examines female vacillation between social seclusion, their longing for social inclusion, and freedom in Tennessee Williams’ “The Glass Menagerie”. A special focus will be placed on Laura Wingfield’s profile as a woman with special needs. Feminist Narratology will be employed to examine how social factors accentuate Laura’s psychological dilemma. The aim is to show that ‘disability’ is not something physical, but rather a social construct. Verbal utterances, fragmented speech, animal imagery, symbolism, and non-verbal language will be deployed to analyze the different forms of female disability. Another goal of this paper is to prove that disability has broader allegorical and cultural dimensions. The final part of the section will shed light on the way Laura goes beyond physical disability and social confinement. She proves to be a subversive woman in a patriarchal Southern American atmosphere where female freedom is an alien notion.*

Key words: *Female Identity, Female Freedom, Physical Disability, Social Confinement, Theater of the Disabled.*

1. Introduction

Tennessee Williams’ plays are pervaded by the themes of family dysfunctionality, the decline of the Agrarian South, the failure of the American dream of family union, and the nightmarish reality of capitalism and industrialization. *The Glass Menagerie* (2011) differs from his other plays as an autobiographical work that introduces the theme of female disability. While *A Streetcar Named Desire* explores female desire, fantasy, and madness, *The Glass Menagerie* addresses family issues similar to those in Williams’ dysfunctional family. The paper aims to analyze disability from different perspectives and to invite the audience to rethink female disability and to call for the deconstruction of social stereotypes against women with special needs. Williams exposes the double marginalization of Laura because of her disability and her gender, but he defends the rights of some disabled women like Laura. The paper studies female disability in Tennessee Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie* from a new vantage point, deploying thematic concerns, stylistic devices, naturalism, textual analysis, hints of feminism, and disability theory to examine how Williams condemns socio-cultural views of disability as a source of social seclusion. The Southern American playwright examines the denigration of the young Southern belle, the maltreatment of disabled characters, and the role of the patriarchal mindset in shaping stereotypes against women with special needs.

2. Literature Review

The Glass Menagerie is the focus of many critics who examine the modern American play from different perspectives. Some critics focus on gender issues, others on the play’s autobiographical dimension, and the most recent research has focused on the various forms of disability in the play. To start with, some critics adopt a feminist perspective to prove that

gender is a cultural by-product. In the article “Masculinity Aspects in Glass Menagerie” (2020), Nensia analyzes the characterization of Jim and Laura. Jim is introduced as an unconventional nobleman who “does not see the beauty of a girl from the cover. He sees beauty in each Laura's parts, body and soul” (Nensia 2020:295). Jim subverts the traditional view of a woman as the center of eroticism, and he views a woman as both a body and a soul. Other critics pay more attention to the relationship between Amanda and Laura. For example, in “Male Shadowing: the Lingering Phantom of Patriarchal Society as seen in *The Glass Menagerie*”, Darta uses feminism to criticize Amanda's patriarchal mindset. Darta defines Amanda as a submissive woman who serves the patriarchal agenda and adds to female social confinement. “Mother like Amanda makes the male domination grow flourishingly” (Darta 2013:77). Amanda contributes to the development of a patriarchal mindset as she forces her daughter to be a typical Southern belle who abides by the rules of femininity and attracts male suitors. Darta draws on French feminism and cites Millet to show the role of women in subverting the patriarchal regime and in setting themselves free from male authority. “Women, Millet argues, have to fight against male dominance as the power center of their culture” (Darta 2013:73). This paper will differ from some critics who define Laura as a submissive woman by presenting her as a subversive woman who creates a world of her own and challenges the spirit of “the angel in the house”. Laura recalls Williams's sister, who used to be treated in a sanatorium because of her psychiatric disorder. In *Reading and Interpreting the Works of Tennessee Williams*, Spring Hermann uses a biographical approach. He looks for the similarities and differences between Laura Wingfield and Rose Williams. Different from Laura, “Rose Williams was sexually discontent and became increasingly violent” (Hermann 2017:41). The current research will also draw certain parallels between Williams' Laura and his sister Rose. The aim is to show the role of the context in grasping the female inner psyche and in challenging male discourse.

The Glass Menagerie has been analysed from different angles. In “Metaphorical Disability in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*”, Jiefei Yu argues that disability is metaphorical, stemming from emotional blockage. It goes beyond physical defects as it is based on social insecurity. Yu writes, “the emotional insecurity had crippled [Laura] as represented by her disability” (2022:990). Laura has emotional disability as she is not allowed to express her feelings in a Southern American conservative society. Her mother is partially responsible for her mental and psychological malaise. Indeed, “Amanda deals with the physical and mental problems of her daughter with allusions to the South” (Yu 2022:933). Put differently, disability is metaphorical because it refers to the disability of Southern American characters in freezing the agrarian past in the era of industrialization and capitalism. This paper will develop ideas about metaphorical disability by analyzing emotional and mental disabilities from the perspective of social disability theories. In addition to Yu, Yadak deals with a Marxist interpretation of female disability. In “A Marxist Analysis of Disability in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*”, Yadak studies and “investigate[s] the struggles that a disabled girl like Laura encounters at the time of the Great Depression in the South” (Yadak 2023:106). The great depression at a national level is coupled with Laura's depression and her social seclusion.

This paper will focus on the allegorical dimension of the play and examine the downfall of the Southern belle figure in the 1930s. In the same context of analyzing disability, in “But, Mother-I'm crippled”, Ann Fox sheds light on queering disability. She writes, “Both queer and disabled bodies seen as violations of natural masculinity and femininity, defy a heterosexist ideal of sexuality and its attendant gender roles” (Fox 2004:235). Traditional gender roles are broken because Laura is seen as a mere object, and she is perceived as a sexually unattractive woman because of her timidity. Fox adds that “Williams' work gradually merges critiques of those social assumptions that sexual and physical straightness circumscribe queer and disabled bodies across his plays” (Fox 2004:235). By focusing on the intersection of disability and queer

theories, Ann Fox finds that queer and disabled bodies share similarities. In short, disability has been approached from different perspectives. This paper will build on previous studies of disability in *The Glass Menagerie* and add to recent research on female disability.

The topic of female disability can be of utmost interest regarding the painful experience of Laura, her social seclusion, and her constant longing for freedom. The present paper examines female oscillation between disability and freedom, drawing heavily on theories of female disability. The paper offers insights into feminist narratology to show Laura's role in challenging male discourse. Feminist narratology is the stylistic medium through which female disability will be analyzed. The intersection between feminist narratology and female disability theories is meant to show that social (and not physical) disability is responsible for Laura's malaise. The real disability is the mental inability of the mother to get rid of ideas about marriage or to understand that her daughter longs for freedom and is not interested in being a submissive wife. The intersection between disability theory, feminist narratology, theatrical props and objects, and thematic concerns is meant to question American vision regarding women with special needs.

3. Theoretical Framework: The Theatre of the Disabled

Disability is approached from medical, social, and feminist angles. In the eighteenth century, disability used to be associated with physical aspects, authority, power and knowledge. It was perceived as "an abnormal body coincided with the development of networks of knowledge and power which classified, measured and imposed cultural diagnosis on bodies" (Kristy 2016:15). The disabled body was seen as "an abnormal body" intimidated by the cultural understanding of disability as a physical defect. Power is exercised on the disabled body because of its weakness and supposed inferiority. This view was modified in the nineteenth century, becoming much more complex. Indeed, "degrees of abnormality could also be considered, even measured with the rise of the eugenics movement in the late nineteenth century, abnormality came to be considered as a sign and cause of wider social dysfunction in which medical science was misdirected" (Kristy 2016:16). Disability was considered a sign of social dysfunctionality, and the disabled body was regarded as a token of shame. The concept of disability has changed over the modern and contemporary periods. Disability is understood as a social phenomenon arising from the misinterpretation of physical disability as a form of weakness. For instance, social disability theories: "recognize disability as a consequence of social pathology, (...) disability is not inherent to the individual. Rather, they assume that the disability is a consequence of the social structure" (Pothier and Delvin 2006:51). In other words, disability is not something individual; it is rather a social by-product as it is closely linked to social stereotypes and the social interpretation of the disabled body as "an abnormal" body.

The limited social view on disability fosters disability activism, and it invites contemporary organizations to defend the rights of people with special needs. Social activism is meant to develop disabled people's skills, stimulate self-determination, and create socially and psychologically balanced individuals. In this respect, according to Krysty, "the independent living movement, ... argued for the right of persons with disabilities to control the conditions of their own lives, ... and they should wrest control over their circumstances from charities" (Kirsty 2016:16). Charities are beneficial because they allow people with special needs to exercise their fundamental rights, be socially integrated, and pursue happiness. The American government supports people with special needs by guaranteeing their legal rights. For instance, "the American disabilities act (1990), ... provided education and employment supports for persons with disabilities" (Kirsty 2016:17). The act contributes to a smooth integration of people with disabilities by allowing them to develop their educational skills and be integrated into the job market.

Tobin Siebers contributes to the development of disability studies, arguing that the real disability is society's inability to meet the needs of disabled individuals, to respect their individuality, and to treat them as equal members of society. Siebers declares that "disability in particular reveals with great vividness the un-just stereotypes imposed on identity" (Siebers 2008:74). Social stereotypes inflicted upon disabled people affect their identity since they minimize them and do not respect their uniqueness. Siebers adds that disability has enormous social impacts and it is "socially constructed. It is tempting, in fact, to disability exclusively as the product of a bad match between social design and human bodies" (Siebers 2008:57). The human body is looked down upon by society because it does not meet the social norms of physical beauty. Siebers believes that social views of disability cannot be changed without modifying the social mindset and challenging the limited views about the human body. The limited view is an obstacle to social development and justice: "[This]social barrier [is] equal to or greater than any physical barrier" (Siebers 2008:51). Real disability is not physical, but rather social. Siebers affirms that disability is a social by-product that does not need medical care, but it needs social transformations and a new model. "Social model challenges the idea of defective citizenship by situating disability in the environment not in the body. Disability seen from this point of view requires not individual medical treatment but changes in society" (Siebers 2008:73). Within the social disability theory, society is responsible for supporting people with special needs and allowing them to be treated as citizens with legal rights. In reality, "society is obliged to provide supports and aids and devices enabling social and economic integration, self-determination and legal and social rights for the disabled" (Pothier and Devlin 2006:35). The social environment is thus responsible for creating a limited view of disability and defining it as a defect.

In a conversation between a playwright and a wheelchair user, John Belluso reveals that people watch him as if he were an actor. He says:

"Any time I get on a public bus, I feel like it's a moment of theater. I'm lifted, the stage is moving up, and I enter, and people are along the lines, and they're turning and looking, and I make my entrance. It's theater, and I have to perform. And I feel like we as disabled people are constantly onstage and we're constantly performing." (Belluso qd. in Sandahl 2005:620).

There are affinities between theatrical performances and the position of the disabled. Belluso's words are riddled with the use of irony and an implicit criticism of the social treatment of the disabled body as an alien figure. The use of visual imagery, 'looking,' evokes the feelings of estrangement and the way some people look at the wheelchair as a symbol of paralysis and the lack of motion. Comparing the act of sitting in a wheelchair to the act of performing on stage highlights the pain of disabled people who are compelled to play roles and wear social masks to survive. Modern and contemporary theatrical representations of the disabled body challenge the classical and limited social views about disability. According to Saur and Johansen, actors with disability:

"have often been treated as children and put in unchallenging roles and asexual and apolitical plays. And they are not in the position to make artistic decisions themselves because they do not master the knowledge and language that is required to exercise power, resulting that they are in the hands of the able" (Saur and Johansen 2013:247).

Actors with disability are given minor importance and less powerful roles because it is believed that they do not have enough knowledge. They are also compared to children because they are thought to be unreliable. They are given "asexual" roles because of physical problems, and it is believed that they do not meet the social requirements for physical beauty.

Disabled individuals are also misrepresented in the arts. They are presented as passive creatures. "In art and literature, disabled people were presented as either super-heroes, villains or tragic individuals, but never as ordinary people trying to carve out meaningful lives, like everybody else" (Riddle and Watson 2003:3). In the same vein of misrepresenting disabled characters, Laura Wingfield is presented as a tragic heroine whose flaw (from the viewpoint of her mother) lies in her social isolation, her inability to capture the attention of suitors or to be integrated within the job and the marriage markets. Laura creates a glass menagerie to survive, and she gets involved in arts, music, and poetry to go beyond social limitations. Arts are sources of Laura's self-empowerment and a way to reshape female identity in a society that defines physical disability as a form of weakness and inferiority. Laura is a subversive woman, but she partially fails at imposing her identity or at convincing her mother about marriage as a social institution that does not really shape female individuality and identity: "For people with learning disabilities to be empowered and gain co-determination, their carers must let go of their unilateral power position" (Saur and Johansen 2013:258). Amanda imposes her patriarchal maxims on her daughter, and she stifles her freedom.

The mother is in a position of power because she warns her daughter against flouting the maxims of patriarchy, and she fears for her daughter and for the whole family's reputation. She does not like her daughter to be identified as a spinster in a conservative society where womanhood is linked to marriage and coquettish behavior. Laura creates her own space and artistic world, and she has inner forces that are not respected by her mother. The mother does not respect the privacy of the daughter, and she compels her to comply with the Southern American social fabric. "Society creates pain, but this creation backfires, producing an individual who struggles against society" (Siebers 2008:62). Laura resists social conventions, and she goes beyond the norms of the Southern American community. In a nutshell, disability is a source of social complexity for Laura because it results in her social confinement.

Disability leads to the double marginalization of Laura because of her physical conditions and her secondary position in a misogynistic society. Feminist disability is relevant for analyzing the double marginalization of Laura, who is suppressed because of her gender and her partial physical disability. Feminist disability Theory "addresses such broad feminist concerns on the unity of the category woman, the status of the lived body: the politics of appearance, the medicalization of the body, the privilege of normalcy, multiculturalism, sexuality, the social construction of identity, and the commitment to integration" (Hall 2011:15). There are affinities between social disability theory and feminist disability theory, as both discuss the role of society in shaping identity in general and female subjectivity in particular. Feminist disability theory introduces the female body (or disabled women) as the site of control and cultural stigma. Indeed, "disability, like femaleness is not a natural state of corporal inferiority, inadequacy, excess or a stroke of misfortune. Rather disability is a culturally fabricated narrative of the body" (Hall 2011:17). Both femaleness and disability are cultural constructs generated by the patriarchal agenda. The disabled female body is stigmatized as being "an asexual body", which does not meet the requirements of the beauty system. "The disabled body is rendered completely asexual" (Bonnie and Hutchison 2010:235). It is the case of Laura, who is taken as 'asexual' and 'frail' as she fails at capturing the attention of any suitor: "Images of fragility and helplessness that populate conversations about Laura are not only patronizing toward people with disabilities, but tend to leverage antiquated stereotypes about women" (Hill and Juvera 2018:57). Williams shares with feminist disability theoreticians the same view about gender and disability as forms of cultural corruption. It is a form of corruption because "the beauty system's mandated standard of the female body has become a goal to be achieved through self-regulation and consumerism" (Hall 2011:22). Laura does not comply with the system, and she is consequently alienated and exiled. Laura's social exile implies

Williams' "presentation of erasure as the ultimate fate of disabled body" (Fox 2004:238). The theme of female disability is conveyed through narration. Narration in drama is a modern technique playwrights use to explore characters' inner psyches. Tom is the homodiegetic narrator of the play as he is both a participant and a narrator. The paper suggests that Laura is another homodiegetic narrator because she narrates her experience more lucidly. Feminist narratology can help better grasp the theme of female disability.

4. Lanser and Feminist Narratology:

In her 'Toward a Feminist Narratology,' Susan Lanser criticizes narratology theories for being male-oriented. She argues that they are limited in that they pay little attention to the social and cultural contexts of a specific text. Lanser argues that classical narratology excludes gender issues and misrepresents women: "It is readily apparent that virtually no work in the field of narratology has taken gender into account" (Lanser 1986:342). Classical narratology is thus unreliable because it lacks a feminist touch and does not delve into the intricacies of the female self. Lanser states that her study aims at "[asking] whether feminist criticism, and particularly the study of narratives by women, might benefit from the methods and insights of narratology and whether narratology, in turn might be alerted by the understandings of feminist criticism and the experience of women's texts" (Lanser 1986:342). Lanser has doubts about narratology, and she calls for a better representation of women by creating areas of convergence between feminist criticism and narratology. Lanser adds that narratology is limited because it ignores the text's historical background and emphasizes the importance of plot. She observes that "Narratology has mistaken in trying to arrive at a single definition and description of plot. We will learn more about women's narratives....if we make ourselves find language for describing their plots in positive rather than negative terms" (Lanser 1986:358). Lanser attacks classical narratology for its lack of plurality and for being reduced into a limited definition of plot. She revisits Gerard Genette's narratological "elements that are universal, or at least trans individual" (Genette 1983:23). Lanser firmly believes that narratology should not be transindividual because every individual has his/her own different preoccupations. For instance, female characters in contemporary fiction do not share the same views, voice, interests, psychological profiles, and dilemmas as their male counterparts. Lanser's ideas about feminist narratology will be used to analyze Laura's narratology. It is noticeable that the historical and social frameworks are given priority over plot in Lanser's theory. Accordingly, this paper will study the social position of the Southern belle between the World Wars.

5. The Merits of Feminist Narratology:

Before delving into the historical background of the play, it is pertinent to examine the major characteristics and merits of feminist narratology. Feminist narratology digs deep into the female psyche, and it highlights the importance of social context in shaping the female psyche and narratology. In this respect, feminist narratology attacks structuralists for being limited to the structure of a sentence, without focusing on the motivations, context, setting, and inner depth of a specific female character's utterances. Structuralists are criticized because "the decontextualized grammar of narratorial modes, (...) are inadequate unless qualified by context" (Liveley 2019:103). The merit of feminist narratology then lies in situating the words of female characters within specific patriarchal contexts and challenging male discourse. Indeed, male narrative theory is criticized by feminist narratology for being biased and for being limited to imitating patriarchal reality without seeking change. Feminist narratology highlights the importance of both semiosis and mimesis in deciphering the intended meanings of words uttered by female characters. The main purpose of feminist narratology is to revise "the role of gender in the construction of narrative theory, the status of narrative as mimesis and semiosis

and the importance of context for determining the meaning in narrative” (Lanser 1986:363). Similarly, this paper focuses on female narratology in the play under examination. It deals with textual analysis and with a wider interest on “questions of how rather than what” (Punday 2019:4). Indeed, the main research question to be addressed in this paper is: How does Laura narrate the story of her life? How is feminist narratology used as a source of survival against the male-dominated society, and how does the context serve to grasp the implied meaning of the female narrator?

6. Contextualization: The Situation of Southern American Women between the World Wars

The Southern belle is a concept related to Southern American traditions of femininity. A belle used to be “frequently fashioned in keeping with dress protocols that evoke aspects of aristocratic femininity” (Richardson 2011:62). In addition to paying attention to sartorial appearance, the Southern belle also adhered to the tenets of true womanhood. A belle is expected to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic, and “Southern women became the domestic and morally refined exemplars of true womanhood” (Siber 1993:118). Southern women are clearly confined and attributed a secondary position. In *Ladies’ Home Journal*, an old colonel declared: “our Southern ladies thoroughly understand the art of housekeeping and never dreamed of anything but politeness or consideration” (Siber 1993:118). The use of the possessive pronoun ‘our’ insinuates the consideration of women as objects of male authority. The adverb of frequency ‘never’ suggests that some Southern women are denied the right to dream or have ambitious aspirations. They are expected to be polite, to follow the patriarchal roles assigned to them, and to be confined in the domestic sphere: “The Southern belle is portrayed as physically and intellectually submissive, and in need of male protection” (Whitt and Perlich 2014:68). The Southern belle is thus dependent on the male gaze. The Southern belle gives attention to her appearance and sartorial profile. “Fascinating mannerism and high spirits, concern with looks and clothes, a love of dancing and parties—all elements of the complex of attributes known as Southern belle” (Farnham 1994:172). Amanda is an example of a fading Southern belle who was once charming, young, and feminine. Unlike Amanda, the traditional Southern belle who laments her husband’s absence, Laura is a more liberated girl who refuses to accept social reconciliation. Williams criticizes the position of the Southern belle, and he rejects the limited view of women as inferior creatures. The next part will study Laura’s characterization and examine female disability.

7. Textual Analysis of Female Disability

Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie* announces female disability on the thematic and structural levels, deploying narratology as the medium for staging middle-class families as dysfunctional. The play stages a seething condition of disorder beneath the tranquility of the Southern belle. Irony, narratology, memory, and imagery are used to unleash female turmoil against male authority. Laura Wingfield subverts the strict gender roles and cultural prescriptions assigned to women with special needs. The play opens with a female identity crisis and Amanda’s deep concern about the health conditions of her daughter. According to the social disability researcher, social disability is triggered by the gaze of others, sympathy, and the consideration of the disabled body as an abnormal body. Social disability contributes to “increase critical consciousness about the way that some bodies make other bodies feel” (Siebers 2008:25). Tom and Amanda sympathize with Laura, and they conceive her as a crippled girl who is dependent and ‘abnormal.’ Amanda is obsessed with the dream of family union, but the absence of her husband, the presence of a crippled daughter, and an irresponsible son lead to her breakdown. She is moving between memory and reality, illusion and truth, the

past and the present. She denies the fact of having a crippled daughter because disability does not match the tenets of true womanhood or the ideal image of the Southern belle. Tom informs his mother that Laura is dear to them: "Laura seems all those things to you and me because she's ours and we love her. We don't even notice she's crippled anymore" (Williams 2011:36). Tom implicitly reveals that he has a different view of Laura because she is dear to him. However, the social perception of a disabled person might be different and degrading. Accordingly, Amanda refuses to face reality and she is immersed in the illusion of having an ideal daughter. She addresses her son: "Don't say crippled! You know that I never allow that word to be used!" (Williams 2011:36). The use of negation reflects Amanda's refusal to consider her daughter as a disabled woman. This refusal stems from the cultural view of a disabled individual as a physically 'abnormal' person. "Lennard Doris suggests that the term normalcy studies supplants the name disability studies in the way that gender studies sometimes succeeds feminism" (Hall 2011: 34). Indeed, there is a dialectical relationship between Normalcy and female disability because both concepts are generated by the patriarchal system. "Normalcy and disability are part of the same system" (Davis 1995: 2). Tom adds that his sister is asocial and that she is exiled from social surroundings. Social exile is the outcome of social disability, as Laura feels she is inferior, and she avoids social gatherings and social hypocrisy.

Tom faces his mother with the reality of Amanda's social seclusion: "Not quite all – in the eyes of others – strangers – she's terribly shy and lives in a world of her own and those things make her seem a little peculiar to people outside the house" (Williams 2011:36). Laura is obviously alienated from social margins because she does not meet the requirements of the ideal Southern belle. The mother is still immersed in illusions as she orders her son: "Don't say peculiar" (Williams 2011:36). Amanda does not accept the fact of depicting her daughter as crippled or socially alienated because she wants her daughter to be inscribed within the institution of marriage. Amanda has ambivalent attitudes because she refuses the traditional considerations of disability as a form of estrangement, and she accepts the traditional idea about marriage as the ultimate fate of Laura. Amanda is a traditional woman with advanced ideas about female disability. She calls for "reimagining disability by installing people with disabilities in the realm of human commonality" (Snyder et al 2022: 78). In this respect, Amanda encourages her daughter to take business classes, and she treats her as a decent human being with intellectual abilities. However, Laura escapes school and she opts for freedom, arts and nature. She discloses to her mother: "I went in the art museum and the bird-houses at the Zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch" (Williams 2011:14). Laura resorts to nature as the locus of freedom and escape from social constraints and stereotypes against women with special needs. On the other hand, Laura escapes school because it is a form of panopticon and the educational system misrepresents students with special needs. Laura reveals to Jim her embarrassment because of her late attendance and her struggle with the brace on her leg. She divulges her discomfort using the following terms: "And everybody was seated before I came in. I had to walk in front of all those people. My seat was in the back row. I had to go clumping all the way up the aisle with everyone watching I" (Williams 2011:55). Laura does not accept the fact of being watched by others or looked down upon by society because of her physical disability.

The idea of being watched recalls Foucault's views on the panopticon as a form of imprisonment in which the individual "is seen, but he does not see, he is an object of information never a subject of communication" (Foucault 1997: 200). It is the case of Laura, who is seen by others as a stranger, but she does not communicate or express her feelings in Public. She just tells Jim about her painful experience with the brace and with the fact of being watched by others and recognized as an other. The otherness of the female self is evident when she describes her dramatic situation and inner struggle: "Yes, it was so hard for me, getting upstairs. I had

that brace on my leg – it clumped so loud I” (Williams 2011:55). The use of hyperbole ‘so hard’ and auditory imagery ‘so loud’ translates the role of physical disability in determining Laura’s psyche. She is not confident enough to face her reality or to stay in public for long. She escapes school because it is a source of imprisonment and a social institution that does not support people with special needs. Laura’s school is a form of Panopticon where female freedom is suppressed. “Foucault portrays Bentham’s panopticon design as the example of this mode of disciplinary surveillance. Intended to serve equally as a prison, a workhouse, a factory, an asylum, a school” (Driver 1993: 11). Laura defines the school as a form of panopticon where her colleagues can easily recognize her amputated leg. She is obviously concerned with the external views of others, and she does not like to be taken as an abnormal student. Her embarrassment is made conspicuous through auditory images: “LAURA [*wincing at the recollection*]: To me it sounded like thunder!” (Williams 2011:55). Laura detests the sound of the brace because it provokes feelings of self-debasement and minimization. Jim blames her for the self-debasement and for defining her partial amputation as a form of disability.

Laura can be blamed for self-minimization and for a lack of confidence. However, her views on female disability have social origins as “Laura has been schooled to read her disability as intrusive and dissonant” (Kristy 2016: 139). Jim declares that the limited view of female disability should be challenged. In this respect, he advises Laura: “You don’t have the proper amount of faith in yourself. I’m basing that fact on a number of your remarks and also on certain observations I’ve made. For instance, the clumping you thought was so awful in high school. You say that you even dreaded to walk into class” (Williams 2011:59). Jim implicitly suggests that Laura is responsible for her own deeds and that the real disability is the disability of developing, being an ardent reader and a good student. Jim rebukes Laura for dropping out of school and leaving behind the ambition and the dream of being an educated lady. He employs accurate arguments:

You see what you did? You dropped out of school, you gave up an education because of a clump, which as far as I know was practically non-existent! A little physical defect is what you have. Hardly noticeable even! Magnified thousands of times by imagination! You know what my strong advice to you is Think of yourself as superior in some way!’ (Williams 2011:59).

Jim’s speech is punctuated with the use of rhetorical questions, emphatic form, logic and coherence. He argues that physical ability is insignificant and it is an illusion, which prevents Laura from having a bright career. He asks Laura to be self-reliant and to develop self-esteem. His arguments prove that physical disability can not function as an obstacle against progress and mental evolution. The real disability is the inability of the individual to make efforts, to proceed, and to be an active member of society.

We can further analyze Laura's characterization and the theme of disability through Tom's narrative voice. Indeed, Tom is the main homodiegetic narrator in the play, “similar to the camera performs, (...) as the cinematic I who sees within the fictive narrative” (Bloom 2007: 54). Tom has an introspective view of his sister, and he convinces his mother that she is a strange girl who is isolated and unable to be socially integrated. He thinks “She lives in a world of her own – a world of little glass ornaments, Mother... [*Gets Up. AMANDA remains holding brush, looking at him, troubled.*] She plays old phonograph records and – that’s about all” (Williams 2011:36). Amanda forgets her dysfunctional family and freezes moments from the sweeter past. The old phonograph is a fetish of the past, and the glorious moments for Amanda when she used to be a Southern belle. Past events are reenacted, and memories come alive in Amanda's mind. The past is also relived on stage, and Amanda’s mind dramatizes the gloomy reality of an unhappy marriage. In the prologue, Williams expounds to the audience that “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” (Williams 2011:7). The mixture between dimness and brightness is conveyed through Amanda’s vacillation between unearthing the sweet past and lamenting the dire reality of failure. Amanda brags about her success at attracting callers, and she implicitly blames her daughter for being passive. In this context, the mother informs her sons:

“*One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain, your mother received seventeen! gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there aren’t chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house*” (Williams 2011:36).

Amanda laments over the aristocratic past when she used to be a charming Southern belle, and she gives attention to external beauty rather than focusing on inner worth. Amanda is obviously a traditional lady who “focuses on physical appearance, and the ultimate goal of a female is marriage” (Darta 2013: 74). Amanda prioritizes the female body and physical beauty as key features for attracting suitors and securing social status. Her superficial perception of the female body can be criticized. Indeed, “the subject of disability studies is not the person using the wheelchair or the deaf person but the set of social, historical, economic and cultural processes that regulate and control what we think about and we think through the body” (Davis 1995: 2). Amanda is influenced by the cultural stereotypes that portray the amputated female body as a token of shame. In this way, disability has cultural rather than physical origins. The real disability is the inability to set the female spirit free from socio-cultural stereotypes.

The idea of disability as a cultural by-product is reinforced through the dichotomy between misleading appearances and real reality. Amanda resorts to fake appearances, and she denies the fact that her daughter is crippled. She orders her daughter: “*Resume your seat, little sister, I want you to stay fresh and pretty for gentleman callers!*” (Williams 2011:9). Amanda treats her daughter as a puppet who is expected to follow the social norms of physical beauty and to satisfy gentleman callers. Consequently, Laura appears “like a piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting.” (Williams 2011:39). The simile “like a piece of translucent glass” conveys Laura’s transparency and her inability to maintain the mask of beauty for long. The superficial understanding of beauty is meant to show that physical beauty is transient, but inner beauty is eternal. Amanda has a limited view of beauty, and she is among the prejudices that “disabled women may be most disadvantaged in the cultural conception of what constitutes an acceptable physical appearance within society” (Shah and Jones 2018: 74). Not only does Amanda focus on her daughter’s sartorial appearance, but she also cares about her daughter’s decor. The Wingfields’ apartment is well decorated: “a colored paper lantern conceals the broken light fixture in the ceiling, new billowing white curtains are at the windows, chintz covers are on chairs and sofa, a pair of new sofa pillows make their initial appearance” (Williams 2011: 39). The lexical register of hiding ‘conceal,’ ‘covers’ betokens Amanda’s obsession with appearances. She wants her daughter to be inscribed within the institution of marriage and to hide the fact that she has partial disability. Amanda can be criticized for her limited understanding of female beauty. The real disability is Amanda’s inability to go beyond the patriarchal view of beauty. She is influenced by “the myth of the beautiful body that society and the market have created, [that] defines the impaired female body as unfeminine and unacceptable” (Shah and Jones 2018:74). Disability is thus a cultural by-product produced by the patriarchal myth of beauty. Amanda’s actions and reactions regarding the female body show that she is a conventional woman who believes that female disability is a source of shame.

The cultural views of disability have nefarious effects on the emotional and psychological state of Laura. In reality, “disabled women with physical impairments may be subjected to psycho-emotional consequences and identity conflicts” (Shah and Jones 2018:74).

It is the case of Laura, who has low self-esteem because she did not expect suitors and perceives herself as an unattractive Southern belle. She blames her mother for making efforts to secure Jim's presence and to convince him to get engaged to Laura. Laura's self-debasement is made conspicuous when she informs her mother:

"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" (Williams 2011:11).

Her low self-esteem rises when she compares herself to her mother, who was an ideal Southern belle who attracted gentleman callers. Laura seems to be an unconventional daughter because she does not believe that marriage is her destiny. Her narrative voice is heard when she ironically tells Tom about her mother's fear of being a spinster. She does not believe in the patriarchal view that "social position is bound up with marital status once a subject has achieved a certain age" (Jonnes 2014:74). We better understand Laura's roadmap through her direct speech and her own narrative voice.

Despite the fact that Tom is the homodiegetic narrator of the play, Laura is a first-person narrator who better informs the audience about her inner mind. Laura uses direct speech to confront her mother with the reality of not receiving suitors, but Amanda does not accept the truth, and she wants her daughter to be inscribed within the institution of marriage. When Laura reveals: "I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother. AMANDA [*reappearing, airily*]: What? Not one – not one? You must be *joking*" (Williams 2011:11). Amanda is clearly in denial, refusing to acknowledge her daughter's lameness, and she forces Tom to find a gentleman caller for Laura. Amanda is a fading Southern belle, and she is disillusioned with the institution of marriage, but she wants her daughter to have a family and to get married. For *Amanda*, "to be crippled is somehow shameful, a disgrace. Laura has never been allowed to acknowledge her lameness as part of her" (Kristy 2016: 138). Amanda's denial of disability proves that she respects the myth about beauty, and she links physical beauty to moral beauty. An ideal Southern belle is expected to be graceful and to be endowed with physical and moral beauty. Amanda's attitude is another proof of the cultural effects of disability. The real disability is the inability to grasp that moral beauty is not linked to physical disability.

Dramatic irony arises when Amanda compels her daughter to get married, but she is disillusioned with the institution of marriage and with the absence of her husband. Amanda is a tragic heroine and a self-contradictory woman because she gives priority to appearances. When her son asks her, "Then how did you happen to make a tragic mistake!," she answers: "That innocent look of your father's had everyone fooled! He *smiled*- the world was *enchanted*! No girl can do worse than put herself at the mercy of a handsome appearance! I hope that Mr. O'Connor is not too good-looking." (Williams 2011:35). Amanda informs her son about her hamartia which consists of being misled by appearances and being enchanted by the appearance of her husband. Amanda is implicitly delivering the message about the transient physical beauty and the eternal spiritual depth. She is affected by the dysfunctionality of her family; real disability is the inability of the family to be reunited and the difficulty of forgetting about the absence of the father. Allusions about the absent father are made clear through the image of the canary and the nail. Tom uses a sarcastic tone and he addresses his sister:

"This is his magic scarf. You can have it, Laura. You wave it over a canary cage and you get a bowl of goldfish. You wave it over the gold-fish bowl and they fly away canaries...But the wonderfulest trick of all was the coffin trick. We nailed him into a coffin and he got out of the coffin without removing one nail" (Williams 2011:23).

Like the magician who moves without “removing one nail”, the father escapes without caring about his family. The image of the magician alludes to the father, who is partially responsible for the dysfunctionality of the family.

Laura’s situation and the absence of her father recall Marsha Norman’s Jessie Cates, who suffers from epilepsy, social seclusion, and the absence of the father: “Jessie Cates and Laura Wingfield are viewed as sisters in disguise” (Greiff 1989:224). The modern and the contemporary female characters share the same. The absence of the father triggers the emotional disability of Laura and the psychological malaise of Jessie. In one of her melancholic utterances, Jessie complains: “I’m just not having a very good time and I don’t have any reason to think it’ll get anything but worse. I’m tired. I’m hurt. I’m sad. I feel used.” (Norman 1983: 61). Jessie’s life-weariness is a fine example of her emotional disability and the effects of sickness on the psyche of female characters. “Jessie recedes from society. Although Jessie remains physically capable of leaving the house, her depression creates a mental cage” (Reuning 2002:60). In the same context, Laura informs Jim about her disillusionment with dreams and her deep disappointment with the values of the New South. Jim calms her down by affirming: “You think of yourself as having the only problems, as being the only one who is disappointed. But just look around you and you will see lots of people as disappointed as you are.” (Williams 2011:42). Jim’s speech has an allegorical dimension, symbolizing the disappointment of some American citizens with the transformation of the Old South, the penetration of the capitalist system into the Southern garden, and the disillusionment with American ideals of democracy and peace. The emotional disability of Laura reflects the inability of some American citizens to cope with social and political corruption. “The metaphor of disease [is used] to critique American totalitarianism in an attempt to push those in power to implement more rational strategies” (Yu 2022:994).

Emotional disability reaches its peak when Jim knocks on the door, and Laura is not able to express her sincere emotions. Tom informs the audience that “In playing this scene it should be stressed that while the incident is apparently unimportant, it is to LAURA the climax of her secret life.” (Williams 2011: 52). It is the climactic scene because “Laura faces a stranger for the first time and because her mother forces her to capture the attention of Jim” (Williams 2011:14). Amanda is responsible for the emotional disability of her daughter because she forces her daughter to follow the rules of the old South. “Amanda had disabled Laura emotionally by filling her head with the romance of the old South and by overpowering Laura with her personality” (Moss 2004:58). She overpowers Laura when she informs Laura of the obligation to get married and establish a functional family. Amanda uses a pessimistic tone when she talks about the effects of being a spinster, and she reveals:

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! (Williams 2011:35).

Amanda clearly equates marriage with gaining social status and creating a nest. The nest symbolizes well-knit families and stable homes. She depicts spinsters as socially disabled women who are dependent on their relatives and unable to abide by the rules of true womanhood. The image of the mousetrap has negative connotations. It alludes to female social disability to construct a happy home, and the fact of being chained in a restricted space where

she does not occupy any social position. Accordingly, Amanda dreams of finding a suitable suitor, and she discloses to Tom:

“No, I don’t have secrets. I will tell you what I wished for on the moon. Success and happiness for my precious children! I wish for that whenever there’s a moon, and when there isn’t a moon, I wish for it, too. I thought perhaps you wished for a gentleman caller” (Williams 2011: 32).

Tom uses a sarcastic tone to challenge his mother and to criticize her obsession with finding a caller for Amanda. In this way, Amanda is partially responsible for her social disability and her solitude. She believes that marriage is Laura's sole fate and wants to avoid the responsibility of motherhood. The father's absence adds to Amanda's burden of caring for her progenitors. Amanda's wish to establish a niche for her daughter stems from the mother's disappointment with the family union. She fails to create a happy home and imposes on her daughter the maxims of domesticity, submission, piety, and purity. Therefore, the real disability is the social failure of establishing a stable home.

Social disability can be analyzed through the play's gothic dimension. Indeed, the ghost of the suitor is haunting the house of the Wingfields: “It became an obsession. Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image of the gentleman caller haunted our small apartment” (Williams 2011: 17). The mother believes that marriage is the only alternative for her daughter and the solution for a girl with special needs. Laura is an asocial creature who refuses all social institutions and wants to create a world of her own. Amanda expresses her motivations behind choosing marriage as the source of her freedom: “I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home of her own, independent?- why, then you’ll be free to go wherever you please” (Williams 2011: 28). She argues that Laura will be independent if she gets married and builds her own nest, rather than remaining dependent on her family. The homodiegetic narrator, Tom, reveals his mother's enthusiasm behind creating her own nest, rather than remaining in Laura's marriage: “Mother was a woman of action as well as words. She began to take logical steps in the planned direction, realizing that extra money would be needed to properly feather the nest and plume the bird” (Williams 2011:17). The images of the bird and the nest suggest that Laura can be freed from spinsterhood if she gets married, and she can be independent by establishing her own home. The mother believes in the institution of matrimony as a source of independence. She is unable to think about her daughter's integrity, psyche, and artistic orientation. The traditional mother contends that her daughter is dependent and that marriage is the best alternative for reaching independence. She complains about her daughter: “she’s young and dependent. I put her in Business College – a dismal failure! Frightened her so it made her sick at the stomach. I took her over to the Young Peoples League at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody, nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is fool with those pieces of glass” (Williams 2011:28). The mother wants to impose her system on Laura, but Laura chooses spiritual freedom. She is not interested in the business college as a social institution, and she does not integrate with people in the church. The lack of integration is evidence of her refusal of social hypocrisy and of her success in achieving inner independence. In one of his speeches, a disabled individual declares: “We will look beyond the chair and open the doors to talent and beauty” (Morris 2002:106). It is the case of Laura, who deploys nature, music, and her menagerie to resist social stereotypes about people with special needs.

Unlike the mother, who does not really grasp her daughter's inner psyche, or Tom, who feels guilty for not taking care of his sister, Jim gives Laura messages about self-esteem and confidence. Laura “appreciates Tom’s efforts to write about her. She wishes that he had made the effort to find out how she really felt about things” (Bottoms et al. 2014:67). The

homodiegetic narrator fails to describe the minute details of Laura's emotions, but Laura dares to narrate and express her authentic feelings to Jim. She informs him about her amputation and the way it irritates her and raises her inferiority complex. His ideas stem from the patriarchal belief that "the disabled women are pinned by a dominant male gaze coupled with the gaze of the culture which constructs them as objects to be stared at" (Ghai 2003:159). Laura falsely believes that she is stared at, and she is influenced by the cultural stereotypes that define disabled bodies as sources of horror. In this way, "the disfigured and disabled represent the Kristevan horror of abjection and are thrust out of the good and proper social body" (Bouson 2009:164).

Jim negates the fact of defining the disabled body as the source of horror, and he subverts cultural stereotypes when he affirms: "Well, well, well, I never even noticed" (Williams 2011:53). His answer shows that the real disability is not physical, but it is rather cultural. Laura is influenced by the cultural stereotypes that minimize disabled women. However, Jim ensures that she is a normal human being. Her partial disability is unnoticed: "The concept of the normal helps to explain, and he subverts cultural stereotypes when he affirms: "Well, well, well, I never even noticed" (Williams 53). The emergence and evolution of disability as a cultural idea" (Kirsty 2016:16). It is a cultural idea because it exists in Laura's mindscape, but in reality she can move and even dance. Jim invites her to use her body as a source of freedom and not as a source of shame. When Laura utters "[*breathlessly*]: I – can't dance! JIM[answers]: There you go, that inferiority stuff! Come on, try!.... A little bit higher. Right. Now don't tighten up, that's the main thing about it – relax" (Williams 2011:61). Jim asks Laura to appreciate her body and not to be intimidated by social maxims or to retreat into the shell of the self. Accordingly, in the raising actions, "Laura emerges as a woman who resists the male gaze in *Menagerie* and comes to represent an alternative to the ones complying with the conventional role of a woman in a patriarchal society" (Chakraverty 2024:2). She becomes a liberated woman whose body is not commodified by the male gaze.

Jim invites Laura to change her ideas about disability, to get rid of the inferiority complex, and to define herself as a sane human being. He asks Laura to be self-confident rather than intimidated by social stereotypes about people with special needs. Jim states: "I happened to notice you had this inferiority complex that keeps you from feeling comfortable with people. Somebody needs to build your confidence up and make you proud instead of shy and turning awayand – blushing" (Williams 2011:63). Jim invites Laura to rethink about her identity, to be confident and to accept her difference. Disability theory, stresses "the value of disability as a form of diversity, and on the power of disability as a critical concept of thinking about human identity in general" (Siebers 2008:18). Jim convinces Laura about the difference as a source of uniqueness, diversity, and individuality. He teaches her a lesson about difference as a form of spiritual richness and a source of pride and self-worth. Jim advises Laura: "the different people are not like other people, but being different is nothing to be ashamed of. Because other people are not such wonderful people. They are one hundred times one thousand. You are one times one! They walk all over the earth. You just stay here. They're common as – weeds, -but – you – well, you're – Blue Roses!" (Williams 2011: 63). The use of the simile "common as weeds" shows that Laura is a distinguished lady who is not placed at the margin of society because of her difference. On the other hand, she is depicted as a blue rose, a light color and "a romantic symbol of longing for infinite, of unrequited yearning for the absolute emotional and artistic fulfillment" (Bloom 2007:67). The image of the blue rose highlights Laura's sensitive side, her romantic attitude, and her continuous yearning for the arts and creation. In the final scene, disability becomes a source of power and not a sign of intimidation. "Disability prevents [individuals] from the full use of their bodies, yet all have complete vision, hearing and mental faculties" (Morris 2002:96). Laura has a vision about transparency, honesty, and altruism as the

key features for preserving the humanity of the human being. She has talents and strong artistic inclinations, manifested in her listening to music, which is a source of her mental and spiritual comfort. Laura reveals: "It was always such a relief when the singing started" (Williams 2011:55). Music can be considered a form of subversion in the play as it deconstructs the views about the disabled woman as a passive and untalented lady. She trespasses across the traditional boundaries that define a lady with special needs as a woman without vision or artistic skills. Indeed, "her cognitive situation is not the result of her deficit, but instead of the psychological strain that has resulted from constant assault from dissonant and conflicting pressures" (Kristy 2016:140). Therefore, Laura's inferiority complex stems from the psychological pressure of her mother and not from her partial amputation.

Unlike Amanda, who is shocked to learn that Jim is engaged and is not the right gentleman caller for her daughter, Laura is more mature, trying to create a world of her own and fetishizing inner peace. Amanda plays the role of the victim, and her reaction stuns: she learns that Jim is engaged and is not the right gentleman caller for her daughter. Laura is more mature as she tries to create a world of her own, with laughter. She rebukes her son:

"you've had us make such fools of ourselves. The effort, the preparations, all the expense! The new floor lamp, the rug, the clothes for Laura! all for what? To entertain some other girl's fiancé! Don't think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who's crippled and has no job!" (Williams 2011: 68).

Amanda can be classified as a flat character who does not change her mentality about marriage as the ultimate fate of her disabled daughter. On the other hand, Laura is a complex character whose attitude toward disability, self-esteem, and happiness evolves. She grasps that joy is not external; it comes from within. The images of the broken mirror and the glass menagerie suggest Laura's gradual psychological development. Laura declares that glass is precious to her and it is her favorite material: "Oh, please don't think I sit around doing nothing! My glass collection takes up a good deal of time. Glass is something you have to take good care of" (Williams 2011:58). Laura's association with glass reflects her transparency and her fragility. Glass is a "symbol for our ability to see into the inner selves of characters" (Banach 2010:142). We can clearly delve into Laura's inner self and recognize her transformation and maturity at the end of the play. She moves from illusion to objective reality and independence. The broken mirror represents her first step towards self-achievement. According to Byfonski, "the glass animals came to represent fragile, delicate ties that must be broken that you inevitably break, when you try to fulfill yourself" (2013:12). Breaking the mirror leads Laura to believe that happiness does not come from the outside world or from the fabricated mirror, but rather from within. The broken glass is coupled with the image of the light and the candle.

The candle reflects artificial light in contrast with inner light. It is the "inner light of the characters, truth and illusion" (Banach 2010:142). The illusion is Amanda's belief that disability is something physical, which should be hidden, and that marriage is the solution for getting rid of the burden of having a disabled daughter. Accordingly, Laura blows out the candles at the end of the play; "for nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura – and so good-bye.' [*She blows the candles out*]" (Williams 2011:69). Blowing out the candles shows that superficial light fades away, while inner light cannot be extinguished. Laura succeeds at convincing the audience about the unimportance of physical disability. Indeed, "if [the character] is doing his job right, they are not going to focus on disability they are just kind of forget about it and concentrate on what's going on" (Morris 2002:97). The audience is paying attention to events, the climactic moment of meeting Jim, comic relief, Amanda's prestigious behavior, and Laura's spontaneity. Laura implicitly teaches the audience

about disability and informs them that disability is something social, cultural, psychological, and mental, but it is not physical.

8. Conclusion

Disability in *Glass Menagerie* is social, cultural, emotional, moral, and psychological. The scrutiny of Laura's inner self shows that society and patriarchal culture shape real disability. Exilic manifestations stem from social considerations of female disability as a source of sympathy and a form of weakness. Laura is secluded at home and in social institutions such as school, church, and marriage. The analysis traces the female oscillation between physical disability and longing for freedom. By drawing attention to the theme of physical VS. social disability, Williams highlights how prejudice against women with special needs is shaped by the socio-cultural elements that govern patriarchal societies. Through metaphors of glass, candles, nature, and musical notes, the play deconstructs the traditional views about a physically disabled woman "identifying disability as an impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities" (qtd. in Reuning 2002:56). Laura liberates herself from traditional power when she blows out candles and proves the role of inner light in determining female identity.

The present research merges disability theories with feminist narratology. Dealing with female disability from different perspectives is challenging. It offers broader perspectives to grasp disability and decode the female character's message about disability as a socio-cultural by-product. The interdisciplinary approach shows that disability refers to the American nation's inability to eliminate social ills, to recapture the ideal values of the Agrarian past, and to put limits on the capitalist machine, which widens the social gap and hinders the economic development of the middle-class society.

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