

## Speaking up the Unspeakable: Female Agency in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*

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### 1. Abstract

This article examines female agency in two selected American plays of two famous modern contemporary playwrights namely Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. These playwrights offer insights into the women's possibility to resist in patriarchic societies living under circumstances, which reflect their needs. As female characters have the ability to take action, participate in decision-makings, they are seen to have agency. The word agency is associated with being a person within the humanist discourses that is prevailed in the social sciences. The current article adopts the symbolic interaction theory of gender, in which societal norms are comprehended by the passage of time and are exposed to endless support. This importance of this article was existed in the broad issues of gender as they are related to varied fields that explore the impacts of gender in a specific area. This can contribute to the understanding of gender in an alternative area. The term 'gender agency' is often used synonymously with notions such as liberty, self-governance, reason, and ethical legitimacy. There exist several basic disparities in the conceptualization of personhood between humanists and poststructuralist theorists.

**Keywords: Female, Agency, Freedom, Autonomy, Morals.**

## 2. Introduction

Artistic expression and philosophical shifts challenged Modernism by the time the twentieth century progressed. So, people started making use of technological innovations as a means of everyday life. The term “Contemporary” is commonly used to describe the time period after the late 1950s, when changes began to be represented in new literary, artistic, and philosophical works and ideas. There have been several studies on this topic (Chabot, 1988; Goodman, 1993; King, 1991; Laqueur, 1996; Linn, 1996). They rejected the idea that one may discover Truths in one’s internal or external experiences. They praised variety and welcomed “the Other,” or those who were different from themselves in terms of ethnicity, gender, or social status. Taking its cues from mass culture rather than the lofty art that defined Modernism. Because of the era's preoccupation with language, literary theorists began engaging in in-depth linguistic study in order to better comprehend various social subsets. They took a strong anti-elitist position, which led them to focus less on the writer and more on the audience.

The measuring of women's agency presents a number of obstacles, the most significant of which are the multidimensionality and context-specificity of the problem. This problem is especially difficult to solve in non-Western cultures since measurement tools are often adapted without first undergoing stringent testing or developing a full knowledge of the meanings of constructs. This is the approach that will be taken in order to investigate the understanding and functionality of the women's agency scale components. Within the plays that are being considered for this project, the vast majority of the female characters will be analyzed in terms of the choices that they make on their own. However, while women seemed to grasp

the freedom-of-movement item as it was meant, the questions evaluating gender views were often representative of broader local society norms rather than the women's personal ideas. This was the case despite the fact that women seemed to comprehend the item as it was intended. This article demonstrates the importance of conducting additional research into the ways in which women comprehend an agency scale before applying it in a different setting.

Broadly speaking, this article supported Dekovan's (1999) judgement in which Modernism appeared as “a masculine movement”, however feminism developed as a philosophical “preoccupation”. (p. 126). Ozieblo (1990) asserts that the literary contributions added by Glaspell remained obscure for a significant period due to the prevalent male-centric viewpoint that permeated American literature. Consequently, such a viewpoint placed O’Neill within the forefront of the literary scene, while Glaspell was left in the shadows. Curiously, this insight was extended to the plays of the Postmodern era. During the 1960s, Adrienne Kennedy’s work was frequently overshadowed by the prominence of other black male writers (Stascavage, 1990).

### **3. Review of Literature**

Literary women made significant contributions in the latter half of the 20th century, capitalizing on contemporary fascination with the other sex and the movement to empower marginalized individuals. In the 1960s, with the emergence of feminist criticism and female authors as academic disciplines, women also made strides in the theatre. While women had historically been featured as characters in plays, their

contributions as serious playwrights remained muted. This trend did not commence to shift as late as the 19th and as early as the 20th centuries (Case, 1988). The prominence of female playwrights experienced a notable ascent during the 1960s, and subsequent to the emergence of the second phase of feminism, a greater number of them “energized and forceful refocused attention on women’s sociopolitical status, reopened artistic avenues for women and redefined both the nature and artistic expression of women’s experiences” (Kachur, 1991, p. 16). The early of 70s, witnessed the emergence of female playwrights’ anthologies, which added to the scholarly weight that of women’s literary movement in the theatre respectively. (King, 1991).

The concept of agency is also associated with self-efficacy, which is the conviction that one is capable of accomplishing a task. Prior to acting, a woman must possess knowledge of her capacity to determine actions and subsequently have faith in her ability to execute those decisions. Despite the presence of adequate resources, the ability of a woman to utilize them in order to achieve her goals may be hindered unless she possesses self-efficacy, which is a manifestation of critical consciousness. The British ideological hegemony has consistently subjected modern American plays to racial stereotypes, a trend that dates back to early nineteenth-century English literature. Due to the fact that it contains and continues to reinforce a number of the values upheld by that ideology, literature is one of the most fundamental cultural elements required for the advancement of a state ideology. Long ago, early English literature continued to shape the negative perception of Native British among the white public. Initially inculcated through the literary canon, bigotry and animosity gradually assimilate into the fabric of society.

Feminist social and political thought and feminist ethics both start with the idea that women have the power to make their own decisions and act on them. Feminist thinkers were interested in women's agency because their identities were formed in places other than their best interests. One of the main reasons for feminist research was in understanding that organizations and practices have always put them down, though in varied traditions and levels depending on the place and time. Cultural norms make sense that many women will be more likely to accept a lower social place. When people who disagree with feminist ideas and actions said that most women willingly follow the rules of femininity, it is said that women might choose to live differently if they were not surrounded by conventional heterosexual role models and media portrayals, as well as the problems that come with not fitting in. This meant that the issue of women's agency was linked to the idea of voice. There was disagreement about how to tell when women are being themselves and doing what they want to do.

Poststructuralist theory, which is primarily formulated in opposition to humanist theory "the subject itself is the effect of a production caught in the mutually constitutive web of social practices, discourses, and subjectivity; its reality is the tissue of social relations" (Henriques et al, 2001, p. 117). According to the humanist or individualistic perspective on human nature, agency is an inherent characteristic of every mentally sound and mature individual. Individuals who do not possess inherent agency, such as women, children, indigenous populations (as referred to by Trinh, Minh-ha), and individuals with mental illness, are considered, according to this particular model, to be lacking whole humanity. The concept of agency, in their perspective, is more commonly observed as an exception rather than a prevailing norm. Additionally, the agency postulates a confrontational dynamic between the

individual and others, as well as between the individual and society (Carbaugh, 1988/89). Individuals are commonly perceived as existing in a state of interdependence with an external entity known as “society,” which has a significant influence on them and with which they can engage in opposition. This perspective is closely associated with the recognition and admiration of individuals who are perceived to distinguish themselves from the larger group. Therefore, modern history can be understood as the narrative of renowned individuals and their profound influence on global affairs. Contemporary narratives, in a similar vein, revolve around protagonists who undertake particular missions and triumph over the obstacles that are presented by the world. During the upcoming session, we will explore several feminist perspectives pertaining to agency.

Feminist philosophers were largely in agreement concerning the requirements that a feminist theory of agency must meet, though also an intense debate existed regarding the theory that satisfies such requirements. An essential component of a feminist theory of agency is an explanation of how women can live authentic lives, which show these women’s real needs while also developing evaluations of sexist political and social organizations to actively resist male-dominated societies. Furthermore, it is imperative that it achieves both of these objectives while refraining from presuming that individuals are capable of transcending their socially constructed perspectives in order to gain a God-like outlook. Expanding upon the raising awareness framework established in the 1970s, Nancy Hartsock argued that genuine agency and self-discovery for women are contingent upon their participation in practices related to unity alongside feminist demonstrators. Sandra Bartky (2020) valued how gender norms are contradicted, which are imposed on women, such as the expectation that they strive to be physically attractive and

pleasing to men, only to be ridiculed for exhibiting narcissistic traits. These conflicts, in their view, present a foundation for challenging established beliefs regarding the ideal societal and domestic position of women.

#### **4. Purpose of the Article**

The objective of this article was to describe the depiction of gender and ascertain the manner in which gender norms were defined, depicted, and practices in Modern American plays. Additionally, it illuminates the manner in which gender norms were defined as well as portrayed in a subset of American plays. However, such endeavour came to be primarily and effectively concerned with women, which cannot be conducted to examine only one perspective. Thus, this is so for a better investigation on the way women were depicted to analyze masculine characters.

#### **5. Content Analysis**

A number of research theorists define content analysis and describe the methods by which this process is used. Content analysis was defined by Krippendorff (1980) by means of “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context,” (p,21), which was “characterized as a method of inquiry into the symbolic meanings of message” (p, 22). Based on the idea that societies have organizations dedicated to developing and distributing the rules by which society is operated. As a result, these concepts and rules are reflected in the inscribed records of a certain culture (Krippendorff, 1980). Essentially, due to such records of a community served as a representation of that society, they evolved into “cultural indicators” to be regarded as having validity and reliability data. (Weber, 1985). This is so, because plays represented the records that were inscribed to be the “cultural indicators” in terms of gender roles behavior.

## 6. Women's Agency

The term 'agency' is often used interchangeably with the concept of personhood. The term is frequently employed in a manner that is synonymous with notions such as liberty, self-governance, reason, and ethical legitimacy. According to Lois McNay (2003, 10), an agency is "the capacity for autonomous action in the face of often overwhelming cultural sanctions and structural inequalities." In alternative terms, individuals demonstrate agency when they engage in behaviours that deviate from societal norms and expectations, despite the influence of social institutions (Giddens, 1979) and internalized cultural practices. (Bourdieu 1990).

The emphasis on agency within feminist theory may be interpreted, in part, as an effort to rectify the relatively unidirectional discourse surrounding patriarchal oppression that marked the initial phase of feminism. An exploration of the notion of agency is also an effort to delineate the novel manifestations of autonomy and dependence that are arising from the reorganization of gender dynamics in late-capitalist society. A substantial portion of the scholarly discourse surrounding agency has been dedicated to the conceptualization of gender identity as a resilient yet malleable phenomenon. This entails examining the intrinsic instability of gender norms and the subsequent opportunities this presents for identity to be refashioned in a way that is emancipatory and resistance-oriented (Butler, 1990; Pellegrini, 1997). Agency is the capacity to recognize objectives or make decisions, and subsequently take action. As members of the family and as individuals and collectives, agency can be variedly exerted when talking about spheres, such as politics, and markets. As well, agency can be represented in a number of forms; for instance, "bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and



resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis” (Kabeer 1999: 438).

As a result, and throughout women’s history, agency and action have been two of the most important themes. In order to understand women’s lives, cultures, and experiences in the past, these ideas are very helpful. A good way to think about women’s past is through the lens of the idea of agency. The early and important part of women’s history scholarship was bringing women’s historical practice out of obscurity. This showed how women have been partly formed by their sociality and have also shown the capacity partly to transform the social structures in which they have lived. This way of thinking lets women be seen as useful tools for the kinds of power that might be thought to determine them. It is impossible to think about agency in this way without also thinking about how women have organized themselves and fought as activists to challenge, resist, overthrow, or get into social structures and institutions that used to ignore, exclude, disadvantage, or punish them.

Females characters’ capability for taking initiative and making choices, which impact both their own lives and their societies. It is the state of being proactive and influencing or gaining control over oneself. Originally, the term agency first appeared into English as a Mediaeval Latin term *agentia* during the mid-1600s and changed from ‘active operation’ to ‘a mode of exerting power or generating effect’ by the 1670s. Such a change was associated with creating things into a motivating force. The first use of agency was to denote to a place or institution that does business for someone else in the mid-1800s. Historically and in most civilizations, women have had little agency. The positions of women in most texts reflect the

culture in which they are written, reflecting the agency women had in society at the time. Books, films, and plays have stronger and more independent female protagonists than before due to the rise in consciousness and reception concerning the rights of women and the equality between men and women. This also adds more to both the autonomy and individuality of women. Female characters can now do anything, unlike before when they were confined by males and their rules.

In former eras, powerful, intelligent, and honest women stood out from their peers. The plays chosen showcase women who stood out and conveyed significant messages. The creators never intended to make them two-dimensional, submissive women. It would have wasted those characters' abilities and strengths and defeated their writers' goals and messages. Female characters have agency when they can act, make decisions, and affect others.

## **7. Methodology**

The present article involved the examination of two American Modern plays, focusing on the issue of gender and the portrayal of gender role behaviours exhibited by the characters. In order to meet the requirements of this article, it was imperative to adopt a methodology for analyzing each play's content, adhering to the tenets of qualitative research. The purpose of this communication is to discuss several subjects with the aim of clearly elucidating the specific research approach employed in this article. The inherent characteristics of this article were conducive to the utilization of a qualitative research approach. In its fundamental manifestation, irrespective of the particular method employed for data collection (e.g., content analysis), qualitative research is employed holistically to “discover themes and relationships” that are found in a specific context (Gall, Borg, & Gall,

1996, p. 29). More comprehensively, Mason (1996) proposed that qualitative beliefs were “concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, or produced,” and such beliefs attempted “to produce [a] rounded understanding on the basis of rich, contextual, and detailed data” (p. 4). The article employed qualitative principles as the overarching methodological framework, with both content and textual analysis serving as the specific methodologies used to establish the operational boundaries of the study.

## **8. The Selection Procedure/s**

The meticulous selection of the plays to be analyzed was a crucial aspect of this article. According to Rogers (1991), the process of literature selection holds significant importance in cultural studies, particularly when the literature serves as the foundation for such studies. “Sampling literary works requires sketching broad boundaries and insistently including all the widely read and/or critically acclaimed writers whose work gives those boundaries literary and cultural meaning” (p. 17).

## **9. The Selected Theory**

According to Hilde Lindemann (2016), it is imperative for individuals to express their self-perception through the act of storytelling. The utilization of the narrative form allows for the potential reevaluation of historical events and the generation of alternative storylines, so empowering women to harness their creative abilities and thereby transform their lives. By categorizing some typical behaviours observed in the workplace as "sexual harassment," female employees affirmed the legitimacy of their feelings of anger and shame. This validation then empowered them to envision strategies for addressing and challenging these discriminatory practices.

Another agency approach that supported similar beliefs centered on the epistemological question of how people can separate their own interests, values, and the like from those they have absorbed from their social contexts. Agency involves self-discovery, self-definition, and self-direction skills to be used as talents, which people can identify to promote their own and others' successful and repudiate unfair and damaging ones.

Feminist agency theory was founded upon assumptions concerning the essence of individuals, which likewise influenced feminist epistemology and philosophy of science. Women have frequently been portrayed as fundamentally inscrutable by men in Western culture, due in large part to the perception that men are rational while women are irrational. Feminist philosophers contend that any lingering cognitive impairments among women can be ascribed to the historical context in which women were seldom provided with formal education or motivated to partake in intellectual endeavors. Presently, there are instances where females in Western nations are discouraged from pursuing mathematics and science, either through explicit discouragement or due to the sexist expectations and attitudes of their parents and teachers. In support of this assertion, feminist philosophers Longino (2010) noted that “communities of knowers” – Experts were surprisingly homogeneous in sex, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Thus, most knowers were white, Western, heterosexual men. Feminist epistemologists argued that expert legitimacy criteria are social creations that strengthen the political and economic current situation. Feminist epistemologists doubt science and scientific philosophy are objective because so many people's experiences, reasoning, and testimonies are ignored. Some feminist epistemologists believe that knowledge acquisition agents

are communities of inquirers rather than specialists since evaluating knowledge claims requires peer consensus and data verification.

## 10. Analysis

This article shows how marginalized characters resist gender and class oppression through voice and agency. To do this, the researcher evaluates the characters' free will and if their society permitted them to fulfil their desires. The ability of characters to act differently in different contexts was examined. The researcher also explores women's circumstances to examine characters' resistance.

## 11. Arthur Miller's *The Death of a Salesman*

Arthur Miller's renowned play, *Death of a Salesman*, holds the distinction of being the most widely recognized and celebrated work in American theatrical history. First published in 1949, this masterpiece by Miller encapsulates the spirit of a specific time period and has captivated the minds of various individuals. (Murphy, 1998). During the time later to the play's first appearance,

*“Arthur Miller had received more than a thousand letters explaining the personal ways in which the play was related to their writers' lives...A number of sermons, both spiritual and secular, had been preached on the text of the play, with ministers, rabbis, and priests explaining its exposure of the emptiness of Willy's dream of material success, and sales managers using Willy as an object lesson of how not to be a salesman.” (p. 757)*

Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*, received critical acclaim and recognition. Miller was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for best play. Furthermore, during the play's initial performance, it garnered an impressive number of 742 productions (Jacobus, 2001). In the year 1972, a theatrical

production featuring a cast composed entirely of individuals of African descent was staged, while during the 1980s, Miller assumed the role of director for a rendition of the aforementioned play in the country of China. In 1999, “exactly fifty years to the day from its original opening,” (p. 1185). the play itself was brought back once again to Broadway stage due to the public’s appraisal.

Literary figure Willy Loman has become a cultural symbol of epic proportions. He shows the American spirit’s flaws and, oddly, its strengths. Death of a Salesman is also about Willy’s family and how they react to his situation. Old salesperson Willy Loman is nearing the end of his career. Willy was the best New England salesperson ever, who has believed in being liked as successful, based on naïve trust in the American Dream. Willy’s workplace has changed since the play’s 1949 setting. The younger generation handles the workplace differently than their fathers, where a hand-shake signifies little and has significance as compared with the worker. Therefore, Willy’s daily struggles are to afford the expenses that are needed to be covered.

Willy uses flashbacks to relive important events. Willy’s character is revealed by these 1928 scenes. These scenes show how Willy exaggerated his salesman image for the advantage of his family excused his oldest son’s insignificant stealing, touched impermanent personally since he had no idea about his father and saw his brother’s success, and how Biff by chance figured his father’s adultery. Such flashbacks help the play’s plot by explaining Willy’s family dynamics.

Willy’s life is chaotic when the play starts. William returns from a failed sales trip in the first scene, a frequent theme. Linda tells her sons that Willy is secretly borrowing money from Charley and working on commission like a novice to make

ends meet. Linda uncovers Willy's suicide attempt. His kids did not succeed. A drifter and part-time ranch worker, Biff, just served time in the county jail for stealing a suit, while Happy, a low-level office kid like his father, inflates his business position. Willy should recognize his successes, but he only sees failures and blunders.

NYC-based Biff backs his parents. Biff asks Bill Oliver for a business loan, saying Willy can help and was productive. Biff remembers his friendship with Oliver in Oliver's office after a full day waiting that ended by an appointment denial. After remembering taking Oliver's case of basketballs, he panics and grabs his fountain pen before leaving work. To have a meaningful future, Biff must inform his father his life was a lie. Biff keeps his dining triumph a secret from his father. Biff and Happy depart Willy at the restaurant, furious at his persistence about Biff being a liar and to be embarrassed by his nonsensical statements.

After losing his job and being disappointed by his oldest child in one day, Willy returns home depressed. Biff confronts Willy and tells him to stop lying. Biff tries to convince Willy that he's a criminal and that Willy made him arrogant. Biff says to leave the family and seek his own way to happiness. Willy cannot accept his son's or life's truth.

Willy pledges to his family's financial future after miscommunication with his deceased brother Ben. He imagines a salesman funeral with buyers and salesmen journeying far. His extravagant burial would show his son Biff, that Willy Loman was not "a dime a dozen" and a leader. *Death of a Salesman's* family focus makes it ideal for gender role study. The characters' gender norms and behaviours were

explored using the four gender trait categories of Behaviour Characteristics, Communication Patterns, Sources of Power, and Physical Appearance.

Willy, the family patriarch, is not strong and independent. Act I begins with Willy returning home having failed his business trip again. Because he cannot work, Willy is not valued by society in a world that values men by their jobs and income. When telling Linda, “*I’m tired to the death. I couldn’t make it. I just couldn’t make it, Linda*” (p. 338). In this flashback, Willy had the feeling of insecurity concerning his status, though he continuously showed himself as the best seller. For instance, he tells Linda,

*“I was sellin’ thousands and thousands, but I had to come home [...] I did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston [...] Well, I—did—about a hundred and eighty gross in Providence, Well, no—it came to—roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip [...]”* (p. 345).

Subsequently, he acknowledges the following statement:

*“I get the feeling that I’ll never sell anything again, that I won’t make a living for you [...]”* (p. 346).

Willy’s overarching viewpoint, which guides his actions and aspirations, encompasses both his approach to life and his pursuit of success. In order to fulfil his role as the primary breadwinner for his family, Willy has the belief that a man must possess certain qualities and attributes that contribute to his success “*well liked*” (p. 344) and have “*important contacts*” inside the commercial public (p. 350).

These contacts are a direct result of being popular. Lastly, an individual:

*“never leaves a job till [it is] finished”* (p. 343).



A man of success could “dress to advantage” and act like that of “*few words*” in a commercial site. (p. 346).

In the play, Willy delivers a sermon to his offspring:

*“The man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want”* (p. 345).

Linda possesses exclusive knowledge of the authentic Willy, who consistently falls short of the idealized persona he presents, yet she unwaveringly supports him anyhow. Biff and Happy, whether positively or negatively, hold Willy in high regard, perceiving him as an ideal figure and attributing exceptional sales achievements to him within the New England region.

## **12. Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie***

Tennessee Williams’ first commercial drama was *The Glass Menagerie* in 1945. Williams was a playwright from the southern part and consequently his characters reflected the Southern belles. Falk (1961) said Williams’ plays were often “studies in the frustrations of women of a culture and refinement associated with the Victorian era that disintegrated during the decade of World War I” (p. 71). *The Glass Menagerie* is mostly an autobiographical play about Williams’ family members and their existence in St. Louis while their father was a travelling shoemaker. *The Glass Menagerie* is among of Williams’s called “memory plays” since most of the actions come in a form of a memory. In the play, Amanda Wingfield, the female character, is immersed in Southern customs, and the actions mainly emphasize the way she deals with mid-1940s living. Life and the future are

gloomy for Amanda as well as hers, Tom and Laura, unless big adjustments are done.

*The Glass Menagerie* is narrated by Tom Wingfield, as he reflects on his life and how he joined the Merchant Marines. Tom introduces the action as the play's narrator, stepping into and out of the past. The play's primary action takes place in 1945 at the Wingfield flat, while Tom, the narrator, is in the present, a few years later. Amanda runs the Wingfield home after her husband left – a “telephone man who fell in love with long distances” (p. 339). Amanda, being captivated by her husband's charisma and smile before their marriage, led a Southern belle lifestyle. This way of life served as a refuge and a source of comfort for her, and it is vividly depicted in her children's narratives concerning her feminine allure and her life as a Southern belle “seventeen gentlemen caller” (p. 339).

Amanda considers these men giants since they prospered and supported their families. Tom is the household breadwinner and works in a shoe warehouse. He hates being so and wants to write. Therefore, he goes to the cinema and bars every night to escape his monotonous life. Laura enjoys spending all day with her glass menagerie, her collection of ornaments. Laura, who has a leg brace and limp, is terribly shy and has trouble making friends. She quit high school and business school after an embarrassing attack. Amanda's determined pursuit of marrying Laura to a good guy to secure Laura's and her own future dominates the story. Tom finally brings home a gentlemen caller for Laura after Amanda begs him. Ironically, Tom brings home Jim O'Connor, Laura's high school crush. Jim talks to Laura and kisses her. Jim tells Laura he is engaged to another lady and cannot visit her or continue their relationship. The disclosure makes Laura withdraw, destroying

Amanda's expectations for her marriage. Tom leaves home after the tragic evening, but his sister's death haunts him forever.

*The Glass Menagerie* has seven scenes, with all characters save Jim O'Connor appearing in the last. Behaviour Characteristics, Communication Patterns, Sources of Power, and Physical Appearance were used to gather information about gender roles and character behaviour. Amanda holds onto her Southern heritage to prepare Laura for the future. Amanda believes Laura can marry or work till she does. She wants Laura to avoid elderly maidhood. After learning Laura dropped out of business school, Amada warns her:

*“What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South—barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife!—stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room—encouraged by one in-law to visit another—little birdlike women without any nest—eating the crust of humility all their life!”* (p. 341).

Amanda believes autonomy occurs as a woman does not have a husband or she is jobless until one arrives. Owning a home gives her independence. Laura denies whatever of her mother's actions. She focuses on finding Laura a husband to guarantee her own and Laura's future. Tom noted,

*“Mother was a woman of actions as well as words. She began to take logical steps in the planned direction [...]”* (p. 342).

Amanda's strategy to find a husband involves persuading Tom to find potential suitors and prepare the home to exhibit Laura's local and skilled nature. To start the scheme, Amanda bargains with Tom to relieve him from breadwinning duties if he finds Laura a spouse:

*“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”* (p. 346).

She also promised Tom that he wouldn't owe her anything because she expects Laura's dream husband to care for her. After Tom tells Amanda a gentlemen caller would visit the Wingfield home, Amanda polishes the silver, prepares the dinner menu, and decorates the home to create the illusion of domestic perfection. When Jim arrives, she casually remarks how Laura prepared to show Jim she could be a good wife and career. Southern tradition required each parent to evaluate a daughter's potential suitor. Amanda fulfils both roles without a father. From the assumption that:

*“old maids are better off than the wives of drunkards”* (p. 348).

Amanda grills Tom about Jim's drinking habits. Amanda explains when Tom opposes to this questioning:

*“When I was a girl in Blue Mountain and it was suspected that a young man drank, the girl [...] would sometimes speak to the minister of his church, or rather her father would, if her father was living, and sort of feel him out on the young man's character. That is the way such things are discretely handled to keep a young woman from making a tragic mistake.”* (p. 348)

Without a father, Amanda must play a male role to protect Laura. Although the father should investigate character, Amanda, the mother, is pleased to learn Jim works at the warehouse higher than Tom, makes more money, and goes night school to improve himself. Happy to learn this, she exclaims,

*“Those are the sort of things that a mother should know concerning any young man who comes to call on her daughter”* (p. 348).

In summary, Jim embodies the quintessential attributes that are deemed essential for a man to be regarded as a commendable spouse and provider.

### 13. Conclusion

This article adds to the literature on gender and class oppression resistance. It used Butler's idea of agency to determine if the protagonists can overcome oppression. Their right to criticize oppressive powers is also analyzed to determine their resistance to patriarchal agencies. Our study added to the literature by exploring the diverse oppression of these two plays in terms of resistance and how the characters' techniques vary. It observed that not all characters conquer oppression. Overall, females in both plays agonized more as compared with the males. Moreover, most of them could not recognize their needs or were emotionally hurt, due to their unstable status, which in turn added to the inability to change their surroundings. Most research believed masculine and female attributes are opposites, from play assessments to broader notions. In the current article, both plays showed gender concretely and variedly. In Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, women were barred from active roles because they lacked awareness and consideration beyond the domestic; in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, gender behaviour was shown by actions or conversed in dialogue and followed male and female norms. Characters could not satisfy themselves as culture shaped their behaviour. Both *Death of a Salesman* and *Glass Menagerie* show some gender behaviour that was observed, but most was discussed. Parents' desire to pass on gender was emphasized. Legacy gender behaviour showed how society adjusted to gender roles. This theory also suggested that society might modify people's roles and behaviours given proof. Both plays-maintained gender roles. No plays in this article had unpaid female characters. Although society encourages equality, no play did. With the symbolic interaction theory that people can modify their roles with external help, these performances did not influence male and female behaviour. Both plays

depicted family and gender stereotypes. These plays depicted domestic women who never left home. Since Death of a Salesman's family is destroyed, it was a veneer of a proper family.

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