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Silent Women in Theater

Abstract

Women in theater are underrepresented and often overlooked in analysis of literature. Provided are two twentieth century plays, *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, which provide examples of ways in which female characters are overlooked. There has been criticism of the characters Linda and Stella, which argue that the characters are unnecessary, underdeveloped, or weak. However, these characters impact the story greatly, they simply are not analyzed. In contrast, earlier works, such as “Trifles” by Susan Glaspell and Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* have been deemed feminist works, which are heavily researched as they show directly how women are overlooked and abused. It is ironic that if the story is not about women being overlooked, the female characters are overlooked by the audience. Despite their silence in the plays, Linda and Stella carry as important roles as Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew* and the wives in “Trifles.” Stella must deal with a complex life, often having to decide between pleasing her sister or pleasing her spouse and suffers abuse from both parties, despite the decisions she makes. Linda has had to watch her husband deteriorate physically, mentally, and emotionally, as he treats her like she knows nothing and her children do the same, when in actuality, Linda knows the details of her husband’s life, but chooses not to act. Her lack of action is the reason *Death of a Salesman* can be told at all, for she encourages her husband’s nonsensical actions and abusive behaviors. Through Lacan’s theory of the ego, I will analyze Katherine, the women in “Trifles”, Stella, and Linda to

examine their roles and impact on the plot of the play. Women cannot be overlooked and minor characters play major roles in stories of abuse, which needs to be understood and examined.