

# **Role of Life script on Lora's Passivity in Glassy Menagerie Play**

By

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## **Abstract**

*Psychology is one of sciences most of its theories are used in investigation of literary works. Transactional analysis theory is one of new psychological theories which deal with investigation of characters and relationship among them. To this end, this work aims at investigating Lora's character in Glassy Menagerie Play written by Tennessee Williams using this theory with focus on life script. This work analyzes Lora's character using verbal and non-verbal signs and studies its effect on the play plot. Analysis of the play based on this theory showed that the theory is able to reflect characteristics of Lora's character well which is a useful tool for better understanding of the play plot. Finally it can be said this theory, given the points it examines, structures the play plot and can be applied as an explanation for what occurs in the drama world.*

**Keywords:** *Transactional analysis theory, character, life script*

## **1. Introduction**

Among theories which are applied in investigation of the play as a literary form, psychology theories are one of the most important ones since psychological theories in one hand, are very specialized in examining the character, and on the other hand, they are suitable tool for measuring the character. Given aspects of human which they deal with psychological theories each of represents a new manifestation of the work. One of psychological theories which this work attempts to show its effectiveness in studying characters of the play is Transactional analysis theory (TA). It was developed by Eric Berne and deals with what happens in the moment and among the characters dynamically. It examines the character at 4 levels, and current work attempts to clarify its effect and contribution in shaping the story plot in the form of Lora's character using life script concept

## **2. Method and Material**

Current work is of descriptive – analytical type and using signs which are identifiable as verbal and non-verbal actions as clear symbols of character in the play, it studies life script of Lora's character and its effect on the play plot.

## **3. Findings**

Transactional analysis theory by Eric Berne is the theoretical foundation of the current research which is a psychological theory and it has not been used in investigating literary works including play so far. However, since it deals with the character and human relationships, it is regarded as a suitable structure for studying characters which are imitation of the real world characters, according to Aristotle.

The **first analysis level** is investigation of structural analysis or analysis of the individual's character. This level of the character is measured considering behavior of the individuals whether in loneliness or in relation with others, and generally three specific actions can be observed in it; actions which are observable in all individual's states including behaviors, face mimics, voice and speech content to other behavioral aspects with external manifestation. Transactional analysis theory studies such behaviors in

the form of three structures in the individual's character. Berne calls them as Exteropsychic, Neopsychic, Archeo psychic which are commonly known as the parent, adult, and child (Berne, 1966:23). Characteristics of this theory is that individuals can experiences different states of ego according to the situation (Goe and Howang, 2012), which can be a good justification for behavioral changes of the characters in one situation and versus different individuals. States of ego are described in the following.

**Parent Character:** Parent is emotions, thought and behaviors which are recorded in the individual's character from external sources and their alternatives. The parent includes beliefs, judgments, values and musts. Two parts can be identified in the parent character of the individuals: Nurturing parent and controlling parent.

**Adult Character:** It is part of the character which collects or presents information, evaluates received information, measures probabilities and has reasoning power (Bahrami Moayad, 2005: 236). States of adult ego is related to details and here and now, and unlike three parts of ego, institution and ultra-ego is real and observable in psychoanalysis (Berne, 2011: 3).

**Child Character:** The child is part of the character which records information in an emotional manner and acts in dealing with events emotionally. Two child states can be recognized in child ego state: 1. Natural Child, 2. Adapted Child.

The **second analysis level** is investigation of transactional analysis or analysis of the individual's relationship with the other in the form of interpersonal relationships. The first principle which should be considered in interpersonal relationships is that relationship continues as long as interactions are of complementary type (Berne, 1966: 23). In fact transaction should be regarded as a social action unit and in its analysis it should be considered that what manifestation source of message and response in character states and what is situation of both individuals versus each other (Bahrami Moayad, 2005: 69). In interpersonal relationships, there are numerous cases of such relationships. However there are 6 types of them which are more important and practical.

1. **Complementary Transaction:** A coupled relationship where the response is sent from the same character state intended by the message giver (Dadgostar, 2004: 131).
2. **Crassel Transaction:** Relationship between two people where response is not sent from that part of character states intended by the message giver (Bahrami Moayad, 2005: 233).
3. **Angled Transaction:** In this relationship, one of character states sends a message from parents to the other one's child and the second individual sends message to the adult instead of responding from child to the parent.
4. **Indirect Transaction:** in such relationships, the message is transferred to the second individual's child from the first individual's parent, but the intention of the message sender is child of a third person which may not receive the message (Dadgostar, 2004: 140).
5. **Ulterior Transaction:** "It is a kind of transaction between two individuals where two types of message are sent at social and psychological levels, but the main message is ulterior and it is at psychological level" (Bahrami Moayad, 2005: 233).
6. **Healthy Transaction:** Healthy transaction is a relationship where the message and response are delivered in parallel and directly. Such relationships are dynamic and positive and are presented in one level.

The third analysis level is psychological games analysis or implicit transactional analysis. Games can be regarded as a chain of complementary interactions with hidden purpose which goes on to achieve a predicted result in a totally planned manner (Berne, 1996: 23). In fact, games initiate with an implicit transaction which is sending two types of social and psychological messages. Games are usually

repetitive and are done without awareness of the adult and finally create an unpleasant feeling in the person. Games can be named according to the situation where they occur and they can be classified into 7 categories.

The **last part** in investigation of characters is life script. Life script can be regarded as analysis of specific story of the personal life, where He is the main actor. Bern argues that life script is shaped dynamically in the child development period under influence of the parents and it influences individual's behavior in the major aspects of his life (Areskin, 2010: 29). In fact life script is decision making in adulthood based on adolescence; this decision making is done considering all information available in the time and includes situation, expectations and of course logical solutions which individual can provide for the existing situation (Kernel, 2008). Most psychologists such as Eric Bern, Fritz Perls, Sidney Gerald and others describe human as dramatic actors which perform their role in the scene or in other words, in the life. Bern believes that life script structure follows Aristotle's tragic laws: "...where there is beginning, middle, peak and end points..." This tragedy is pitiable and disappointing whether really or symbolically, and it originates from real life (Areskin, 2010: 30).

Life script is unconscious plot of the life which some people may be aware of it (Cornell, 2008). But it is repeated as long as its patents are not discovered consciously (Solomon, 2003). And sometimes it happens that some points are added to it in adolescence and even it may be revised in adulthood. Generally plays are shaped for two reasons: first these decisions reflect the best child method for surviving in his stormy environment world and second these decisions of play are made usually based on emotions and reality measurement of the child (Dadgostar, 2004: 203).

All human beings have life scripts, uniqueness of which is one of their features. However, all scripts have a common feature and it is win and loss in the play. Plays can be classified into three categories in terms of win and loss. **Win plays**; according to Berne, winner is someone who reaches to his goals in peace and satisfaction. **Loss plays**; are plays in which the individual doesn't reach to his goals or if he reaches, it is not in peace and satisfaction. Such plays are usually accompanied by pain. **Non-win plays**: there is no evident win and loss in non-win plays, individual experiences a monotonous and event-free life, thus he feels neither pain of loss nor joy of win.

Table 1. title and meaning of injunctions					
	Title of Injunction	Meaning of Injunction		Title of Injunction	Meaning of Injunction
1	Don't be happy	You were an unwanted	7	Don't be close	Do not trust anybody
2	Don't be you	You had to be a boy/girl	8	Don't belong	You are different from all people
3	Don't be a child	Be older than your age	9	Don't be well	Be patient to attract attentions
4	Don't be grow up	Always be like children	10	Don't think	Parents (others) know all answers
5	Don't succeed	He never does an action properly	11	Don't feel	Do not reveal your emotions
6	Don't be important	You are not ever salient	12	Don't do	There is risk in anything you do

How life script is shaped and based on which bases? One of effective factors in life scripts is the psychological situation where the individual is, or in other words, the look of individual to himself, others and the world where he lives in. such situations are observed as 4 forms: "I'm good, you are bad", "I'm bad, you are good", "I'm bad, you are bad", and "I'm good, you are good". Drivers and Injunctions lil kfha are other factors which are effective in shaping life scripts. Drivers may be regarded as "ethical valuations which are transferred from parents to the child and have positive social load and are publicly accepted,

however they are pressor psychologically and due to the way of transfer and the expectation they create" (Bahrami Moayad, 2005: 244). Injunctions *lil kfa* are regarded as limiting and threatening messages which are transferred to children by the parents in Preverbal level and prevent from experiencing some emotions or events by the child (ibid: 235). Such injunctions have negative load and are often stated by such terms as *don't be* and *don't do*. These injunctions can be classified in 12 categories (Table 1).

Considering what mentioned, current research aims at investigating character of Lora using life script concept introduced in transactional analysis theory and analyzing Lora's life script on her passivity. In fact aim of this work is investigating the effect of Lora's character on proceed of play plot and describing its causal relationships. These are factors which are certainly important in better understanding of the work.

#### **4. Research Findings**

*Glassy Menagerie* play is the first play by Tennessee Williams which brought fame for the author. This play depicts story of a family which expects for a redemptive actor so that he changes their life. Characters of this play are 4 people. Amanda is the family mother, Lora and Tom are her children and Jim O'Conner is the last character which adds to their collection as Lora's suitor. Amanda should be regarded as director of this play, Tom is the narrator and Lora is the most passive character of this play, although her future is the key theme of the play.

In investigating characters of this play, firstly ego states of these characters should be considered. Amanda is the key character of the play and is a person who has the most influence as Lora's mother on her. In terms of transactional analysis, Amanda should be regarded as a character with parent ego state. His parental role in the family from one hand and her continuous guides for Lora and Tom on the other hand, stabilizes her role as parent. However, her stringency toward Tom makes her a controlling parent, while she acts as a nurturing parent toward Lora. Her nurturing behavior toward Lora is clear in her care for Lora and attempt for finding a support for providing Lora's future.

Lora is the most important character in this play which should be dealt with, because she is axis of the play actions and the aim if this research is investigating effect of her character on the play plot. In investigating character of Lora, she can be regarded as child's ego state. Lora is the only character all through the play who doesn't offer her opinion, has no demand and only follows Amanda's orders, even when Amanda's demands is bothering for her. For example, when she takes part in the typewriting class reluctantly and prefer hours of wandering in the streets over stating her demand directly so that she is attended by the parent Amanda. Because her inside child has learned that she should be what Amanda wants if she wants to be accepted, since otherwise would be angered by Amanda like Tom, and it is what Lora is not capable of accepting because of her incomplete life script.

Perhaps one of the main reasons for Lora's incomplete life script is her physical handicap. A defect which has caused other behaves her by pity and prejudice and they make to Lora's life script. And perhaps it is not wrong to consider Amanda as the most effective person in this process.

In interpersonal analysis, relationship between Lora and Amanda can be Complementary transaction and of parent – child type. In this relationship, Amanda constantly addresses Lora's child from her parent and as it is expected, Lora responds her by her child. This relationship is so common among them which can say it is leaving transaction and approximates to Symbiosis. Symbiosis occurs when part of the individual's character which has been eliminated is complemented by the other individual in the transaction (Bahrami Moayad, 2005: 253).

Actually it should be said that Lora's child ego state almost totally dominates over her character and derives back the parent ego state. This situation occurs when the child is nurtured under domination of a

stern parent and she learns for releasing from a parent with threatening presence, eliminates it from her character structure. By this method, child tries to preserve her ego by rejecting her inside parent. It is in this situation that Lora develops a symbiosis with Amanda for complementing her character structure which lacks parent.

This communication way between Lora and Amanda has caused they spend considerable part of their time on psychological game. Psychological game of Lora is a poor game which is complemented by Amanda's game. Amanda's game is "I'm just helping you". In analysis of these two types of games they can be regarded as similar in one aspect, that is, there are two main roles in both of them. One who helps and one who needs help. The major problem of Amanda in this play is provision of Lora's future, the problem that even Amanda doesn't believe to overcome. Thus for alleviating her blame feeling about Lora's handicap and her anti-social behavior which has led to her inability for provision of her future, Amanda attempts to blame Lora for creating such situation. Amanda enslaves Lora actually by her behavior, but she always thinks she is helping Lora to have a better life and provide her future, however, Lora doesn't succeed. She acts according to Amanda's want with this hidden purpose: actually not doing anything or doing it in the worst way. Thus Lora achieves her two implicit goals; one is being support all the time by Amanda by showing her inability, and the other is presenting her anger toward Amanda passively by considering her unable in changing her situation. It is an anger originating from Lora's inside child which is severely controlled by the parent. In fact it is only in this way they both achieve their implicit goals. That is, Amanda has a child which is vandal and needs care and she is not able to be released from this situation because never acts according to Amanda's order properly. Lora's subversion in typewriting class and church youth community are examples of it. Lora also benefits from this relationship in her own way and it is the support which he receives.

What was stated up to now is a situation where Lora's psychological life is. This works aims as addressing factors which caused Lora to become such a girl with these characteristics. Importance of knowing Lora's life script is that it can clarify why she acts in this way and why she repeats it despite of damage by her passivity in her life.

Lora was born with a congenital handicap in her foot and this handicap causes she has inferiority feeling. Lora's situation is in "I'm not good, you are good". People who are in this situation are ready to receive negative messages about themselves. They regard their successes as small and valueless. As it is seen in the play, Lora says to Amanda that she lacks popularity of Amanda; they exaggerate their errors and consider anything as reason for their inability and handicap. In Lora's life, such defects as inability in her leg or vomiting in typewriting class become so important that causes she abandons her class, because such events for her mean more inability and increased inferiority versus others; others like her mother who are better than her. Thus Lora avoids competition and has passive position toward events. In such situation, people feel that others are more able than her and have fewer problems (Rezaeeian, 2007: 60-61).

But other than living situation, there is another effective factor in shaping Lora's life script which is injunctions. There are many injunctions in Lora's life script which make her a passive character. Don't Do is of them. When parents prevent from activity of the children because they feel children may be harmed, they promote such feeling in children that the world is an unsafe place and for being safe, nothing should be done. These people face with Don't Do injunction in their adulthood and are afraid of doing any action. Perhaps roots of this injunction can be found in Lora's handicap. This handicap may be the reason that Lora was banned from doing many works in childhood and this behavior with Don't do injunction is present in Lora's life script. It is an injunction which is strengthened by Amanda despite of its power and consequences in Lora's life, and Lora surrenders it too.

Lora: "mom, let me clean the table!"

Amanda: "No dear, do honey, you to the front room and learn your typewriting table, or practice stenography! Stay fresh and nice!"

Insistence of Amanda for making Lora passive and conditioning Lora's beauty to it, has this message for Lora that nothing should be done but being well; fear of an event which may have bothering consequences like Lora's handicap. This behavior of Amanda makes Lora like glassy dolls, although passivity is one of the basic elements of Lora's life script. However, it is not the only effective injunction in Lora's life script. The other important injunction is Don't Be Well. People with this injunction have learned to pretend to be patient for attracting other's attention. This strategy is learned to the child from childhood by the parents. Presence of this injunction is related to Lora's handicap. She dissembles disease for escaping situations. Vomiting in typewriting class is for escaping from a simple practice, directly stating disease is for escaping from meet with Jim which finally leads to not attending on dinner table. All these unconscious attempts by Lora are for reaching to a desire that she is not able to state it consciously.

The third injunction which controls Lora's life script is Don't Think injunction. If in childhood when the child offers a solution and her solution is mocked by the parents of their alternatives, the child learns not valuating her thoughts and suggestions and suffices solutions offered by others for proceeding the works. This injunction says to Lora that there is no need that she bothers herself for finding answers, because there is an Amanda who thinks instead of her and finds solution. This injunction is clear in Amanda's attempt for provision of Lora's future; anxiety which is not felt at all by Lora.

Two other injunctions which are effective in shaping Lora's life script with lower importance are Don't succeed and Don't be important is shaped in people who have been humiliated and rejected verbally and non-verbally by their parents or their alternatives. These people always prefer to remain in the margin and are doubtful in expressing their demands. As Lora tries to be in Amanda's margin so that she attracts Amanda's attention and kindness.

Don't succeed injunction puts Lora in stagnation state and persuades her to be satisfied with what she is. People who have this injunction in their life script are those who in their childhood have learned do not be more successful than their parents so that they are accepted by the parents. In fact Lora has no choice other than failure before Amanda for being accepted by Amanda and escaping blames for Tom. Because Lora's success is violation of parental power of Amanda and causes that Lora attracts attentions and it is something that certainly would not be accepted by Amanda as a parent for Lora's submissive child. Thus Lora's unconsciously selects these injunctions so that she always remains in the margin. Although this being in margin may bring satisfaction for her, it doesn't make Lora's life script as a win play. Because her life script is a non-win play which has neither excitement of win nor pain of loss, it is a monotonous play like the life which Lora has made for herself beside her glassy Menagerie.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

Considering what was mentioned and it was observed in examination of Lora's character, injunctions as defects in Lora's life script influence her character and make her an unlovely person. They are defects which Amanda influences on their formation as a parent whether in childhood and after that. According to Berne "all people are born as prince and princess as long as their parents make them as frog" (Steiner, 1990: 2). And now Lora appears with such characteristics so that she is presented as a character in the play; such presence which is undoubtedly influential in the process of shaping play plot. In fact using this theory, which acts objectively by application of verbal and non-verbal signs in analysis of characters, it is possible to recognize cause of the behavior and motivation of the characters. It not only justifies plot and the way of events occurrence, but also it allows audience to have a repetitive perception which is one of the science principles. In effect, this theory in investigation of literary works is able to accomplish two basic functions of the theory: introducing new questions about the work and the application it can have in literary works criticism. It is a point that application of this theory in analysis of the play would be manifested.

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