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## THE COMPARISON BETWEEN IDEAL FEMINIST AND DISCRIMINATED FEMINIST FROM CHARACTERISTICS OF AMANDA AND LAURA AS SEEN IN THE GLASS MENAGERIE BY TENNESSE WILLIAMS

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### Abstract

*The problem in this thesis is the analysis of ideal feminist and discriminated feminist from the characteristics of Amanda and Laura is based on the three waves of feminist movements. Both Amanda and Laura represents the different kinds of feminist in literary work, Amanda is the strong woman as the representation of ideal feminist, whereas Laura is the weak woman as the representation of discriminated feminist. Then, the purpose of research is to describe Laura as the discriminated feminist, Amanda as the ideal feminist, and to explain Laura and Amanda as the ideal and discriminated feminist from The Glass Menagerie. In research methodology, the data collection is performed through library research, which the writer gains the data and information about his object through the books and other audiovisual equipment that related and relevant to the topic in the form of words or pictures. In the data analysis, it uses genetic structuralism, it looks the external factor of the literature that conveys the internal element of literary work such as the actions of the main character, such as characters and author.*

*The findings in this thesis can be seen from the characters of Amanda and Laura represents the different kinds of feminist in literary work, Amanda is the strong woman as the representation of ideal feminist, whereas Laura is the weak woman as the representation of discriminated feminist. Amanda, a typical southern belle, trapped by the cruel reality, seeks comfort from her glorious past and causes her isolation from her life, which is the embodiment of her alienation. Laura, a fragile and terribly shy girl with a crippled leg, withdraws completely to her own world made of glass animals and eventually isolates from the society. It is her disability and the family environment cause her isolation from the society, which is just the embodiment of her alienation.*

**Keywords:** *Discriminated Feminist, Ideal Feminist*

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## I INTRODUCTION

The analysis of ideal feminist and discriminated feminist from the characteristics of Amanda and Laura is based on the three waves of feminist movements, this term can be in general movement and also in literary criticism.

Both Amanda and Laura represents the different kinds of feminist in literary work, Amanda is the strong woman as the representation of ideal feminist, whereas Laura is the weak woman as the representation of discriminated feminist.

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Feminism itself is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal, such as to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men. In feminist literary criticism, the three waves of feminist movements can be divided into three literary criticisms. In the first wave, the feminist explores the weak women in literary work as the creation of male authors, they criticize that women are discriminated in the description of male authors in their literary works. In the second wave, the feminist explores the strength of women that can be found in literary works, especially by the female author.

At last but not least, the third wave of feminist movement deals with the position of in a more specific issues other than gender, such as race, education, employment, and others. From this description, Laura is belonged to the first wave feminist movement while Amanda is belonged to the second wave feminist movement. The title of play itself shows the trait of feminism about women as the fragile beings. The glass menagerie, or collection of animals, is the play's central symbol. Laura's collection of glass animal figurines represents a number of facets of her personality.

Like the figurines, Laura is delicate, fanciful, and somehow old-fashioned. Glass is transparent, but, when light is shined upon it correctly, it refracts an entire rainbow of colors. Similarly, Laura, though quiet and bland around strangers, is a source of strange, multifaceted delight to those who choose to look at her in the right light. The menagerie also represents the

imaginative world to which Laura devotes herself, a world that is colorful and enticing but based on fragile illusions. The first subject in this research is Laura Wingfield as the discriminated feminist. Laura's character is the representation of discriminated feminist, it can be seen from her characteristics of obedience and lack of confidence. These characteristics are commonly found in the discriminated feminist. Most of the time, they are obedient to the rule patriarchy because they do not have enough confidence to compete with the men. The second subject in this research is Amanda Wingfield as the ideal feminist. She lives in a world that fluctuates between illusion and reality. When it is convenient to her, she simply closes her eyes to the brutal, realistic world. She uses various escape mechanisms in order to endure her present position in life. When life in this tenement world becomes unbearable, she recalls the days of her youth when she lived at Blue Mountain and had seventeen gentlemen callers in one Sunday afternoon. Indeed, this story has been told so often that it is no longer an illusion and instead has become a reality.

She likewise indulges in playful games so as to escape the drudgery of everyday living. She tells Laura, "You be the lady this time and I'll be the darky." She refuses to acknowledge that Laura is crippled and instead refers to her as having only a slight physical defect. She refuses to accept the fact that Tom is quite different from her and that he, like his father, will someday leave in search of adventures. And finally, Amanda lives perpetually in the world of the gentlemen callers who will appear any day to sweep Laura off her feet.

## II RESEARCH METHOD

In the collecting data, the writer applies library research. Data collection was the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. This technique was attempted to trace the source of information in the form of document which were relevant to the object of the research. The data analyzing procedures

concern with the way of the writer to conduct the analysis by interpreting the data. This analysis uses genetic structuralism, it looks the external factor of the literature that conveys the internal element of literary work such the actions of the main character, such as characters and author. Pradopo (2001: 54) states that "Peneliti bertugas menjelaskan karya sastra sebagai sebuah struktur berdasarkan unsur-unsur yang membentuknya, seperti masyarakat dan kehidupan sosial." "The

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researcher had a chance to explain literary work as structure based on the elements that formed them, which were society and social life.” From the explanation, structural method had two functions which explain the internal factor of literature and show the relation of this internal factor with the external factor such as feminism.

Cott in *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (1997:13) says that feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men. Feminist movements have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to earn fair wages or equal pay, to own property, to receive education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, and to have maternity leave.

Feminists have also worked to promote bodily autonomy and integrity, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Changes in dress and acceptable physical activity have often been part of feminist movements. Feminist campaigns are generally considered to be a main force behind

major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West, where they are near-universally credited with achieving women's suffrage, gender neutrality in English, reproductive rights for women, including access to contraceptives and abortion, and the right to enter into contracts and own property. Although feminist advocacy is, and has been, mainly focused on women's rights, some feminists, including bell hooks, argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims because men are also harmed by traditional gender roles.

Feminist theory, which emerged from feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experience, it has developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues concerning gender. Numerous feminist movements and ideologies have developed over the years and represent different viewpoints and aims. Some forms of feminism have been criticized for taking into account only white, middle class, and college-educated perspectives. This criticism led to the creation of ethnically specific or multicultural forms of feminism, including black feminism and intersectional feminism.

### III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The identification of problem in this research is the feminism literary criticism from the play *The Glass Menagerie*. Throughout the history, women were confined to the domestic sphere, while public life was reserved for men. In medieval Europe, women were denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life. At the end of the 19th century in France, they were still compelled to cover their heads in public, and, in parts of Germany, a husband still had the right to sell his wife.

Even as late as the early 20th century, women could neither vote nor hold elective office in Europe and in most of the United States, where several territories and states granted woman suffrage long before the federal government did so. Women were prevented from conducting business without a male representative, be it father, brother, husband, legal agent, or even son. Married women could

not exercise control over their own children without the permission of their husbands. Moreover, women had little or no access to education and were barred from most professions. In some parts of the world, such restrictions on women continue today.

In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tennessee Williams wrote about the struggles of an American family, especially the women, during the Depression-Era. Williams presented the problems of being constrained to monotonous work and how one's dreams may not always come true. The dramatist also stressed that not everyone is comfortable with living in the present day.

There were always better times than the ones that are being lived now. He acknowledged that there are those who wish not to participate and are not comfortable living in the outside world. Through Williams' genius use of symbols

he was able to convey his ideas to the reader. He made relationships with the symbols and the actions of the characters. Along with these symbols he also used the characters incapability of living in the present to convey the harsh realities that they faced in the modern world.

Laura's character is the representation of discriminated feminist, it can be seen from her characteristics of obedience and lack of confidence. These characteristics are commonly found in the discriminated feminist. Most of the time, they are obedient to the rule patriarchy because they do not have enough confidence to compete with the men.

The character of Laura Wingfield is one of the five characters in the drama. The title itself is *The Glass Menagerie*. It deals with the collection of glass animals that belongs to Laura. The collection makes her live in her own world. Laura's physical and emotional defect is not only a huge problem for her but also for her brother, Tom, and her mother, Amanda. Her condition of being unable to be autonomous becomes the center of the main problem arises in the story. Laura's actions and utterances have a strong influence on Tom and Amanda. Problems and conflicts faced by them are also getting bigger mainly because of Laura's condition.

First, in the lack of confidence, Jim is the one who bravely and straightly says that in scene seven. The purpose is to build up Laura's confidence so that she can be more superior of herself. Jim says:

Yep – that's what I judge you to be your principal trouble. A lack of confident in yourself as a person. You don't have a proper amount of faith in yourself. I'm basing that fact on a number of your remarks and also on certain observation I've made. (378)

Mostly she is not confident when she meets people. She is too frightened to join them because she views herself lower than the fact. At the time meeting Jim in the dinner, her movement, face, and gesture show that she is not confident.

Realizing she makes bad mark in high school, Laura continues life with her collection of the glass animals and old phonograph record. What she does every day are keeping, washing,

or taking care the glass menagerie and playing old Victrola that belonged to her father. She does them whenever she is not helping her mother doing housework.

Laura spends her time to keep her own glass collection of animals. She loves them very much. She decides to take care of them rather than to affiliate with other people. She fails to have relation with others because of her inferiority complex. This is proven as follows.

Tom : She lives in a world of her own – a world of little glass ornaments, Mother.... She plays old phonograph record and – that's about all. (366)

Jim : What are you doing now?

Laura : I don't do anything –much. 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. (378)

The glass menagerie is her friends. She tends to be with them and has her own world with them. Her collection is her imaginary friend to talk to and share the problems with.

Laura is not confident to deal with people and values herself low. She feels her foot defect is nasty because people keep away from her. This feeling is proven on the statement said by Laura below.

Amanda : Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. Sister, that's what you'll do! Laura : But, mother – Amanda : Yes? Laura : I'm – crippled! 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 disadvantages like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it – develop charm –

and vivacity – and charm! ...  
(354)

Laura's lack of confidence is clearly shown from her utterances above. Looking herself in low rate and thinking the foot defect all the time as her imperfectness haunt Laura all the time. Although both Amanda and Jim have convinced her that the defect is hardly noticeable, she is still not confident.

The negative feelings of her such as being painfully shy and dependent and also judging herself low rate hinder Laura to establish contact with reality, with social life, with people. Furthermore, a sense of disappointment of the defect stays in her mind. She has tried to overcome it by being superior but failed. She is dreadfully scared of other people's judgment to her.

Jim : You were shy with people!  
Laura: I tried not to be but never could –  
Jim : Overcome it?  
Laura: No, I – I never could!  
(376)

The failure to be superior builds a feeling of inferior. Instead of getting friends outside as she wish, she tends to move away from others. So, unconsciously she represses the affiliation need. In condition she is unable to make friend she conducts repression.

Collecting the glass menagerie is the result of the repression. Actually, she has a desire to make friend and hang out with them as other women do. Unfortunately, the defect obstructs her to approach her friend. She believes that no body wants a cripple to be their fellow. As a result, her ego starts working and conducting a defense mechanism. The defense mechanism chosen is repression. She represses her desire to be with others by doing her hobbies. The menagerie plays as her friends. In fact, there is still no one beside her as a friend.

Laura seeks for security by withdrawing herself from others. It also happens in Laura's daily life. She never allows close relationship with others but set up a world of her with the glass animals. She prefers to establish her own privacy and isolates herself rather than builds her social world.

The real Laura is actually her wishes to interact with friends, to affiliate with people, and

to be with others. Since she is too shy and too lack of confident, she feels alienated by them. The truth is that she is not secure among the people watching her. It creates a perception in her mind that they do not want her. Finally, Laura prefers to build her private world rather than to be with others. It is a place in which she senses a safety. So, the motivations of collecting the menagerie and play the old phonograph record are based on self actualization need, belonging need and safety need.

Actually, Laura is hurt heavily. the reader can conclude that her defect does not hinder her in doing several actions. However, it hurts her emotional and psychological side. Understanding that sadness is hurt, she is never ever willing to hurt others. Moreover, viewing Tom's condition above, Laura takes an action not to hurt anyone. Even, she is trying to be nice to others or to pleasure others because she knows feeling hurt is painful.

Second, the characteristic of Laura as the discriminated feminist is the obedience. One characteristic of Laura is that she always obeys what her mother asks to her. She does not want to make Amanda sad and angry. She can be categorized as a docile person. One more proof is at the time she cries loudly because of Tom's accidentally breaking her collection. This is totally contrasted with her daily behavior. She is usually shy and silent.

In the dinner scene, when they have dinner, she will clean the table and wash the dishes. Since Amanda believes that there will be a gentleman caller comes, she does not permit her to. The dialogue is as follows.

Laura : Mother, let me clear the table. Amanda : No dear, you go in front and study your own typewriter chart. Or practice your shorthand a little. Stay fresh and pretty! – It's almost time for our gentleman callers to start arriving. How many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon? (Page 351; scene 1)

Every time Amanda orders or requests or asks Laura to do something, the daughter will obey her. Obeying anything Amanda's orders is the way she can actualize herself. She realizes that her ability is just serving and helping



mother. Thus, doing housework is her activity to show her potential.

Laura's love to her mother is shown by helping Amanda those ways. She wants to show and give her love to Amanda and also wants to receive love from mother. Since she does not any friend to talk to unless the family, she then devotes herself for giving and receiving love for and from the family. The reasons why she never hurt anyone is just because she does not want to be hurt either. All she wants is love.

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