
The Role And Theme Of Past In The Glass Menagerie And Never Let Me Go

Both Ishiguro and Williams explore many aspects of the past, including how it defines and contours their characters' identities. Characters like Amanda and Kathy dwell on their past to bring them comfort and an escape from the depressing reality of their situation. 'Never Let Me Go,' Ishiguro portrays the past to be a memory that Kathy desires to cling on to cope with her problems. Both of the authors to a certain extent show that 'the past is not dead' and that it is what the characters deeply need as humans to hold on, many of these characters like Amanda repeatedly talks about her past which makes us as the readers believe that she lives in both the past and the present. However, in some views it can be argued that 'the past is dead' and that most of the characters forget and move on from their past. For example, Tom who goes to the movies to live in a world of dreams and fantasies and not experiencing his past and even worse the problems he's facing in the present. Ishiguro's interest in "blending psychological realism with science fiction" is reflected in the plot of ' Never Let Me Go' when Miss Lucy told her class about their purpose "you'll start to donate your vital organs". . . And it also links with the historical events that took part which Ishiguro was most interested about. For example; Dolly the sheep and cloning and also post-war in Japan.

Escapism is one of the aspects explored by both authors to define the characters' pasts and how well they cope with it . Characters like Amanda and Kathy constantly mention their past to prevent themselves from experiencing reality. Amanda being 'an inadequate, self-centered mother that looked in her own lost youth' shows her attachment to her past that stops her from seeing the reason why Laura can't get any "gentleman callers". It is almost like Amanda is contouring Laura into something she's not and her constant nagging about table manners shows the type of status she wants her children to experience. Perhaps it could be her replaying her past with the use of Laura, also Ishiguro's use of first person narrative in his novel allowed the readers and Kathy to build a connection which allows her past to become personal and more realistic, and her repeatedly talking about her past was a way for her to cling on to her memories with her loved ones . This automatically created huge empathy for the clones as their purpose in life was to complete their donation. As mentioned Kathy's past to the reader comes across reliable because of her honesty "I don't remember exactly" highlights the fragile nature of memory and her fragmented memory of her past isolates her from the depressing reality she faced with her friend's death to experiencing the pain the donors went through. The use of the pronoun "I" demonstrates Kathy's full acceptance of her vivid memory and how invalid it may be to the story. Ishiguro hints to the readers that the past is inescapable for Kathy because that is the only way she is able to live life by living in her past. This automatically shows that the past 'is not even the past' for characters like Kathy and Amanda but a way of them living.

Williams uses Tom to explore the guilt associated with the past, and how it affects individuals. This can be seen through Tom explaining to the audience that the play is a 'memory play'. His illusions enter him into a world of fantasy and dreams, and that is why he is always going to the movies. "Whenever I pick up a shoe, I shudder a little thinking how short life is and what I am doing" implies how desperate he felt at the time before he left all his problems behind. The noun 'shoes' indicates freedom and the fact that Tom 'shudders' every time he picks up his shoes shows the hesitation and the fear he felt to leave everything behind. But the reason for

his “shudder” could be that he is tired of the never ending cycle of him working at the factory and that is why he leaves all his problems behind which leads to his excessive feeling of guilt. His “inability to escape a psychological loss of space no matter how much physical distance is attained” portray the after effect his past has on him. At the beginning of the play he mentions that the play is a ‘memory play’ meaning that his past “memory becomes his eternal prison as he struggles to reconcile his past and present” And so he goes out to the movies to live in a world full of fantasy. The only time he thinks about the past was when he left his sister and the guilt he is feeling is what’s causing him to think about his past. Family tension and economical frustration was the cause of many Dreams from not being accomplished. The American Dream for many families was unreachable because of economic frustration. However, Amanda was a believer in Dreams because of her past social status. She used Laura to replay her past and that meant that her dreams for her would be achieved without her physically working for it. ‘Tom survives only on dreams of the future’ indicates the type of dreams and life he wishes to live in and by going to the movies his dreams become an illusion for his future. The critic highlights this because the movies enables him to do this. It’s ironic that Tom shudders when he looked at his shoe, this would perhaps be the memory of the author Williams remembering the type of lifestyle he once lived in as he worked at a shoe factory.

The contrast of Amanda’s past and her future differs as she goes from being very wealthy to being financially unstable and the constant reminder of her past brings her security because she is able to remind those who are born disadvantaged the life she lived. “The present becomes the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret if you don't plan for it!” Implies that the past is not dead but more or so visible in the present and this was shown through Amanda who never fails to talk about her past. The past being an ‘everlasting regret’ indicates the regret and the obsession she has over her youthful past. It could perhaps be that she wanted to encourage her daughter to change her future so she is not dwelling on her past as much as Amanda. During the publication of the novel many families struggled to escape poverty and financial problems and mostly relied on their husbands for comfort. Amanda raising her children in a house without a father has allowed her past to punish her and bring her a sense of regret because of the huge contrast between her stable youthful past to a life where she is financially struggling. This was shown clearly with the repetition of “gentlemen callers” conveying the huge contrast between her past and how her past is an illusion more or so like Laura’s glass menagerie. During the dinner with Jimmy, Amanda wears a dress that was meant for women that were looking for a gentleman caller, and her wearing the dress supports the view that she still wishes to be young and free. This shows how captivated and obsessed she is with her past that it got to the point where she started to act out her past. ‘Debutante Ball was a formal dance where women wore elegant gowns’ and men wore tuxedos to try and get married. Amanda refers to them as ‘gentlemen callers’ because it allowed her to showcase her economic status. She represents dependent women at the time as she is more concerned on Tom because she wants him to economically support her and so makes her socially acceptable to marriage being a goal.

Guilt is excessively shown throughout ‘The Glass menagerie’. Tom’s constant reminder of his sister being vulnerable shows how guilty and regretful he is of his past because he left them to fulfill his dreams he is the “only young man I know of who ignores the fact that the future becomes present, the present past, and the past turns into everlasting regret” the use of the noun ‘young’ highlights the fulfillments of the The American Dream because the young wanted to escape entrapment and become free from poverty. Guilt for Tom is what his past represents this is because he was able to escape and his sister and mother weren't able to. On the other hand, Tommy in ‘Never Let Me Go’ thinks about the past because there was nothing for him to

dream about that he wanted in the future. 'Do you remember...' supports this because his life was already planned and there was no escape for him. It could also be argued that Tommy didn't want to think about his past and only does it to leave a mark for Kathy and to be the first one to find her cassette. Overall, it could be argued that Tommy wants to achieve the future that he set himself, being that he finds Kathy's cassette before she does. Ishiguro in his novels made sure that his personal life did not interfere with his work. And the purpose of the novel could have been to display the emotions and problems society faced for example; the post-war in Japan and Dolly the sheep. Ishiguro himself struggled to fit into a new environment as he migrated to England from Japan to live a stable life and this is seen through the clones when they're isolated from society.

The past for characters like Kathy and Laura use it to play a happy part of their lives. They were repeatedly trying to live in a world full of perfection as their past allowed them to be mentally close to either their friends and loved ones, and clinging on to their past makes them very vulnerable because they are unable to live in the present. For Kathy her past is the only way to live as mentioned before her life was already planned and so the only way she would live freely is in her past. Ishiguro goes on to note that "childhood memories have a special quality" which portrays the importance of the past for Kathy as she was unable to make her own future. However, for Laura her past prevents her from moving on, it's as though she doesn't want to forget some of her past like the name Jimmy gave for her illness "Blue Roses", the mispronunciation of 'pleurosis' which connotes to the idea that Jimmy was able to make her illness into something beautiful and positive. The colour 'Blue' symbolises trust, peace and loyalty and with the use of "Blue Roses" reveals her acceptance to society rather than looked down upon because of her illness. It could also be argued that with memory of Jimmy and Kathy's past is what makes them as individuals different because they learn to accept their flaws and their already planned future.

In conclusion, both authors represent the past to be something unforgettable and a burden to some characters like Tom because he is unable to move on even after he has escaped. He is a character that is haunted by his past after he had left all his problems, this could portray the confession he might be making to audiences or Williams could be showing the struggles he and his family faced during The Great Depression. Overall, the past has helped many characters to feel included but some feel trapped and find it hard to escape and find their own happiness from their past.