

A STUDY OF TIME IN SELECTED DRAMATIC
WORKS OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

A Thesis

Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Bobby Milton Brown

May 1971

584187

PREFACE

The plays of Tennessee Williams are essentially studies in the erosive effects of time on human beings. His drama is concerned with the ways in which individuals react to the past and adapt to the impact of the receding years. This is a theme which I have found in varying degrees in almost all of his works.

The idea for this thesis developed from a paper which I wrote in a seminar on Tennessee Williams which was conducted by Dr. Lee Pryor. Only after carefully reading and studying all of Williams' work in that seminar did I realize the extent to which Williams is preoccupied with temporality. Although this theme is not an undiscovered one, it is an unexplored and undeveloped one. Critics who have followed the playwright's career have recognized his preoccupation with time but they have commented only in passing. Gerald Weales, for instance, notes that "From Menagerie on, time has been chasing Williams' characters" and that time is the "most menacing of the pursuers in the Williams plays."¹ Henry Popkin agrees, asserting that "time is the real villain."² Joseph Chiari

¹Gerald Weales, Tennessee Williams, Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 53 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), p. 28.

²Henry Popkin, "The Plays of Tennessee Williams," Tulane Drama Review, IV (March, 1960), 54.

affirms that "time, the destroyer, disintegrates and wipes away purity, innocence and beauty,"³ and Francis Donahue contends that in Williams' work "a major theme is the destructiveness of time."⁴ Yet none of these critics has enlarged upon this idea.

In my study of the time motif in Williams' work, I have dealt primarily with five plays: The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, Summer and Smoke, Sweet Bird of Youth, and The Night of the Iguana. I have referred frequently, however, to Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, and the collection of short plays, Dragon Country, and occasionally to Williams' poetry, short stories, and other plays. The reason I have not employed all of his works is that their number is prohibitively large to be dealt with adequately in an M.A. thesis and that some works manifest this preoccupation more than others, namely those just cited. I feel justified in using relevant quotations and information from his various other works because such references not only substantiate my argument, but they also demonstrate that this theme does indeed pervade the entirety of his work.

I wish to express my thanks to several persons for their guidance, thoughtfulness, and patience in relation to my writing this thesis. Dr. Anthony Collins of the Drama Department has been an excellent third

³Joseph Chiari, Landmarks of Contemporary Drama (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), p. 143.

⁴Francis Donahue, The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964), p. 227.

reader whose cooperation and assistance I greatly appreciate. To Dr. Don Harrell I especially owe thanks for his casual discussions, his immense knowledge of the Southern Renaissance, and his suggestions concerning prose style. Dr. Pryor, my director, helped me to overcome a seemingly insurmountable problem, that of developing an idea into a completed thesis. While I was writing the thesis, his suggestions concerning form, structure, and organization were always helpful. My special thanks go to him for conducting so ably the seminar in which this idea evolved, for it was in that seminar that I learned to appreciate the work of a playwright whom I previously had not fully understood or appreciated.

It is to my wife, Janie, that I dedicate this project, for without her sacrifices, encouragement, and patience I would never have completed it.

A STUDY OF TIME IN SELECTED DRAMATIC
WORKS OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Bobby Milton Brown

May 1971

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to point out Williams' temporal preoccupations and to demonstrate the effects of this obsession on his art. He views these temporal elements as forces which influence the action, pattern of characterization, and philosophy of his plays.

Like other writers of the Southern Renaissance, Williams is concerned with the importance of the past and of time and with the ways in which these elements affect human lives. He employs two types of past, the historical and the personal, both being powerful determinants of thought and action in the present. He emphasizes the past through his settings, thematic music, characterization, and through his use of myth, juxtaposition, and symbology in such plays as The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, and Summer and Smoke. But his attitude toward the past is ambivalent, and he makes no definite moral judgment of the representatives of the past in his plays.

Williams views the passing of time as an active, hostile and destructive force. "It haunts me, the passage of time," he writes. "I think time is a merciless thing. I think life is a process of burning oneself out and time is the fire that burns you."¹ Because of his own fear of time

¹Quoted in Francis Donahue, The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964), p. 227.

passing, of growing old, and of dying, Williams is intrigued by the interaction of time and human experience. He perceives time as an annihilative force which affects human relationships, destroys youth, beauty, and innocence, and disrupts life. In describing time, the playwright often relies upon personification, portraying time as a demon, as the embodiment of all evil force. To him this devil, time, is the diminishing factor of the universe and the cause of life's impermanence, and it is the brevity of life, he contends, that takes dignity away from man. Because time is the fourth dimension in which man is trapped, and because man realizes that his end in this dimension is inevitable, Williams' characters futilely attempt to escape from the passage of time and from death through liquor, narcotics, fantasy, physical flight, and sexual promiscuity.

Time, then, which Williams views existentially, acts as a malign Fate which causes almost all of his characters to decline either socially, financially, physically, morally, mentally, or in a combination of these ways. Examples of such fallen characters are Blanche DuBois, Amanda Wingfield, Alma Winemiller, Brick Pollitt, Big Daddy, Mrs. Goforth, Lawrence Shannon, Princess, Chance Wayne, and others. These characters conform to a set pattern of degradation because they are defeated by the effects of time. It is ironic that like his characters the playwright may be a victim of time, for many of Williams' critics believe that his creativity and playwriting abilities have declined steadily over the past two decades.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	. . . . .	i
PREFACE	. . . . .	iii
CHAPTER		Page
I. THE SOUTHERN RENAISSANCE PREOCCUPATION		
WITH TIME	. . . . .	1
II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE PAST	. . . . .	17
Means of Emphasizing the Past	. . . . .	24
Plays Emphasizing the Past	. . . . .	28
"The Last of the Solid Gold Watches"	. . . . .	28
<u>The Glass Menagerie</u>	. . . . .	30
<u>A Streetcar Named Desire</u>	. . . . .	42
<u>Summer and Smoke</u>	. . . . .	56
Williams' Attitude Toward the Past	. . . . .	63
III. THE ENEMY, TIME	. . . . .	69
Personification of Time	. . . . .	76
The Loss of Youth	. . . . .	78
The Brevity of Life	. . . . .	86
Time's Product, Death	. . . . .	88
Escapism	. . . . .	99

IV. THE ARTISTIC EFFECT OF WILLIAMS'

TEMPORAL PREOCCUPATION 112

BIBLIOGRAPHY 124

CHAPTER I

THE SOUTHERN RENAISSANCE

PREOCCUPATION WITH TIME

Time, which, as a part of setting, is an important dimension of any literary work of any era, probably never has assumed such a prominent role as it has in the Southern Renaissance. Of course, certain other periods throughout literary history have emphasized the element of time, the two most notable being the English Renaissance preoccupation with the mutability of time, and the early twentieth-century philosophical and literary concepts of time presented by French writers such as Henri Bergson, Marcel Proust, and Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as English novelists such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Aldous Huxley; but none of the writers of these periods has shown so consciously and totally the degree of preoccupation with what Ben Jonson called "that old bald cheater, Time" as have the writers of the Southern Renaissance.

There are several possible explanations as to why the writers of the New South emphasize the time motif in their literature. One explanation, offered by A. A. Mendilow, is that a preoccupation with time is simply a characteristic of twentieth-century thought. He proposes that modern man's time-obsession is a result of an increasing pace of living, a

deepening consciousness of the impermanence and brevity of life, a rapidly changing social and economic condition, and a growing fear of world destruction.¹ Twentieth-century man lives in a world dominated by the pressures of time, a world where there is a pervading sense that time is running out, not only for individual man but also for mankind. Mendilow asserts, therefore, that for many modern writers the only way in which they can find meaning in life and can solve the problem of their art is to solve the time-problem.²

In addition to the time-pressures characteristic of the twentieth-century in general, the South has felt a supplemental burden which has made its people excessively conscious of the erosive effects of time and of the pronounced influence of the past. The history of the South accounts for much of this provincial preoccupation with temporality. Frederick J. Hoffman points out that any people who has undergone a traumatic experience is sure to be intrigued and puzzled by history and the effects of time's passing. The South, he believes, is an extreme case of this type.³ Once the epitome of gentility and prosperity, the Old South was transformed by the Civil War into a region of destruction

¹A. A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (London: Peter Nevill, 1952), p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Frederick J. Hoffman, The Art of Southern Fiction (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), p. 96.

and poverty. Suddenly the Old South had become an anachronism. Its morality was outdated, its tradition was old-fashioned, its social order was extinct, and its economy was destroyed.

In order to endure the catastrophic effects of such a sudden transformation, the South took refuge in its past. "Perhaps," suggests Philip Rahv, "because it had so little else to give its people, the South nurtured in them a generous and often obsessive sense of the past."⁴ Almost immediately after its defeat the South began its retrospection, looking into the previous era for its romanticism. This backward glimpse into time became an early post war motif, a theme felt by an entire people and symbolically related by its writers. As early as 1866, in defending the ante-bellum South, John Esten Cooke wrote in his romantic novel Surry of Eagle's-Nest: "At all times—everywhere—the Past comes into the Present and possesses it."⁵ This past-as-legend motif has remained in Southern literature as a reminder of the region's former glory, grandeur, and gentility, all of which have been exaggerated appreciably.

It was not, however, until the First World War that the Southern literary world really blossomed. Allen Tate wrote that with that war

⁴Philip Rahv, ed., Literature in America: An Anthology of Literary Criticism (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 409.

⁵John Esten Cooke, Surry of Eagle's-Nest (New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1894), p. 9.

Southerners took a final look into the past; "that backward glance," he states, "gave us the Southern renaissance, a literature conscious of the past in the present."⁶ This Southern Renaissance to which Tate alludes was a spontaneous combustion, ignited by prolific creativity and fed by cultural heritage. It began in the early twenties at Vanderbilt University with John Crowe Ransom and a group of his followers, including Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Merrill Moore. But this Renaissance was much larger than a university movement, and it mushroomed with such writers as Katherine Anne Porter, Caroline Gordon, Randall Jarrell, Truman Capote, Carson McCullers, John Peale Bishop, Eudora Welty, Ellen Glasgow, Erskine Caldwell, Flannery O'Connor, Thomas Wolfe, and William Faulkner. These writers were not united in the sense of being an elite literary circle; their similarity is not necessarily stylistic, philosophic, or even thematic; instead, they are related by common regional tradition, intimate history, agrarian attachment, dynastic observance, and inherited obligation. Figuratively speaking, all of the Southern writers were raised in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, and their homogeneity is in the realm of experience, the experience of growing up in the same region, of accepting that region's value system, and of being aware that their region and its value system are changing before their very eyes.

⁶Allen Tate, "The New Provincialism," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXI (Spring, 1945), 272.

Realizing that the effects of time have changed their cultural sphere, the Southern writers have paused to contemplate their situation, to examine this tyranny called time, and to reflect upon the past. They express this contemplation, examination, and reflection in various ways in their works. Some of them romanticize the imagined glory which was once the South's. Others portray the region in transition and show the effects of the change, sometimes describing the inability of individuals in the South to reconcile the discrepancy between the ideals and values of the past with the realities of the present. Whatever their subject matter or theme, almost all of the writers of this movement are concerned with the passage of time and with the influence of the past upon the present.

By examining the various works of authors in the Southern Renaissance, one quickly perceives this obsession with the element of time. Their preoccupation is reflected not only in their content, but often in their titles, also, some examples of which are One Man in his Time, "The Past," A Still Moment, "A Memory," Clock Without Hands, "Was," The Time of Man, The Children's Hour, "The Lost Day," Of Time and the River, "Tale of Time," "Dark in the Forest, Strange as Time," and World Enough and Time. The reader often feels like Caroline Gordon's favorite character, Alex Maury:

Time, he thought, time! They were always mouthing the word, and what did they know about it?⁷

Indeed, these Southern writers are "always mouthing the word," pondering its substance, seeking its definition. But like the philosophers of all ages, they have succeeded only in describing its effects or in defining it by analogy. Robert Penn Warren discusses the problem of understanding and defining the allusive concept of time in his short story "Blackberry Winter."

You are aware that time passes, that there is a movement in time, but that is not what Time is. Time is not a movement, a flowing, a wind then, but is, rather, a kind of climate in which things are, and when a thing happens it begins to live and keeps on living and stands solid in Time like the tree you can walk around. And if there is a movement, the movement is not Time itself, any more than a breeze is climate, and all the breeze does is to shake a little the leaves on the tree which is alive and solid.⁸

Obviously Warren was intrigued by the nature of time, but it was an element of life and of art which he could neither control nor define. All that he knew about it is expressed in this line from his poem "Bearded Oaks": "We live in time so little time."⁹ Warren also makes use of time as a

⁷ Caroline Gordon, Old Red and Other Stories (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 126.

⁸ Robert Penn Warren, "Blackberry Winter," in The Circus & Other Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1947), pp. 63-64.

⁹ Robert Penn Warren, "Bearded Oaks," Selected Poems: New and Old, 1923-1966 (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 274.

subjective factor in his novel All The King's Men. Blair Rouse points out that Warren especially makes time-awareness a powerful force in the character of Jack Burden, and that this quality is emphasized by the effective juxtaposition of the characters of Burden and Willie Stark, the latter lacking any feeling whatsoever for time, tradition, or the past.¹⁰

Warren is certainly not alone in his regard for time. Two other Southern poets who express concern with the time motif are Merrill Moore and John Peale Bishop. Moore, a prolific poet-scientist of the early Fugitives, wrote a sonnet entitled "The Noise That Time Makes" in which he confronts the mystery of time's passing and describes his impression in terms of audition.

You can hear Time's footsteps as they pass
Over the earth brushing the eternal grass.¹¹
(11. 13-14)

Bishop's poetry is also pregnant with time imagery, his primary motif being, according to Robert Stallman, the struggle between time and man or man's art.¹² Bishop acknowledges this time-obsession in his essay

¹⁰Blair H. Rouse, "Time and Place in Southern Fiction," in Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South, ed. by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 133.

¹¹Merrill Moore, "The Noise That Time Makes," The Fugitive, IV (December, 1925), p. 112.

¹²Robert Wooster Stallman, "The Poetry of John Peale Bishop," in Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South, ed. by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 386.

"The Discipline of Poetry," in which he affirms that "The aim of all the arts is to present the conflict of man with time."¹³

Another temporal concern of the writers of the Southern Renaissance is the past, its influence and its role in the present. One example in which the past plays a dominant role is Ellen Glasgow's The Sheltered Life, especially in the section "The Deep Past" in which the author describes old General Archbald as he futilely attempts to meditate without having the past invade his consciousness.

No matter how hard he tried, it was impossible to keep his thoughts from rambling back into the past. It was impossible to trace a connection between the past and the present.¹⁴

Another Glasgow passage which considers the role of the past in relation to memory is from the story "The Past." But this time the past becomes more than an idea; it becomes a visible, three-dimensional object which obliterate present reality.

The past was with him so constantly—he was so steeped in the memories of it—that the present was scarcely more than a dream to him. It was, you see, a reversal of the natural order of things; the thought had become more vivid to his perceptions than any object.¹⁵

¹³John Peale Bishop, The Collected Essays of John Peale Bishop, ed. by Edmund Wilson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 104.

¹⁴Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life (New York: Book League of America, 1932), p. 88.

¹⁵Ellen Glasgow, The Collected Stories of Ellen Glasgow, ed. by Richard K. Meeker (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), p. 134.

Similar to the previous passage is the one from Thomas Wolfe's "No Door," in which Wolfe describes time as if it were a concrete, palpable, audible object instead of an intangible idea.

. . .feeling dark time, strange time, dark secret time, as it flowed on around me, remembering my life, this house, and all the million strange and secret visages of time, dark time, thinking, feeling. . . .¹⁶

Wolfe's phrase "remembering my life" is the subject of another passage, this one by Eudora Welty, in which the author deals with the secret of enduring life by remembering it, by dwelling in the past, in the memory.

. . .what people are supposed to do. This is it: they endure something inwardly—for a time secretly; they establish a past, a memory; thus they store up life.¹⁷

Many Southern writers themselves follow Miss Welty's instructions. They "store up life" in their memories and write primarily from their pasts. This method of writing is especially characteristic of Thomas Wolfe, who, in an essay on the creative process, confessed that he wrote almost exclusively from personal experience.¹⁸ Like Old Gant of Look Homeward, Angel, Wolfe had a "tragic consciousness of time,"¹⁹ one which he

¹⁶Thomas Wolfe, "No Door," Scribner's Magazine, XCIV(July, 1933), 47.

¹⁷Eudora Welty, "Old Mr. Marblehall," Selected Stories of Eudora Welty (New York: Modern Library, 1966), p. 191.

¹⁸Thomas Wolfe, "The Story of a Novel," Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (December 14, 1935), 4.

¹⁹Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel: A Story of the Buried Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 20.

contemplated both in life and in art.²⁰ His fiction, comments Louis Rubin, is "a search for lost time. . . ."²¹ Fortunately, Wolfe explains, in his search for and reconstruction of the past, he was aided by exceptional powers of recall which permitted him to vividly conjure up from his memory those experiences, feelings, and scenes already long vanished.²²

Central to all of Wolfe's fiction is the burning problem of the relationship of life and time. His only answer was a metaphorical one in which he viewed life as a dream whose boundaries are time. In the story "Dark in the Forest, Strange as Time" he refers to life as a "darkness between two points of time" and also as "this great dream of time in which we live. . . ."²³ In "The Lost Day" he again compares life to a dream:

²⁰Richard S. Kennedy states that in 1931 Wolfe, in an attempt to comprehend the concept of time, made notes from several encyclopedias on the philosophical theories of time by Bergson, James, and Einstein, and that he even employed one of these entries for Eugene Gant's Paris notebook in Of Time and the River. Kennedy further states that in 1932 Wolfe read Shakespeare's Sonnets and Rape of Lucrece and underlined all of the time passages. See R. S. Kennedy, The Window of Memory: The Literary Career of Thomas Wolfe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), pp. 249-250.

²¹Louis D. Rubin, Thomas Wolfe: The Weather of His Youth (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), p. 33.

²²Thomas Wolfe, "The Story of a Novel: II," Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (December 21, 1935), 3.

²³Thomas Wolfe, "Dark in the Forest, Strange as Time," in From Death to Morning (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 113.

"this time, this life, are stranger than a dream."²⁴ And finally, in Of Time and the River, he philosophically asks the question: "What is this dream of time, this strange and bitter miracle of living?"²⁵

The "miracle of living," however, did not bewilder Wolfe nearly so much as did the brevity of living. Rubin notes that Wolfe often brooded over the contrast between the mortality of man and the eternal nature of the universe.²⁶ It is against the eternal element, maintained Wolfe, that is "projected the transience of man's life, the bitter briefness of his day."²⁷ Wolfe viewed time as the dissolving force of life, the fatal dis-
ease of mankind, the irreversible, continuous force which is always passing.

And time still passing . . . passing like a leaf . . .
time passing, fading like a flower . . . time passing
. . . and remembered suddenly, like the forgotten
hoof and wheel²⁸

²⁴Thomas Wolfe, "The Lost Day," in The Hills Beyond (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 139.

²⁵Thomas Wolfe, Of Time and the River (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 52.

²⁶Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Thomas Wolfe in Time and Place," in Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South, ed. by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 294.

²⁷Thomas Wolfe, "The Story of a Novel: III," Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (December 28, 1935), 3.

²⁸Wolfe, "The Lost Day," p. 139. All ellipses are Wolfe's.

Whereas to Thomas Wolfe time was a neurotic obsession which affected his work only as subject matter, to William Faulkner it was an artistic dimension, a device which he stylistically employed in his work in order to illustrate its importance in life. Like Wolfe, Faulkner emphasized the influence of the past upon the present; but Faulkner surpassed Wolfe in using time as a concept and in experimenting with it as a technique.

Faulknerian past, as Jean Pouillon points out, is "extra-temporal." It simultaneously is evoked by the present, is confused with the present, and is coexistent with the present. The past is an entity which receives nothing from the present, and the fact that it exists in the present actually disqualifies the present as being at all. It is the past, therefore, which is real because the present receives its significance from the past and because the past determines the present. As an untouchable determinant, then, the past acts as fate, or as destiny.²⁹

The past acts as a dominant and governing force on many Faulknerian characters, an excellent example of which is Reverend Gail Hightower of Light in August. Faulkner describes Hightower as a man who "lives

²⁹ Jean Pouillon, "Time and Destiny in Faulkner," trans. by Jacqueline Merriam, in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), pp. 79-84.

dissociated from mechanical time."³⁰ Hightower's sense of time has been distorted by two events in the past: his great-grandfather's reputed heroism in the Civil War, and his wife's scandalous affair and subsequent murder. Hightower, says Robert Jacobs, made a bargain with time, a bargain in which he "bought and paid for his dream of the past, the past that became his prison."³¹

Although the past is definitely an important dimension in Faulkner's works, it is only one part of a complex temporal design. Faulkner's most complex manipulations of time are found in The Sound and The Fury, a novel renowned for its experimentation in time because each character has his own sense of time. To Ben, the idiot, time is a clockless flow which does not exist; to Quentin, time is an element from which he would like to escape, and yet his escape is ironically into the past, a dimension of time; to Jason, time is money; to Dilsey, present time is fused with eternal time. Michael Millgate states that Faulkner pointed out in a letter to an editor that there are actually eight different time levels in The Sound and the Fury.³² Of the novel's four sections, the most

³⁰William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: Modern Library, 1959), p. 346.

³¹Robert D. Jacobs, "Faulkner's Tragedy of Isolation," in Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South, ed. by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 182.

³²Michael Millgate, "The Sound and the Fury," in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 100.

elaborate and most pronounced temporal scheme is the Quentin section. Mr. Compson, the father, gives Quentin a family heirloom, a gold watch, which simultaneously symbolizes the past and the present. Mr. Compson tells Quentin: "I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it . . . and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it."³³ It is this time piece which stimulates Quentin's curiosity about time, about its nature and its effects. His conclusion is that time is a malignant force which devours all things. He even asserts "That Christ was not crucified: he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels."³⁴ Then, in a symbolic attempt to destroy time, Quentin smashes his watch and tears off its hands, but the mechanism ticks on. When he takes it to a repair shop, he notices that all of the clocks in the shop register different times of the hour, a fact which Faulkner uses to comment on individuals' subjective times, which are also different and contradictory. Another clock that plays an important role in this section is the courthouse clock, whose chimes ring every quarter hour. The ringing of those chimes serves as a means of recalling Quentin from his mental wandering in the past and also serves as a reminder of the passage of time. Quentin quickly realizes that his father was correct when Mr. Compson

³³William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 93.

³⁴Ibid., p. 94.

said: "time is your misfortune. . . ." ³⁵

But this misfortune is not Quentin's alone; it is one which many Southerners have experienced and which the writers of the Southern Renaissance have discussed extensively. These writers are concerned with the concept of time in all forms of literature: poetry, fiction, and drama. The first two genres have been represented in abundance, but the third has been all but neglected. Of the few Southern dramatists produced in this era, Tennessee Williams is generally considered the most outstanding, and, like his fellow Southern writers, he has shown a profound concern with the past and with the passage of time.

Williams' preoccupation with time is similar to that of other Southern writers ³⁶ of the twentieth century, but it differs in intensity. His temporal concern does not manifest itself as a minor, subordinate, secondary motif, but as a primary theme of major importance, an obsession, a pervading, motivating force recurring in almost all of his work. It is quite literally the fourth dimension in his plays, a dimension which intrudes into every aspect of the characters' lives and which affects their every thought and action.

³⁵Ibid., p. 129.

³⁶Williams considers himself to be a Southern writer because of his background and birthplace: ". . . my parents were Southern and I was born in the South." He feels, however, that he is becoming less associated with the South than he originally was. Cf. The Playwrights Speak, ed. by Walter Wager (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967), p. 227.

Williams deals primarily with three temporal modes: the past, the passing of the present, and the subjective time of the individual. Of these three, it is the past which first materializes in his early work.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PAST

The role of the past in literary works varies according to the value which a writer places on it. Since Tennessee Williams values very highly both in life and in literature the role of the past, it assumes a dominant role in his works. It is true, as sociologist Raymond Aron has said, that "Man has in fact no past unless he is conscious of having one. . . ."¹ According to this criterion, both Williams and his characters have pasts because they are acutely aware of them. Williams' awareness and reflectiveness about the past are his means of emphasizing the attempt by individuals, especially Southerners, to re-create old times, to regain previous values, and to recapture the spirit of a previous era which, at least in memory, had the charm, gentility, and attractiveness which the present never seems to afford.

Actually, Williams distinguishes between two interrelated pasts, one which is historical, the other personal. The historical past consists of regional, national, social, and cultural experiences and ideas which

¹Raymond Aron, "Relativism in History," in The Philosophy of History in Our Time, ed. by Hans Meyerhoff (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p. 153.

affect man's behavior. The historical past is represented by the traditions, morals, life styles, and institutions which are passed down by generations and which influence man in his existence as a social being. Williams often presents characters whose family backgrounds have instilled within them anachronistic morals to which society in general no longer adheres. These characters' strict moral codes cause them to experience psychological conflict when they are introduced to the temptation of modern society because they attempt to repress those impulses which their consciences deem intolerant and immoral. These impulses, according to Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, are driven out of consciousness but continue to exist in the unconsciousness.² Although repressed into the unconscious, they continually strive to intrude into consciousness, and therefore are a constant threat and a cause of conflict within the individual's psyche. Either the character becomes frustrated trying to obey the repressive Puritanical ethics of the past, or he willingly deviates from the ideal behavior and consequently judges his actions in terms of the ideal, a judgment which also results in psychological dissonance.

The psychological conflict resulting from an individual's employing anachronistic values in a modern society is comparable to the conflict

²Sigmund Freud, "Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, XI (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 27.

between the super-ego and the id. Traditions and morals serve the same functions as the super-ego, that function being to control the uninhibited impulses of the individual attempting to fulfill his instinctive desires. According to Freudian psychology, the super-ego, acting as social conscience, suppresses the id, causing tension and often producing extreme guilt feelings.³ David Sievers points out in his book Freud on Broadway that to many of Williams' feminine characters the past, as super-ego, causes not only sexual frustration but even psychoneurosis and insanity.⁴

Another psychological theory relevant to a discussion concerning the influence of the past is Carl Jung's concept of the "collective unconscious." The collective unconscious is that part of the memory which contains the accumulated experience of thousands of years of mankind's struggles, conflicts, and triumphs; and although the material of this homo sapiens memory is submerged in the subconscious, it still influences man's present attitudes and actions.⁵ Jung asserts that this record of man's existence is fixed within the organism and is a powerful psychic force.⁶

³Sigmund Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," in The Complete Works, XXII, 60-61.

⁴W. David Sievers, Freud on Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama (New York: Hermitage House, 1955), p. 379.

⁵Carl Gustav Jung, Psychological Types (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), p. 271.

⁶Carl Gustav Jung, Freud and Psychoanalysis in Collected Works, ed. by Herbert Read et al., IV (New York: Pantheon Press, 1957), 332.

Regardless of whether the historical past is psychological or social, its influence is a determining factor in the lives of Williams' characters. They live, as he says in the poem "The Eyes," an "Existence in time, not only their own but ancestral."⁷ The historical past, as Williams sees it, is an active force, providing established values and standards, presenting ideals, and, in general motivating and even controlling certain characters.

The second type of past which Williams considers to be a determining influence on man in the present is the personal past, which is more immediate, specific and private than the historical past. The personal past is those experiences which each individual exclusively has undergone, his unique previous life with its attitudes, actions, personality, psychological stresses, pattern of development, personal philosophy, mental and sensual perceptions—all of the experiences of his lifetime. Freudian personality theory asserts that man's life can be interpreted in terms of his past experiences and emotions, and that his actions in the present are in some degree determined by the development of his personality through a series of stages. This idea is a sort of psychic

⁷Tennessee Williams, In the Winter of Cities (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 17.

determinism, a complex mixture of biological and mental processes, and it is the same determinism which Williams' predecessor, Eugene O'Neill, alluded to as "our biological past creating our present. . . ." ⁸

Williams, like O'Neill, realizes that all of man's experiences are stored in the memory, and, whether the individual is conscious or unconscious of them, they affect his present behavior.

The memory is the key to the personal past, and in Williams' work the memory assumes a dual role: it aids the dramatist in the creation of his plays, and it affects the actions of his characters within those plays. Williams expresses his awareness of the relationship of the past and of memory in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore when Mrs. Goforth tells the witch:

Has it ever struck you, Connie, that life is all
memory, except for the one present moment that
goes by you so quick you hardly catch it going?
It's really all memory, Connie, except for each
passing moment. ⁹

Williams' emphasis upon the use of memory may be due to the influence of Marcel Proust. In The Past Recaptured Proust states that an artist does not need to invent his art; it is already in him in the form of impressions. Therefore, the writer merely serves as a translator who

⁸Eugene O'Neill letter to Arthur Hobson Quinn, reprinted in O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. by Oscar Cargill et al. (New York: New York University Press, 1961), p. 125.

⁹Tennessee Williams, The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 44.

transcribes these impressions of former experiences into intelligible and communicable symbols.¹⁰ Williams certainly has been influenced by Proust's method of writing and has written of his admiration for the French novelist and his recall technique.

No one ever used the material of his life so well as Marcel Proust, who made out of his life, recollected and continuing, what is possibly the greatest novel of our time, 'The Remembrance of Things Past,' in which he made the passage of time (from past to present and to the future shadow) a controlled torrent . . . the writers of our time can use the method of Proust, that of transposing the contents of his life into a creative synthesis of it.¹¹

This Proustian technique of employing the memory to transpose the experiences and impressions of one's life into creative art is often apparent in Williams' work. Like Proust, Williams extensively uses autobiographical material in his writing. "I don't think," he states in an interview, "you can escape being personal in your writing."¹² Later, he reiterates the same point, even confessing that "I couldn't create anything outside my own experience."¹³ Williams' technique of recall, according

¹⁰ Marcel Proust, The Past Recaptured, trans. by Frederick A. Blossom (New York: Modern Library, 1951), p. 219.

¹¹ Tennessee Williams, "Prelude to a Comedy," New York Times, November 6, 1960, sec. II, p. 3.

¹² The Playwrights Speak, ed. by Walter Wager (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967), p. 225.

¹³ Tennessee Williams May Desert 'Southern Belles' for Mysticism," New York Times, August 2, 1962, sec. I, p. 16.

to Esther Jackson, serves a dual purpose: it allows the playwright to distort his personal experiences into symbolic impressions, and it enables him to exercise a high degree of poetic selectivity in his material.¹⁴

On the other hand, Harry Taylor believes that Williams' limitation is his exclusive use of autobiographical material and that the playwright fails to live up to the full potential of his dramatic intelligence.¹⁵

To Williams, the past, whether historical or personal, is more than merely events which happened at a previous point in time. Instead, the past is a real phenomenon in his work, a powerful force woven into the present. His idea of the past is comparable to Henri Bergson's durée, which is the belief that the past is continually organized with the present and that time is a multiplicity of past-present interpenetrations.¹⁶

Another French philosopher who insists that the past cannot be considered apart from the present is Jean-Paul Sartre, who explains that while the present is, the past is no longer.¹⁷ At this point, though, Williams differs in philosophy, for to him the past is not something which is no longer and

¹⁴Esther Jackson, The Broken World of Tennessee Williams (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 48.

¹⁵Harry Taylor, "The Dilemma of Tennessee Williams," Masses and Mainstream, I (April, 1948), 52.

¹⁶Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1911), p. 7.

¹⁷Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 110-120.

which can only be remembered. Williams' past is here and now as well as there and then; although it was, it also is because it subsists in the present. The past, then, not only can influence the present, but also can supercede it. And in his plays, the past is a real determinant of thought and action, a determinant which the dramatist emphasizes in various ways.

Means of Emphasizing the Past

One way in which Williams emphasizes the role of the past in his plays is in his settings. The majority of his plays, especially his early ones, take place in the South, either on old plantations or in small rural towns where life is "behind the times." Battle of Angels, for example, takes place in a "very small and old-fashioned town in the Deep South"; The Glass Menagerie, though set in St. Louis, carries the atmosphere and tradition of Blue Mountain; A Streetcar Named Desire is set in New Orleans; Summer and Smoke takes place in Glorious Hill, Mississippi; even The Rose Tattoo has as its setting the Gulf Coast of Mississippi; later works such as Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Kingdom of Earth are placed in the area of the Mississippi Delta; and Sweet Bird of Youth is set in St. Cloud on the Gulf. By setting his plays in the Deep South, Williams surrounds his characters with the aura of the past, thereby helping to establish the Southern agrarian atmosphere, that ambivalent feeling of repression, gentility, hatred, refinement, brutality, chivalry, and bigotry which

is associated with the South. And Williams utilizes the many masks of the region by employing the appropriate setting to achieve the special effects desired in each play. Each setting conveys a definite atmosphere: the drunkenness and sexuality of A Streetcar Named Desire; the piety and repression of Summer and Smoke; the feeling of mendacity in the rich decadence of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof; and the desperate flight and bigotry of Sweet Bird of Youth. Even when the setting is not in the South, some of the main characters are often from that region and they carry with them their Southern mannerisms and traditions. One such play is The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, which is set in Europe but whose protagonist, Mrs. Goforth, is a Georgian.

Another way in which Williams accentuates the role of the past in his drama is through the use of music. The musical compositions which accompany the plays are soft, moody, lightly flowing tunes intended to evoke a memory of the past. This effect is achieved in The Glass Menagerie with the single recurring tune "The Glass Menagerie." In A Streetcar Named Desire the memory-evoking tune is a polka, the Varsouviana. In Sweet Bird of Youth the thematic music is "The Lament," a composition employed to suggest a mourning for the past, for lost youth.

A third device which Williams employs to stress the importance of the past in his plays is the use of established myths which are of a remote distant time. He recognizes the validity of Nietzsche's statement that

"Man today, stripped of myth, stands famished among all his pasts and must dig frantically for roots, be it among the most remote antiquities."¹⁸

Williams employs the myths of antiquity because they suggest the cyclic repetition of the human situation, because they are well-known literary themes, and because they express deep aspects of human existence and archetypal ideas from the historical part of the collective unconscious. The myths afford timeless prototypes of human existence, ones on which the dramatist capitalizes.

In his earliest full length play, Battle of Angels, Williams, by adopting the Orpheus myth, dramatizes what Hugh Dickinson labels the biological antithesis of life and death.¹⁹ In the play, Val Xavier is the Orpheus figure who has come to rescue Myra Torrance (Eurydice) from hell and to give her new life. Myra is in the house of death, her dying husband being Pluto, and Val is the life force whose love will revive her. There is even a Cassandra in the play, and she prophetically delivers her evil omens. In the end, Val is lynched for his affair with Myra and his alleged rape of a jealous Waco woman, just as Orpheus was slain by the Ciconian women in Vergil's Georgic IV. Into this classical mythology the playwright

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music with The Genealogy of Morals, trans. by Francis Golffing (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 137.

¹⁹ Hugh Dickinson, Myth on the Modern Stage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), p. 292.

interfuses Christian mythology: Xavier is, as the name suggests, a savior, a Christ figure; and Myra, says Henry Popkin, is a variant of Mary.²⁰ The last act takes place on Good Friday, and Val's murder coincides with Christ's crucifixion.

Myths are implicit in other plays by Williams, the most obvious of which is Kindom of Earth, whose subtitle is The Seven Descents of Myrtle. And in Sweet Bird of Youth Chance Wayne is vaguely identified as a Christ figure, and all of the action of the play occurs on Easter Sunday. According to Popkin, in an early version of Sweet Bird of Youth Princess Alexandra was named Ariadne, the classical guide through the labyrinth.²¹ Even in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore the wanderer protagonist, Chris, is associated with the hero of the legendary castle of attainment and also with the Angel of Death. In all of these plays the myths that Williams uses are a form of the historical past.

Another means by which Williams emphasizes the role of the past is characterization. Unlike many modern dramatists whose characters seemingly lack personal pasts and backgrounds, Williams almost always provides the audience with glimpses of a character's biography. These accounts of personal history give the audience vital keys with which to

²⁰Henry Popkin, "The Plays of Tennessee Williams," Tulane Drama Review, IV (March, 1960), 60.

²¹Ibid., p. 61.

analyze the character's present actions. The past is an essential tool which Williams feels that his audience needs, a tool of understanding. He presents these personal chronicles in various ways. Usually, as with Blanche Dubois and Brick Pollitt, the past is related through dialogue. In The Glass Menagerie, however, Tom Wingfield acts as narrator and relates the past through a monologue, the play itself being impressions from his memory. In The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore part of the past is told through Mrs. Goforth's dictating of her memoirs to her secretary. And in Night of the Iguana Shannon's dialogue with Hannah about his life is almost in the form of a confessional. The very fact that Williams even includes in his characterizations such biographical sketches serves as evidence that he feels as though the past is an integral part of a person's present life.

One of Williams' most effective means of emphasizing the past is by juxtaposing it with the present. This juxtaposition also reinforces the playwright's motif of the conflict between truth and illusion and between the sensitive and the insensitive. The delicate, sensitive being who clings helplessly to the moral code of a previous era generally is pitted against the dull brute of the present.

Plays Emphasizing the Past

"The Last of My Solid Gold Watches"

One of Williams' earliest works demonstrating this past-present

conflict is the one-act play "The Last of My Solid Gold Watches,"²² the title of which ironically refers to an old man's gold watches awarded for his outstanding salesmanship during his lifetime of service with a shoe company. Charlie Colton, the seventy-eight year old salesman whose claim is that he is the "last of th' Delta drummers" (p. 80), realizes when he looks at his fifteen gold watches that he has received the last of the gold awards and also that his "time's just about over!" (p. 83). Charlie is the representative of the past, a being left over from the previous era, almost, he admits, like "one of them monsters you see reproduced in museums" (p. 83). As a foil to Charlie Colton, the playwright creates a representative of the present, Bob Harper, "a young peckerwood" (p. 83) who condescendingly listens to Charlie's reminiscing about the good old days. Charlie tells him that he used to ride into town "like a conquering hero" (p. 85) with his quality goods. But now, he complains, the road has changed; the quality, individuality, and respectability of the business has vanished. "The world I knew," Charlie mourns, "is gone—gone—gone with the wind!" (p. 83). Harper, who is a forerunner of Jim O'Connor, the gentlemen caller of The Glass Menagerie, tells Charlie: ". . . you belong to the past"; but the old man corrects him: "I belong to—tradition" (p. 84). To Williams the two are closely synonymous,

²²Tennessee Williams, "The Last of My Solid Gold Watches" in Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-Act Plays (New York: New Directions, 1945). All quotations from this edition of the play are indicated parenthetically.

and in most of his plays he inserts a representative of the past and of tradition.

The Glass Menagerie

Generally the past is a determining influence only in those plays in which the traditional Southern gentlewoman is the protagonist. John Gassner maintains that in much of Williams' dramatic work a "major theme is southern womanhood in the grip of the presently constituted world, while its old world of social position and financial security is a Paradise Lost."²³

Robert Jones advances this idea more particularly, stating that "the Williams heroine exists mainly in illusion, denying today and living an imaginary yesterday."²⁴ Jones' three-part analysis is the core of the Southern gentlewoman's characterization. First, she denies the present because of its inhumanity and vulgarity; it is a harsh reality, one in which the struggle for survival is barbaric, and one for which her aristocratic past has not prepared her. So the heroine, as Jones points out, retreats into a world of "illusion," which is inevitably the world of the past. She futilely clings to its idealized but anachronistic mannerisms and morals, and therefore drifts further from reality. The past, submits Jones, is "an

²³John Gassner, "Tennessee Williams: Dramatist of Frustration," College English, X (October, 1948), 5.

²⁴Robert Emmet Jones, "Tennessee Williams' Early Heroines," Modern Drama, II (December, 1959), 212.

imaginary yesterday," not the reality of a previous period. It is a romanticized utopia where all the men are gallant gentlemen, where there is social and financial security, and where every day there is a picnic in the afternoon and a formal ball in the evening. The Southern belle exaggerates her beauty, her wealth, her social position, her number of admirers, and her former prospects. Her past is a world of yellow jonquils, Blue Mountains, moon lakes, paper lanterns, and Mississippi Delta planters. By thrusting this hypersensitive, affected, old-fashioned, frustrated belle of the past into present reality, Williams achieves the juxtaposition of past and present which he desires. The gentlewomen who act as his pawns are merely variations of the same character at different stages of development. Her name is Blanche DuBois, Alma Winemiller, Lady Torrance; but in the beginning she was Amanda Wingfield of The Glass Menagerie.

The Glass Menagerie is by Williams' own definition a memory play.²⁵

It is memory play in several ways. First, it is largely autobiographical.

Williams once described the play "'as a transmuted version of my own

²⁵Tennessee Williams, The Glass Menagerie (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. ix. Subsequent references to this edition are indicated parenthetically. The play was tried out in Chicago's Civic Theatre in December, 1944, and later opened in New York at the Playhouse Theatre on March 31, 1945, and ran for 563 performances. Directed by Eddie Dowling and Margo Jones, the cast consisted of Laurette Taylor, Eddie Dowling, Julie Haydon, and Anthony Ross.

family life'"²⁶ and in another interview called the play "'semi-autobiographical'": his sister did have shelves of little glass animals which did have a personal meaning to him and he did work in a shoe factory for sixty-five dollars a week where he wrote poems on shoe box lids.²⁷ Another autobiographical fact is that Williams' real name is Thomas, and his family called him Tom; it is no coincidence that the narrator's name is also Tom. So the play is memory in the sense that the playwright called upon his own "affective memory" in a Proustian manner in order to create the work.

The main reason that The Glass Menagerie is labelled a memory play, according to Paul Nolan, is because the whole play is set in the conscious mind of the protagonist-narrator, Tom Wingfield.²⁸ As Tom unrolls his memory, he presents not truth, but impressions, possibly distorted and probably biased, "in the pleasant disguise of illusion" (p. 4). Like a magician, Tom conjures up the play from his memory. The play, therefore, is an expression of the personal past.

Williams affects the idea of memory in this play by a series of

²⁶Quoted in an interview with Harry Gilroy, "Mr. Williams Turns to Comedy," New York Times, January 28, 1951, sec. II, p. 1.

²⁷Quoted in Robert van Gelden, "Playwright with 'A Good Concert,'" New York Times, April 22, 1945, sec. II, p. 1.

²⁸Paul T. Nolan, "Two Memory Plays: The Glass Menagerie and After the Fall," McNeese Review, XVII (1966), 27.

theatrical and expressionistic devices. He has the narrator explain the premises of the play and explicitly relate the fact that "The play is memory" (p. 5). Then the playwright employs what he calls an "extra-literary accent" in the form of a soft, emotional, thematic musical composition which recurs throughout the play. As the narrator says, "In memory everything seems to happen to music" (p. 5). Williams explains the function of the recurring tune more fully.

It serves as a thread of connection and allusion between the narrator with his separate point in time and space and the subject of his story. Between each episode it returns as reference to the emotion, nostalgia, which is the first condition of the play. (p. xi)

Another means of evoking the atmosphere of memory is the lighting, which Williams suggests "is not realistic" (p. xi), but which remains dim and emotive. Even "The scene is memory and is therefore nonrealistic" (p. 3). The projection screen is an expressionistic device which also registers the emotions of the past. Williams reinforces the lyric nature of the play in as many ways as possible in order to emphasize the atmosphere of memory which the play is supposed to evoke.

A third level of memory is Amanda's memory of her youth as a Southern belle on the Mississippi Delta. All three levels of memory, Williams', Tom's, and Amanda's, evoke a sense of the past, but the latter does so to a special degree because Amanda's past is the past to which most of Williams' early heroines return, the traditional South of gentility.

Amanda is, in this play, Williams' representative of the past, the character who clings "frantically to another time and place" (p. vii). Her world, as Sam Bluefarb indicates, is psychologically and emotionally bounded by and confined to the past;²⁹ mentally, she still lives in the past, in what Williams refers to as "the legend of her youth" (p. 64). She is the embodiment of Williams' belief that "nothing is more precious to anybody than the emotional record of his youth. . . ."³⁰ But Amanda has transformed the record of her youthful past into a fantasy or dream, a Cinderella fairy tale where she can gratify her romantic desires and receive the amorous attention which she needs to compensate for her present poverty and neglect. If her "past" is not fictional, it obviously is exaggerated beyond recognition. When she tells Laura and Tom that one afternoon on Blue Mountain she received "seventeen!" gentlemen callers, all of whom "were gentlemen—all!" (p. 9), and that she "sashayed around the ballroom" (p. 65) at the Governor's ball and won the cakewalk at Sunset Hill, she is reliving an illusion, not a past reality. And her vain jactation that she could have married any planter in the Delta is simply an attempt to eclipse her marital failure, the fact that she really married a

²⁹ Sam Bluefarb, "The Glass Menagerie: Three Visions of Time," College English, XXIV (April, 1963), 513.

³⁰ Tennessee Williams, "Tennessee Williams on the Past, the Present and the Perhaps," New York Times, March 17, 1957, sec. II, p. 1.

"telephone man who fell in love with long distances" (pp. 5-6), deserting both her and her children.

By incessantly adhering to tradition, Amanda tries to recapture the past as she imagines it. She tries to maintain a traditional Southern atmosphere of "gracious living" (p. 80) and she continues to behave and speak in an affected Southern manner. In an attempt to associate herself with an early American heritage and to secure a social position in the community, she avidly attends the meetings of the Daughters of the American Revolution, an organization to which she is to be inaugurated as an officer. She even pretends that she has black servants to do the domestic work: "—you be the lady this time," she tells Laura, "and I'll be the darky" (p. 8). When Jim O'Connor arrives, Amanda states that she is "rejuvenated" (p. 117) by the gentleman caller's visit, and she is overjoyed at the opportunity to exhibit her "girlish Southern vivacity" (p. 78) and "Southern behavior" (p. 79). Amanda regresses to the period of youth, which is characterized by her yellow jonquils and "girlish frock" (p. 65), the one which she wore years before on the Delta and which is now, by her own admission, "Historical almost!" (p. 79).

Although Amanda does try desperately to recapture the past, she realizes that it is gone forever: "Gone, gone, gone" (p. 80), she laments. The past literally has gone with the wind, and, according to Roger Stein, Amanda's references to the novel Gone With the Wind reinforce the

futility of her attempts to reoccupy the past, to rebuild Tara, or, in this case, Blue Mountain.³¹ The metaphor of the wind as flowing time is expressed later when Amanda tells Tom that he can go "whichever way the wind blows you!" (p. 42), and it is employed again in Tom's concluding speech as narrator in which he refers to past times and places as being "swept about me like dead leaves . . ." (p. 123).

Amanda's present environment and dilemma harshly underscore the fact that the era of her Southern youth has vanished completely. The illusion of the past which she perpetuates and in which she lives is conspicuously incongruous with her present physical environment and social status. The juxtaposition of Amanda's vision of the past, as manifested by her mannerisms and reminiscing, with the narrator's memory of the present, which is a St. Louis slum in the Great Depression, is a poignant one. The St. Louis slum area is juxtaposed with the mental image of the glorious plantation estates of the Delta, and the pitiful figure of Amanda in the slum surroundings is as incompatible as, to use one of Williams' own phrases, "a fox in a chicken coop."³² By effecting such a juxtaposition,

³¹ Roger B. Stein, "The Glass Menagerie Revisited: Catastrophe without Violence," Western Humanities Review, XVIII (Spring, 1964), 146.

³² Ibid., p. 3.

Williams is able not only to show the absurdity and incongruity of Amanda's behavior, but also to contrapose the past and the present, thereby exposing the illusory, anachronistic romanticism of the one and the bitter, pragmatic reality of the other.

It is because the present is so ugly and misshapen that Amanda cannot cope with it. The most obvious example of her failure to face reality is her refusal to admit that Laura is crippled. "Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word," she protests. "Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect—hardly noticeable, even!" (p. 21). Later she complains to Tom about the same thing:

Amanda: Don't say crippled! You know that I never
allow that word to be used!
Tom: But face facts, Mother. She is and—that's
not all—
Amanda: What do you mean "not all"?
Tom: Laura is very different from other girls. (p. 58)

Amanda's unwillingness to confront reality, to accept the fact that Laura is not only crippled but also "a little peculiar" (p. 58), is characteristic of her whole attitude toward present reality.

If Amanda cannot extricate herself from the past, and if she cannot face the present, she at least looks occasionally into the future. Perhaps her reason for being concerned about the future is that she learned her lesson the difficult way, from personal experience. "I wasn't prepared," she confesses, "for what the future brought me" (p. 80). She wants her children to be prepared for what is to come so that they will not regret it

when it has passed. ". . . the future becomes the present, the present the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret if you don't plan for it!" (p. 55), she warns Tom. She encourages her son to apply himself wholeheartedly to his job, to take an interest in his career, and to attend night school in order to promote himself in the world. Her naivete and materialism are part of the American dream which she espouses: "Try and you will SUCCEED!" (p. 36).

But Amanda's real concern and worry is for Laura, the crippled, introverted daughter whose chances for survival in modern society are slim because she has neither an occupation nor a husband. Amanda tries to secure one and then the other for her, the first attempt being the fiasco of sending her to business college. "Fifty dollars' tuition, all of our plans," Amanda mourns, "—my hopes and ambitions for you—just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that" (p. 17). Amanda's hopes for a secure future for Laura vanish when she learns that Laura has discontinued attending the business college. The mother knows "so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position" (p. 19), and she finds it difficult to accept the fact that such a life is "the future that we've mapped out for ourselves" (p. 19). Her frustration and displaced aggression change to maternal desperation as she rhetorically and pleadingly asks her daughter: "What are we going to do, what is going to become of us, what is the future?" (p. 15). But there

is an alternative to Laura's situation—marriage. It is an alternative which Amanda quickly perceives. "Girls that aren't cut out for business careers," she tells Laura, "usually wind up married to some nice man" (p. 21). So Amanda sets out in an obsessive-compulsive manner to make the necessary "plans and provisions" to land an eligible bachelor for Laura.

It is the representative of the past, Amanda, who sets into motion the action of this play. She imposes her values and morals on her children and, as Bluefarb notes, determines the course that both Tom and Laura will take.³³ By juxtaposing these three family members, Williams not only exposes character differences but also different visions of time. Amanda's vision of the past is juxtaposed with the particular visions of time of her children, Laura's being the timeless ever-present, Tom's being the future. The juxtaposition of these temporal dimensions emphasizes not only the fact that each character is discordant with the other two, but also that as a family they are disharmonious with the rest of the world, with reality.

Laura's static time is especially pathetic because she has neither the past which her mother cherishes nostalgically nor the adventurous future for which her brother longs. In this respect she is similar to O'Neill's Yank Smith in The Hairy Ape, who complains: "But me—I ain't got no past

³³Bluefarb, "Visions of Time," p. 513.

to tink in, nor nothin' dat's comin', on'y what's now. . . ." ³⁴ Laura's vision of time is not simply the present, for the present implies reality; rather, hers is an ever-present or timeless world. Williams emphasizes this inner sense of timelessness in several ways, the first and most obvious of which is by explicitly identifying her with the glass menagerie, and with the unicorn in particular. The unicorn is associated with Laura because as a symbol of chastity ³⁵ it reinforces the fact that she will never marry, because as a non-existent being it emphasizes her lack of contact with reality, and as a "freak" of nature it accentuates her own deformity. The second means by which the dramatist expresses Laura's timeless world of unreality is through her lameness, which is an external, physical sign of an internal, mental defect. While Laura's physical defect is a sign of her psychological deformity, it is also a contributing factor to her mental state; that is, her physical deformity causes her to retreat further into her world of glass animals. Still another but more subtle means of emphasizing the hopelessness of Laura's ever leaving her illusory world and entering reality is the nickname which Jim O'Connor calls her, "Blue Roses." The single rose is the symbol of complete perfection; the white

³⁴ Eugene O'Neill, Nine Plays (New York: Modern Library, 1959), p. 86.

³⁵ Juan Eduardo Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. from the Spanish by Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 337.

rose of purity; the red rose of passion. But Williams uses "Blue Roses" to symbolize his character because the blue rose, according to the Spanish poet-scholar Juan Cirlot, is symbolic of the impossible.³⁶ "Blue Roses" accentuates the fact that Laura's plight is an impossible one to overcome. When she tells Mr. O'Connor that "blue is wrong for—roses," he replies "It's right for you!" (p. 112). This idea of flowers symbolizing her inability to escape her timeless glass society is metaphorically suggested in "Portrait of A Girl in Glass," an early Williams short story on which The Glass Menagerie is based, when the narrator, referring to Laura, states that "the petals of her mind had simply closed. . . ."³⁷ But Laura's mind is not the only one that is closed to reality; each member of the Wingfield family has retreated into his particular world with its special vision of time.

Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller whom Tom Wingfield uses as "an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from" (p. 5), is Williams' only character in this play who achieves a balanced vision of time, and it is because of this symmetry that he serves as a foil to the entire Wingfield family. That he had a brilliant past in high school is evident from the narrator's remarks and from his conversation

³⁶ Ibid., p. 263.

³⁷ Tennessee Williams, "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," in One Arm and Other Stories (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. 101.

with Laura: former basketball star, captain of the debating team, lead baritone in the chorus, president of the senior class, head of the glee club, and the most likely to succeed. Jim also has a stable and realistic present, and an eye to the future. He not only holds a higher position than Tom at the warehouse, but he also studies public speaking and radio engineering at night school. His motto of "Knowledge—Zzzzzp! Money—Zzzzzzp!—Power!" (p. 104) is in direct opposition to Laura's fragile and impractical glass animals, to Tom's romantic dreams of adventure, and to Amanda's Southern past.

Even though Williams presents every possible time reference in The Glass Menagerie, the ever-present, the real present, the future, and the past, it is the latter which dominates the play. The past prevents the fulfillment of the present and the future, it provides the action from impressions from the narrator's memory, and it haunts not only Amanda but also the narrator, Tom. In fact, the play can be viewed as the contrasting attempts of Tom Wingfield and Tom Williams to find meaning in a past which they could not comprehend when it was present.

A Streetcar Named Desire

A Streetcar Named Desire³⁸ is another Williams play whose heroine

³⁸Tennessee Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire, Signet Book (New York: New American Library, 1947). All references to this edition, hereafter abbreviated Streetcar, are indicated parenthetically. The play, which

is a Southern gentlewoman, but the influence of the past in this drama affects both the character's morality and psychology much more intensely and violently than in The Glass Menagerie. Blanche DuBois, the heroine of Streetcar, is an aristocratic Southern belle whose fall to destruction constitutes the action of Williams' play.

Blanche is probably the most complex character Williams has created in his dramatic career. She eludes capsuled characterizations and descriptions such as the one proposed by John Gassner, who sees her as merely an abstraction of decadent aristocracy,³⁹ and the one by John Mason Brown, who calls her "a Southern schoolm'am who gradually loses her mind, having long since lost her amateur standing."⁴⁰ She is not simply a "boozy prostitute," or a nymphomaniac, or an exhibitionist, or even a spineless degenerate, as some critics maintain. Instead, she is a sensitive, delicate, moral individual who is presently desperate and helpless and therefore potentially destructive and seemingly immoral. She is, as Harold Clurman correctly points out, the potential artist in each individual, and not simply a deteriorated Southern belle.⁴¹

opened in New York at the Barrymore Theatre on December 3, 1947, was directed by Elia Kazan and produced by Irene Selznick; the cast included Marlon Brando, Jessica Tandy, Kim Hunter, and Karl Malden.

³⁹John Gassner, "Williams: Dramatist of Frustration," p. 6.

⁴⁰John Mason Brown, Dramatis Personae (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 89.

⁴¹Harold Clurman, Lies Like Truth: Theatre Reviews and Essays (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 74.

Because Blanche is such a complex character, many persons misunderstand her actions. Her motivation has been condemned in two extremes, one being that it is insufficient, the other that it is melodramatic. Gassner, for example, calls her motivation "specious," "bizarre," unconvincing, abnormal, and "questionable."⁴² What Gassner and others fail to realize is that Williams explicitly provides his heroine with a historical and a personal past, both of which contain abundant motivation which, if not commonplace, is still believable, and which is pyramided on causative relations.

Williams' carefully planned motivation of Blanche DuBois is strikingly similar to August Strindberg's characterization of his heroine in Miss Julie.⁴³ Strindberg comments on Miss Julie's motivation in "The Author's Preface" in which he states that in real life there is never a single reason for a person's actions but that actions are brought about by a series of complex and deep-lying motives. Strindberg, in an effort to convey this idea in his drama, gives his protagonist a "multiplicity of motives," ranging

⁴²John Gassner, "A Streetcar Named Desire: A Study in Ambiguity," in Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism, ed. by Travis Bogard and W. I. Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 377.

⁴³Eric Bentley in The Dramatic Event, p. 261, suggests that in writing Streetcar Williams may have been influenced by Strindberg's Miss Julie. Richard B. Vowles, "Tennessee Williams and Strindberg," MD, I (December, 1958), 168, states that although the heroines and their plights are similar, one should not conclude that Williams borrowed from Strindberg; Vowles suggests that the plays are merely parallel.

from her family background to her monthly menstrual period. Of the twelve motives which the Swedish playwright lists, four are long term and permanent, and the rest immediate and passing.⁴⁴

Williams just as easily could list his own motives for Blanche's insanity, and they undoubtedly would exceed Strindberg's number. Such a list might include:

1. Blanche's family background and tradition,
2. her marriage to a homosexual and its tragic outcome,
3. the deaths of her family,
4. the loss of Belle Reve and what it represented,
5. her seeking love but finding only sexuality,
6. the loss of her reputation and professional position,
7. her present desperate situation—lonely, destitute,
8. her sensitive nature,
9. her fading beauty and her age,
10. her mental condition,
11. her problem with alcohol,
12. the crude conditions of the French Quarter,
13. her being found out and rejected by Mitch,
14. her memory of the past,
15. her uncontrollable duplicity, and
16. Stanley's raping her.

Most of these motives, however, are founded in the past, and even the more recent ones, such as Mitch's rejection, are caused by events which occurred in the past. So although she has a multiplicity of motives, almost all of these motives are from the past.

One definite and consequential motivation from the past is Blanche's

⁴⁴August Strindberg, "The Author's Preface" to Miss Julie, in Seven Plays, trans. by Arvid Paulson (New York: Bantom Books, 1968), p. 65.

family background. Born into an aristocratic but declining Southern family, and reared on a Mississippi plantation, Blanche assumed the tastes, arrogance, affectation, pride, values, and tradition generally associated with the Old South. Tradition is really at the heart of her cultural background, and it is this tradition which causes much of her external or social problems as well as her internal or psychological conflict. Elia Kazan, the director of the original New York production of Streetcar, emphatically states that "Her problem has to do with tradition."⁴⁵ Kazan calls her tradition an absurd romanticism which is left over from the nineteenth century, and says that it is anachronistic in modern society. Kazan further asserts that in Aristotelian terms Blanche's tragic flaw is her tradition because it creates the circumstances that eventually destroy her.⁴⁶

Blanche feels as though she must play the role of the "lady" and try to live up to her ideal image. She thinks of herself as "a cultivated woman of intelligence and breeding" (p. 126), and in order to induce other persons to form the same opinion, she employs a social mask of gentility, a mask characterized by excessive refinement, pretentious behavior, and aristocratic superiority. Adhering to the Southern chivalric code that a

⁴⁵Elia Kazan, "Notebook for A Streetcar Named Desire," in The Passionate Playgoer, ed. by George Oppenheimer (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 344.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 345-346.

lady can find security and protection only in marriage, and knowing that Mitch is her last hope for marriage, Blanche tries to deceive him into marrying her by pretending to be "prim and proper" (p. 81) and by pretending to have "old-fashioned ideals!" (p. 91). So she acts out the role of the traditional Southern lady and makes Mitch clumsily conform to her idea of a gallant gentleman. She calls him her "Rosenkavalier" (p. 84) and requires him to bow to her before presenting a bouquet of roses. Later she refers to herself as "la Dame aux Camillias!" and to him as her "Armanda!" (p. 88). She shuns his sexual advances, telling him to "behave like a gentleman" (p. 91), but then, knowing he does not speak French, asks "Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir?" (p. 88). Blanche's question is an indication of a profound dilemma within her. The fact that she wants Mitch, not only for his kindness and affection but also for his physical love, is seemingly a healthy and normal attitude; but in view of her Victorian morality it presents a psychological conflict so strong that it borders on neurosis.

Blanche's real tragedy lies in this neurotic conflict, in what John Mason Brown calls her "uncontrollable duplicity."⁴⁷ It is a duplicity which is both a part and a result of her anachronistic morality and tradition. According to her traditional morality, women are supposed to be

⁴⁷Brown, Dramatis Personae, p. 92.

sexless creatures who are not to need, think about, or especially enjoy sexual relations. Therefore, when Blanche is driven to sexual promiscuity with soldiers, salesmen, and students by a series of tragedies, including her husband's suicide, her family's deaths, and the loss of Belle Reve, she experiences psychological conflict because she cannot reconcile the two warring principles within her, principles that Joseph Riddel labels desire and decorum, or the Dionysian and the Apollonian forces.⁴⁸ Kazan also perceives a basic contradiction in Blanche's nature. He states that although she refuses to face her physical or sensual side, she nevertheless gives in to it out of loneliness and later feels guilty for her actions. "Her tradition makes no allowance, allows no space for this real part of herself," he says.⁴⁹ Applying essentially the same interpretation but in Freudian terminology, Sievers argues that Blanche is unable to cope with the irreconcilable split between the id and the super-ego, one being her impulse to satisfy her basic needs, in this case sexual, and the other being her conscience.⁵⁰ In his early lectures on psychoanalysis Freud reported that the symptoms of neurosis and other illnesses are traceable with surprising regularity to impressions from erotic life.⁵¹ Certainly

⁴⁸Joseph N. Riddel, "A Streetcar Named Desire—Nietzsche Descending," Modern Drama, V (February, 1963), 422-424.

⁴⁹Kazan, "Notebook," p. 347.

⁵⁰Siever, Freud on Broadway, p. 379.

⁵¹Freud, "Five Lectures," p. 40.

part of Blanche's behavior is traceable to the psychological conflict which she experiences when she views her "sexual transgressions" in terms of her anachronistic morality; she fails to live up to her inner image of her ego-ideal, that of the virtuous Southern lady.

If Blanche could forget this past which is a mixture of the excesses of the self and the restraints of society she might be able to live in the world of reality; but she cannot forget it. And the past which she remembers is a hideous one. In this respect she is similar to O'Neill's character, Charles Marsden, in Strange Interlude who audibly thinks ". . . what beastly incidents our memories insist on cherishing! . . . the ugly and disgusting . . . the beautiful things we have to keep diaries to remember! . . ." ⁵² (O'Neill's ellipses). The horrors and deaths of the past are stored in Blanche's memory, almost in her conscious mind; the beautiful things of the past, her husband's love letters "yellowing with antiquity" (p. 41), are kept in an old trunk. Kazan states that Blanche's memories are a real factor in her life. "We cannot really understand her behavior," he asserts, "unless we see the effect of her past on her present behavior." ⁵³ Blanche has had to endure the constant pressure of decay and death, and, unlike Stella, she has tried to hold on to the old

⁵²O'Neill, Nine Plays, p. 507.

⁵³Kazan, "Notebook," p. 342.

life. "I stayed at Belle Reve and tried to hold it together!" (p. 25).

Blanche remained at Belle Reve, the beautiful dream, until it slowly faded away and left her awakened and lost in a real world. She cannot simply erase the past, because the past is a part of her. Stella, however, left Belle Reve, gave up the beautiful dream of the traditional South, made a new life for herself, and cultivated a new value system. Stella is the representative of decayed aristocracy who, Joseph Wood Krutch suggests, rejuvenates her society by union with Stanley, the natural man, the man of the people.⁵⁴ Blanche's inability to relinquish her memories and her anachronistic values and to adapt to a changing environment is evident in her inability to comprehend the reality that Stella actually enjoys her life with Stanley in the Quarter. "I take it for granted," Blanche says, "that you still have sufficient memory of Belle Reve to find this place and these poker players impossible to live with" (p. 70). But, as Stella quickly replies, Blanche is "taking entirely too much for granted" (p. 70). Blanche's remembrance of things past alienates her from her sister just as it does from the rest of society. Blanche is the sole survivor of the DuBois family; Stella is obviously a Kowalski.

Blanche is not only the last of the DuBois's, she is also the last of her civilization. Kazan sees her as an "emblem of a dying civilization

⁵⁴Joseph Wood Krutch, Modernism in Modern Drama (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953), p. 128.

making its last curlicued and romantic exit."⁵⁵ As the representative of the past, she is one of Williams' moth figures whose beauty, sensitivity, fragility, and etherealness cannot survive in the present world. In an early poem called "Lament for the Moths" Williams describes the plight of these delicate creatures.

A plague has stricken the moths, the moths are dying,
 their bodies are flakes of bronze on the carpets lying.
 Enemies of the delicate everywhere
 have breathed a pestilent mist into the air.

Lament for the velvety moths, for the moths were lovely.
 Often their tender thoughts, for they thought of me,
 eased the neurotic ills that haunt the day.
 Now an invisible evil takes them away.

.

Give them, O mother of moths and mother of men,
 strength to enter the heavy world again,
 for delicate were the moths and badly wanted
 here in a world by mammoth figures haunted!⁵⁶

Williams explicitly states that Blanche's appearance as well as her nature "suggests a moth" (p. 15), and phrases from this poem emphasize exactly what he connotatively means by the moth symbol. It is a "delicate," "lovely," but "dying" species whose "enemies" seek to eradicate it. Because of its "tender thoughts," it is "badly wanted" in the "heavy world" of "mammoth figures." Williams has summarized in this poem what he communicates in Streetcar.

⁵⁵Kazan, "Notebook," p. 343.

⁵⁶Williams, In the Winter of Cities, p. 31.

Like the moth, Blanche has a difficult time fitting into the heavy world. Everything about her is incongruous with her present environment and society. She is an intruder into Elysian Fields, the pagan paradise for couples where life is pursued on a primitive level. "Her appearance," Williams describes, "is incongruous to this setting"; she is daintily dressed in a white suit with white gloves and a pearl necklace "as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district" (p. 15) instead of at a two-room flat in the slum area of the French Quarter. Her speech is also out of place because it is affected and filled with euphemisms. Randolph Goodman points out that while Blanche speaks in elegant, complex, formal, periodic sentences which contain romantic images, other persons in the play usually speak in short, staccato, emphatic sentences.⁵⁷ Another incongruous and inappropriate element in Blanche's character, especially when one considers her desolate situation, is her superior attitude. Even Stella is aware of her sister's condescension. "Then don't you think," she tells Blanche, "your superior attitude is a bit out of place?" (p. 71). Stanley recognizes her snobbishness and simply retorts by calling her "Hoity-toity" (p. 112) and "Dame Blanche" (p. 99).

⁵⁷ Randolph Goodman, Drama on Stage (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1961), pp. 278-279.

Blanche and Stanley are diametrical opposites. Whereas she is fastidious, romantic, repressed, affected, well bred, refined, delicate, and neurotic, he is uncouth, barbaric, uninhibited, natural, common, coarse, brutish, and healthy. Stanley Kowalski is, by Stella's own admission, "A different species" (p. 24).

There are two sides to Stanley, one being the virile Lawrencean hero, the other being the brutal beast. As the Lawrencean hero, he is the embodiment of masculine sexuality and potency. Sexual power is implicit in everything he does; he has "the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens" (p. 29). As the Lawrencean hero, Stanley represents the vital force who awakens new life in women, the new life in this case being given to Stella, to whom he gives new reasons for living and also gives actual new life in the form of a child. But K. M. Sagar states that Williams finds it impossible to make the Lawrencean distinction between reductive, sensationist sexuality and true passion.⁵⁸ Marion Magid also argues that although Williams' characterization of Stanley is patterned after the Lawrencean philosophy, Williams forgets his predecessor's basic premise that profound sexual experience civilizes, humanizes, and lends delicacy to life.⁵⁹

⁵⁸K. M. Sagar, "What Mr. Williams Has Made of D.H. Lawrence," Twentieth Century, CLXVIII (August, 1960), 143-144.

⁵⁹Marion Magid, "The Innocence of Tennessee Williams," Commentary, XXXV (January, 1963), 37.

Stanley's sexuality certainly does not civilize anything. Instead, his sexuality is equated with dominance, and his dominance is founded in animal force. In fact, Williams' characterization of Stanley relies primarily on animal symbolism. Williams states that "Animal joy in his being is implicit in all his movements and attitudes" (p. 29). Blanche tells Stella that all "such a man has to offer is animal force . . ." (p. 69). Even Stella calls him an "animal thing" (p. 57) when he violently throws the radio out of the window. After he hits Stella and after she takes refuge upstairs, Stanley "throws back his head like a baying hound" (p. 59), and when she returns they embrace "with low animal moans" (p. 60). "There's something downright—bestial—about him!" Blanche declares. "Yes, something—ape-like about him" (p. 72). As an astrological Capricorn, the Goat, Stanley is a follower of Pan, and he is also reminiscent of the lecherous satyr.

A clash between Stanley and Blanche is inevitable, Signi Falk asserts, because they represent two opposing worlds, two opposing views of life, two opposing types of human nature. They literally live to the beat of different tunes, Blanche to the waltz and Stanley to blue jazz. Their conflict can be interpreted several ways. Leonard Berkman sees it as a struggle between the fragile, poetic spirit of the civilized past and

the brute of the savage present.⁶⁰ Gassner calls it a war between the plebian Kowalski and the patrician DuBois.⁶¹ And Riddel sees it as a contest between the self, Blanche, and the "anti-self," Stanley.⁶²

The outcome of the conflict is as inevitable as the clash: the annihilation of the representative of the past by the representative of the present. Williams explains the artistic purpose of the rape in a letter to the chief censor of the Production Code.

The rape of Blanche by Stanley is a pivotal, integral truth in the play, without which the play loses its meaning, which is the ravishment of the tender, the sensitive, the delicate, by the savage and brutal forces of modern society.⁶³

Williams has concluded his play in the only manner in which it can be concluded. Blanche is, as Kazan states, "an outdated creature approaching extinction," and her destruction is inevitable.⁶⁴ Williams' attitude toward her annihilation and toward her destroyer, however, is not lucid. His attitude toward the past and its representatives remains complex, if not ambiguous.

⁶⁰Leonard Berkman, "The Tragic Downfall of Blanche DuBois," Modern Drama, X (December, 1967), 253-255.

⁶¹John Gassner, Theatre at the Crossroads (New York: Holt, 1960), p. 85.

⁶²Riddel, "Nietzsche Descending," p. 425.

⁶³Quoted in Gerald Weales, Tennessee Williams, Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 53 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), p. 26.

⁶⁴Kazan, "Notebook," p. 348.

Summer and Smoke

In Summer and Smoke, "Tennessee Williams continues his studies," Richard Watts remarked in his New York Post review, "of frustrated and disintegrating Southern womanhood."⁶⁵ Other critics viewed the 1948 production as a forerunner to Streetcar, Robert Coleman calling it a "prefatory play,"⁶⁶ and Robert Garland labelling it a "foreward" to the earlier work.⁶⁷

Williams does present in this play another Southern heroine, one who is in many ways similar to Amanda Wingfield and Blanche DuBois. Like the two earlier heroines, Alma Winemiller is a woman of the past. "She seems to belong," Williams contends, "to a more elegant age, such as the 18th Century in France."⁶⁸ Her Victorian manners and behavior, however,

⁶⁵Richard Watts, Jr., "A Rather Gloomy Report on 'Summer and Smoke'," New York Post, October 7, 1948, drama.

⁶⁶Robert Coleman, "'Summer and Smoke' Has a Searching Eloquence," Daily Mirror, October 7, 1948, drama.

⁶⁷Robert Garland, "Unneeded Foreword to Streetcar Theme," New York Journal American, October 7, 1948, drama.

⁶⁸Tennessee Williams, Summer and Smoke, Acting Edition (New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1950), p. 10. The play was tried out in Dallas and opened on Broadway October 6, 1948, with Tod Andrews and Margaret Phillips in the leading roles and Margo Jones directing. Critical opinion of the production was mixed. The play was revived off-Broadway in 1952 by the Circle in the Square group from Greenwich Village. With new talent (then unknown Geraldine Page) and a new director (Jose Quintero), this production was acclaimed one of the outstanding theatrical events of the season. Williams' revised version of the play which the Circle in the Square group followed is the one used here because it is the better and the final version. All references to Summer and Smoke are taken from this edition, and indicated parenthetically.

suggest that the era to which she belongs is the late nineteenth century, and this implication is reinforced by the Victorian architecture of the setting.

It is primarily the historical past rather than the personal past which affects Alma's characterization in Summer and Smoke. The institutions and ideas of the past, what young John Buchanan calls "hand-me-down notions!—attitudes—poses!" (p. 60) such as Victorian morals, Puritanical repressions, and Southern genteel ideas and values, mold Alma into the typical Williams heroine, affected, self-conscious, nervous, delicate.

Having been reared as a minister's daughter and having assumed the position of hostess in the rectory, Alma has led a limited social life, one which excluded the normal entertainment and enjoyments of youth. As a child, she "had an adult quality" and now, in her middle twenties, she has a "prematurely spinsterish appearance (p. 8). Because Alma has "a kind of "airiness" (p. 10) and exaggerated gestures and mannerisms, other persons her own age consider her to be "rather quaintly and humorously affected" (p. 8). John tells her that she has a reputation "for gilding the lily a bit" (p. 16) and he says that often at parties she is mimicked because of her pretentious behavior and speech. Although she tries to ignore such "unprovoked malice" (p. 16), Alma is nonetheless aware of "these peculiarities of mine" (p. 16), such as her excessive propriety and self-conscious laughter.

Alma's rationalization for her peculiar behavior is that she has "a certain—cross—to bear!" (p. 17), the cross being her mother, who has regressed into an infantile state because she could not cope with life in the rectory. The repressive morals of Puritanical life have caused Mrs. Winemiller to become a kleptomaniac. Psychologists report that such compulsive stealing is associated with sexual gratification and that it is a type of fetishistic behavior in which the excitement and suspense involved in shoplifting contribute to the sexual excitation.⁶⁹ Mrs. Winemiller steals "a fancy white plumed hat" (p. 25), an ostentatious garment by which she expresses her revolt from the dull, repressive atmosphere of the rectory; after stealing the hat she brings it home and "sits on the love-seat" (p. 25) to try it on, an action definitely meant to connect the theft with sexual longing. Another indication that Mrs. Winemiller's regression is due to sexual repression is her craving ice-cream cones, which are obviously phallic symbols. Reverend Winemiller tells Alma that Mrs. Winemiller stopped on Front Street at the drugstore and would not budge until he bought her an ice-cream cone. Embarrassed by his wife's (sexual) appetite, the preacher had the cone wrapped in tissue but "she tore off the paper and walked home licking it every step of the way! . . . just to humiliate me!" (p. 62).

⁶⁹James C. Coleman, Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life (3rd ed.; Chicago: Scott, Foresman Company, 1964), p. 405.

Alma, like her mother, is unable to completely suppress her sexual desire. But instead of withdrawing from the adult world as her mother does, Alma employs over-compensation as a means of superficially repressing her physical side. She talks at length about the spiritual side of relationships, and tells John: "Some people bring just their bodies. But there are some people, there are some women, John—who can bring their hearts to it, also—who can bring their souls to it!" (p. 50). Alma considers herself to be one of these spiritual women; unconsciously, however, she is preoccupied with the physical side of love. In order to accentuate her argument that spiritual attainment is her goal, she describes a Gothic cathedral with its "delicate spires" (p. 48) reaching for spiritual fulfillment. Alma's lofty cathedral spires rising high into the sky, however, are phallic symbols, the cathedral itself being simply an acceptable and appropriate means of sublimating her sexual longing.

The social-physical conflict within Alma is externally represented by her dilemma of having to choose between John Buchanan and Roger Doremus, the virile rake and the Sunday School superintendent, respectively. Although Alma tells old Dr. Buchanan that she considers the idea of "physical passion" even in marriage to be "somewhat unpleasant" (p.23), she still needs that passion and she realizes that she could never be happy with Roger, especially not "In bed with him" (p. 23). She secretly prefers the virility of John, but when he makes sexual advances to her, she

rejects him, shouting "You're not a gentleman!" (p. 51). While her id, then, rejects Roger and his marriage proposal, her super-ego declines John and his proposition. Her duplicity prevents her from being happy with either of them, and she refuses their offers for diametrically opposite reasons.

Alma is the victim of her own duplicity. Her real nature is suppressed by her idea of being a lady, a repression symbolically manifested in the ring which she wears, the cold, white pearls surrounding and isolating the topaz center stone. John recognizes her duplicity, and tells her that "Under the surface you have a lot of excitement, a great deal more than any other woman I have met" (p. 49). He refers to this duplicity as her "irritated doppelganger" (p. 12), a term which, Alma finds out, "means another person inside me, another self . . ." (p. 71). In first describing Alma, Williams hints at this doppelganger by saying that "Her true nature is still hidden even from herself" (p. 8).

It is Alma's inability to admit the existence of her real nature that causes her strife and final transformation. Her ante-bellum, anachronistic morals will not allow her to recognize her true self. In order to expose the inadequacy of Alma's repressive moral system, Williams uses the Freudian metaphor of a house to represent her body.

John: These Southern homes are all improperly heated.
Open grates aren't enough.

Alma: They burn the front of you while your back is freezing! (p. 70)

Because her Southern Puritanical background will not permit her to have a physical side, she must try to extinguish the sensual flame within her. By ignoring her physical side Alma is, to borrow Maggie the Cat's words, "shutting a door and locking it on a house on fire in hope of forgetting that the house is burning. But not facing a fire doesn't put it out."⁷⁰ Alma finally becomes asphyxiated from her own smoldering nature. She tells John: "the girl who said 'no'—she doesn't exist any more, she died last summer—suffocated in smoke from something on fire inside of her" (p. 72). Like Williams' other Southern heroines, Alma's conflict is a self-destructive one.

Both Alma and John are abstractions rather than real characters. Joseph Wood Krutch states that they are "suggestive of the protagonists in some old morality play,"⁷¹ and John Mason Brown concurs, calling them "figures in an allegory, given proper names."⁷² Alma, which is "Spanish for soul" (p. 50), obviously represents the spirit, and John represents the flesh. Williams employs the old technique of using his characters as external symbols to represent internal conflict, spirit versus flesh, faith versus science, soul versus sex.

⁷⁰Tennessee Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Signet Book (New York: New American Library, 1955), p. 25.

⁷¹Joseph Wood Krutch, "Drama," Nation, CLXVII (October 23, 1948), p. 474.

⁷²John Mason Brown, "People Versus Characters" Saturday Review, XXXI (October 30, 1948), 33.

Alma and John are diametrically opposed in every way. While she is a "white-blooded spinster" (p. 59), he is "a Promethean figure," "an epic hero" (p. 7). She adheres to the traditions of the past, but he expresses contempt for the abstraction of the historical past. Whereas she attends pseudointellectual literary meetings at the rectory, he revels in debauchery at Moon Lake Casino. When she is dating the placid Roger Doremus, he is making love to the exotic Rosa Gonzales. While she demands order, he delights in anarchy. Even the setting reinforces this consistent dichotomy. At stage right is the rectory, which cares for the spirit, and at stage left is the doctor's office, which cares for the body.

Ironically, when both Alma and John change as a result of each's influence on the other, they are still antitheses, as Alma finally realizes.

The tables have turned, yes, the tables have turned with a vengeance! You've come around to my old way of thinking and I to yours like two people exchanging a call on each other at the same time, and each one finding the other one gone out. . . . I came here to tell you that being a gentleman doesn't seem so important to me any more, but you're telling me I've got to remain a lady! (p. 74)

After this transformation, Alma, like Blanche, will turn presumably from her repression and disappointment to promiscuity, for at the end of the play she accompanies a traveling salesman to Moon Lake Casino. By traditional standards, her destruction is complete.

What Williams implies in Alma's disintegration is unclear. He may simply be showing the effect of social and cultural transition upon the individual. He may also be demonstrating the unrealistic morality which is based on an either-or, black-white fallacy. Or, as in other plays, he may be illustrating the futility of the individual who adheres to anachronistic traditions of the past. Esther Jackson says that through Alma's personal disintegration, her transformation from a Corneillian heroine to a Racinian woman, Williams illustrates the crisis of modern civilization, that crisis being the "inability to choose between the lofty ideals of the humanistic tradition and the materialistic values" of the twentieth century.⁷³ But the playwright's intention in this play is ambiguous, as is his whole attitude toward the past and its representatives.

Williams' Attitude Toward the Past

One of the basic difficulties in interpreting Williams' characters who are representatives of the past is the playwright's ambiguous attitude toward them. In his characterization of Amanda, Blanche, and Alma, he treats them sometimes with ironic distaste, as Nancy Tischler points out, and at other times with warm sympathy.⁷⁴ Popkin suggests that although

⁷³Jackson, Broken World, pp. 137-138.

⁷⁴Nancy M. Tischler, Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan (New York: Citadel Press, 1965), p. 155.

Williams may indicate sympathy for those who cherish the past of the Old South, the playwright endorses neither their attitudes nor their values.⁷⁵

He feels the need both to condemn and to pardon those whom he wishes to exalt, Arthur Ganz contends.⁷⁶ He exposes their weaknesses pitilessly and yet paradoxically compassionately, for at the heart of his characterization of these heroines is empathy.

Williams' attitude toward Amanda is probably not so much ambiguous as it is ambivalent. This fact is understandable since he admits that her characterization draws heavily on his own mother's nature and behavior, and a writer seldom views such autobiographical material objectively enough to allow anything but personal impressions. While Williams sees that there is "much to admire in Amanda, and as much to love and pity as there is to laugh at," he also realizes that "her foolishness makes her unwittingly cruel at times. . . ." Over-all, however, Williams seems to admire Amanda, especially her "endurance," which he says is "a kind of heroism. . . ."⁷⁷

Because Williams' attitude toward Kowalski is more ambiguous than his attitude toward the antagonist gentleman caller of The Glass Menagerie,

⁷⁵Popkins, "Plays of Williams," p. 54.

⁷⁶Arthur Ganz, "The Desperate Morality of the Plays of Tennessee Williams," American Scholar, XXXI (Spring, 1962), 294.

⁷⁷Williams, The Glass Menagerie, p. vii.

the playwright's feelings toward the heroine in Streetcar are also more ambiguous. Stanley Kowalski is simultaneously the virile Lawrencean fox and the brute representative of modern society. Williams' ambivalence toward Stanley is mirrored in Blanche's opinion of her brother-in-law: she admires ("My sister has married a man!"), desires ("Yes, I was flirting with your husband!"), fears ("What such a man has to offer is animal force . . ."), and condemns him ("Yes, swine! Swine!").⁷⁸ Williams' attitude toward Blanche is also imperspicuous. He portrays her as being delicate but decadent, romantic but arrogant, refined but neurotic. While on the one hand he seems to sympathize with her, on the other hand he exposes her weaknesses mercilessly and then destroys her. Even the role of Stella is vague because in escaping the aristocratic decadence of her past she flees into a bestial but adjusted existence of the present.

In Summer and Smoke the dramatist's sentiment again is obscure. Like John Buchanan, he seems to ask the heroine: "This lady stuff, is that so important?"⁷⁹ But "this lady stuff" does represent the honor, duty, gentility, and virtuousity of the Old South, an era for which Williams shows respect and affinity. It also, however, represents repression and affectation, whereas Buchanan represents freedom and naturalness.

⁷⁸Williams, Streetcar, pp. 40, 44, 69, and 126, respectively.

⁷⁹Williams, Summer and Smoke, p. 49.

Krutch suggests that in this play and others Williams is saying that modern society is hideous because it has no equivalent substitute for the positive attributes of Alma's ladyhood or gentility, which are now mere anachronisms.⁸⁰ Williams seems to plead, as does his character in Camino Real, "let there be something to mean the word honor again!"⁸¹

There is a moral contradiction, a kind of poetic injustice, in Williams' Southern heroine plays. His women have noble ideals but their world's moral order is destroyed; their destroyers are either brutal or irresponsible, yet they triumph. Williams' implied comment, as Jackson suggests, is that through these representative heroines he is exploring the questions of choice for civilization itself: the dead past or the meaningless present.⁸² He presumably finds an ethical void at the center of modern urban society and poses it against the chivalry and tradition of the agrarian Southern past.

Amanda, Blanche, and Alma are the Southern past to Williams, and his attitude towards them is ambiguous because his attitude toward the Southern past is ambiguous, for it is a combination of pride, prejudice, romanticism, poverty, greatness, and death. While on the one hand he

⁸⁰ Joseph Wood Krutch, "Drama," p. 473.

⁸¹ Tennessee Williams, Camino Real (New York: New Directions, 1953), 156.

⁸² Jackson, Broken World, p. 60.

portrays it as a period of gaiety, romanticism, and social and financial security, on the other hand he shows it as the cause of repression, failure, and psychological conflict. It is a paradox that the past is both a source of pain and a source of happiness for Williams' heroines. There are crucial tragedies which each heroine would like to forget, such as Mr. Wingfield's desertion, Allan's suicide, and Dr. John's rejection of Alma. Yet the Southern gentlewoman still attempts to recapture the past because, even though it is stifling, it is romantically attractive in comparison to the crude, ugly reality of the present. The choice is painful: a dead but beautiful past, or an ugly and meaningless present. Williams himself cannot make the choice; he both pardons and condemns those who choose the past.

If Williams condemns the past, he does so with reluctance and with reservations, for the present is hardly better than the past in his plays. The past provides allegiance, values, morals, and a feeling of security, even if the allegiance is to a dying regime, the values and morals are anachronistic, and the feeling of security is a false one. The past was beautiful, but it is gone. As the Baron tells Kilroy in Camino Real, "Used to be is the past tense, meaning useless."⁸³ It is difficult to believe that Williams shares the Baron's point of view about the past's being

⁸³Tennessee Williams, Camino Real, p. 37.

useless, for to the playwright it is a source both of meaning and of inspiration, of theme and of characterization.

Williams' ambivalent attitude toward the past and his lack of moral judgment concerning the past-present conflict in these plays demonstrates both his honesty and his maturity. Although he sympathizes with the old Southern way of life, he realizes that that life is decadent and anachronistic, that progress is being made in the harsh realities of the present, and that the life force must be carried forth by those in society who are the most able, not the most sensitive. Because of this realistic attitude, Williams understands that it would be fallacious if not deceptive for him to glorify the South without also showing its iniquities. Therefore, his characters embody qualities of both good and evil because he strives to portray life realistically, and life is never all white nor all black, neither all wrong nor all right. Williams' truthfulness, then, is a positive attribute, especially in a period such as this when audiences and scholars demand honesty in their drama. The ambiguity in his plays is a product of portraying life realistically and truthfully.

CHAPTER III

THE ENEMY, TIME

Although Tennessee Williams' feelings about the past are ambiguous, his attitude toward the passage of time is definite; it is a destructive force. His attitude is typical of many modern writers. One reason for their viewing time as a destructive force is that with the passage of time come the loss of youth and the approach of death. Another reason, a uniquely twentieth-century one, is that modern man in general is pessimistic about the future and is pensively somber concerning its advent, not only because of its absurdity and uncertainty but also because of the imminent possibility of world annihilation. So while modern man is alienated by science, industrialization, and urbanization from the religious, social, and moral order of the past, he is also potentially deprived of the future. There is a growing fear that as time passes, so will the human race.

Time is no longer merely an element of setting in human drama, George Kernodle asserts, but is an active force, a hostile and evil force.¹ Man now views time as a source of suffering and anxiety, a reason for despair and hopelessness. The message that the character One writes to Two

¹George Kernodle, "Time-frightened Playwrights," American Scholar, XVIII (Autumn, 1949), 446.

in "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow" exemplifies Williams' view of time.

'If there wasn't a thing called time, the passing of time in the world we live in, we might be able to count on things staying the same, but time lives in the world with us and has a big broom and is sweeping us out of the way, whether we face it or not.'²

As Williams says, whether one faces it or not time continues to move; actually, however, it is the present that moves, the linear temporal plane along which it moves being time. Nevertheless, because man is a time-conscious being, he is both affected by and aware of this passage.

Each human being lives in two realms of time — one physical or objective, the other psychological or subjective. The first is the one which passes independently of man and which can be measured by chronometric devices. Williams alludes to this objective time in "The Dark Room" when the social worker, Miss Morgan, tells Mrs. Picciotti: ". . . there is an element of time we go by. Time measured by the clock, by the calendar, by the—time!"³ The second kind of time is an inner, private time unique to each individual. This subjective time may or may not occasionally deviate from or coincide with objective time. Sometimes this personal, psychological clock within the individual ticks faster than public

²Tennessee Williams, "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow," in Dragon Country (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 141. The reason for the quotation marks here is that the speech is in the form of a note which One reads aloud.

³Tennessee Williams, "The Dark Room," in American Blues: Five Short Plays, Acting Edition (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1948), p. 17.

time, and sometimes it runs slower. There is a correlation between these two kinds of time and their equivalent types of reality, subjective and objective. In fact, there is a direct relation between a person's concept of time and his idea of reality. For some of Williams' characters the existence of a subjective and an objective time is consequential, for the disparity between the two often becomes so great for so long that they lose contact with reality; in effect, their inner times dominate their minds and these characters begin to live in fantasies. For other characters, and for possibly Williams himself, the subjective time operates much more quickly than public time, the result being that they perceive time as rapidly flying by, and they therefore become desperate and attempt to escape from time through various means.

For Williams, the quest to arrest the irreversible flow of time is of primary importance in life because time not only shortens life but also degrades it.

It is this continual rush of time, so violent that it appears to be screaming, that deprives our actual lives of so much dignity and meaning, and it is, perhaps more than anything else, the arrest of time which has taken place in a completed work of art that gives to certain plays their feeling of depth and significance.⁴

⁴Tennessee Williams, "Concerning the Timeless World of a Play," New York Times, January 14, 1951, sec. II, p. 1.

Williams believes that because characters in a play are in "a world without time" in that "time is arrested in the sense of being confined," they have a dimension and dignity which persons in reality cannot achieve. "The great and only possible dignity of man lies in his power," Williams asserts, ". . . to live . . . as if he, too, like a character in a play, were immured against the corrupting rush of time." Man could appreciate life and could care for other human beings "if only the shattering intrusion of time could be locked out," he contends. A dramatist can achieve this suspension of time for the audience, Williams maintains, by having them identify and empathize with the characters; the members of the audience should enter into the roles of the characters in the play, where time does not exist. But in order to make this arrest of time possible "The diminishing influence of life's destroyer, time, must be somehow worked into the context. . . ." ⁵

Williams not only views play writing as a means of creating a world without time, but he also considers composition in terms of time much as did Gertrude Stein. He measures time not in years but in completed works.

' . . . each year is not another year to me—it's a play.' And sometimes three years are a play and my life seems to be chalked off not in years but in plays and pieces of work. . . . ⁶

⁵Ibid., pp. 1, 3.

⁶Tennessee Williams in interview, The Playwrights Speak, p. 226.

Writing for Williams is a race with time where there is no finish line, but only a series of plays. His main fear in competing against time is that he will lose, that at the end of his dramatic career he will look back and, like Brick Pollitt in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, say "—time just outran me. . ."⁷ His fear, then, is that time will not permit him to say what he feels needs to be said. "There is too much to say," he submits, "and not enough time to say it."⁸ His brother, Walter Dakin Williams, has been quoted as saying that "Tennessee is anxious to complete his life's work in the shortest possible time"⁹ because the playwright realizes that time is running out.

The clock is ticking loudly for Tennessee as it did for Chance Wayne. He senses that "the enemy, time" may run out for him, too, and he is anxious to bring in all his "toys" before the coming rain.¹⁰

Tennessee Williams feels that he must be continually creating new plays not only because he knows that time is running out but also because writing is a means of psychological therapy for him. ". . . I write from my own tension," he says. "For me this is a form of therapy."¹¹ He

⁷Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. 84.

⁸Tennessee Williams quoting himself, "Person—to—Person," foreword to Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Signet Book (New York: New American Library, 1955), p. viii.

⁹Quoted in Francis Donahue, The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964), p. 236.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 212.

feels as though he must create a new psychological world, a new play in which to reside, before the old world disintegrates.

It is almost as if you were frantically constructing another world while the world that you live in dissolves beneath your feet, and that your survival depends on completing this construction at least one second before the old habitation collapses.¹²

Because the writer's survival depends upon his continually creating new works, and because as the years pass the writer's health and creative ability often decline, Williams views time as his principal enemy.

I think time is the enemy of the writer more than it is of the athlete, for instance. A writer has to compensate for what time takes away from him by working harder and trying to think things out more carefully if he can.¹³

Viewing time as the writer's enemy is not an original idea, of course, but with Williams it is especially pessimistic since he does not believe, as poets for centuries have maintained, that a writer's work will make him "immortal." He completely lacks the poetic optimism about an artist's achieving immortality through his art. To Shakespeare's question "where alack, / Shall times best Jewell from times chest lie hid?",¹⁴ Williams' probable reply would be Shakespeare's own line that "nothing

¹²Tennessee Williams, "On the 'Camino Real,'" New York Times, March 15, 1953, sec. II, p. 1.

¹³Quoted in Joanne Stang, "Williams: 20 Years After 'Glass Menagerie,'" New York Times, March 28, 1965, sec. II, p. 3.

¹⁴William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 65," in Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, I (London: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1944), 172. The spelling is modernized.

gainst Times scythe can make defence. . . ."¹⁵ That Williams does not concern himself with the possibility of immortality seems somewhat contradictory to his brother's statement concerning the playwright's wishing to finish his life's work before death, but his reason for wanting to complete his work is simply a desire to expend all of the creativity afforded him by life. His reply to an interviewer's question as to whether he derives any comfort from the thought of immortality through art is typical of his view toward immortality.

It's strange, I guess, but I don't seem to have any concern with that. I think when I'm dead, it won't matter a damn to me whether people remember me well or not. The hereafter is for the living, not for the dead.¹⁶

Williams' rejection of the idea of immortality through art, however, is simply a part of his disbelief in immortality altogether. When he converted to Catholicism in 1969, he accepted everything, Father Joseph Leroy reported after baptizing him, except immortality.¹⁷

The fact that Williams does not accept the idea of immortality and that he views death as a finality underscores his obsession with time. Williams' view is summed up in Big Daddy's statement to Brick: "When

¹⁵Ibid., "Sonnet 12," I, 32.

¹⁶Quoted in Stang, "20 Years After," sec. II, p. 3.

¹⁷"Tennessee Williams Turns to Roman Catholic Faith," New York Times, January 12, 1969, sec. I, p. 86.

you are gone from here, boy, you are long gone and no where!"¹⁸ As Williams sees it, there is but one life to live, and it is shortened by time's "ticking away like a clock attached to a time-bomb,"¹⁹ to use his own words. That he views time as a destructive force, then, is an understatement, and the degree to which it is understated is apparent only when one reads a sampling of his indictments and invectives against time.

Personification of Time

In his condemnations of time, Williams relies heavily on the use of personification. He endows the abstraction time with human characteristics and actions, but the qualities which he attributes to it are almost always negative ones. Time is an evil, vile, wretched creature whose nature is at best indifferent but more often demonic. When it is merely indifferent, it is a blind force, what Williams calls "the blundering sleepwalk of time,"²⁰ which unconsciously and insipidly disrupts life. But generally time is an actively evil force, and Williams portrays it as being an infinite, imbecilic maniac which destroys, devours, and eradicates. "Time, the endless idiot," Williams quotes Carson McCullers, "runs

¹⁸Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. 75.

¹⁹Williams, "A Separate Poem," in In the Winter of Cities, p. 128.

²⁰Tennessee Williams, "The Malediction," in One Arm and Other Stories (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. 48.

screaming round the world."²¹ It is a disease, a pestilence, which attacks everyone and everything. It infects, afflicts, and ultimately destroys each human being. To Williams, time is the enemy, a fact which he explicitly expresses in the title of the short play "The Enemy, Time." Time is to this playwright the embodiment of all evil: ". . . the one great terrible, worst of all enemies, which is the fork-tailed, cloven-hoofed, pitchfork-bearing devil of Time!"²²

This devil, time, is an inescapable enemy because it is a dimension of life, and therefore of drama, also. As John Buchanan of Summer and Smoke says, "time is one side of the four-dimensional continuum we're caught in."²³ The frustrating and overwhelming problem concerning time is that there is no way to defeat or to control it. In its continuous and endless flow, it is relentless, impervious, unconquerable, and it is with this invincible aspect of time—the fact that man cannot transcend time—that Williams is obsessed.

Part of Williams' preoccupation with time is that time affects human relationships. As he states in "Two on a Party," "time is one of the biggest differences between two people."²⁴ In his plays, he attributes loss

²¹Quoted in Williams, "Timeless World," sec. II, p. 1.

²²Tennessee Williams, "Two on a Party," in Hard Candy: A Book of Stories (New York: New Direction, 1967), p. 62.

²³Williams, Summer and Smoke, p. 39.

²⁴Williams, "Two on a Party," p. 64.

of honesty and of sensitivity in dealing with other persons to the effects of the flow of time. Chance Wayne in Sweet Bird of Youth expresses this idea when he tells Princess: "Time does it. Hardens people."²⁵ In the expressionistic play Camino Real, Marguerite tells her companion Jaques Casanova that "Time betrays us and we betray each other."²⁶ Brick Pollitt says that the relationship between him and Skipper was one that "couldn't be intercepted except by time. . . ."²⁷ To Cora and Billy the prostitute and the homosexual in "Two on a Party," it is only a matter of time before they must dissolve their relationship.

— — — Time, of course, was the greatest enemy of all, and they knew that each day and each night was cutting down a little on the distance between the two of them running together and that demon pursuer.²⁸

The Loss of Youth

Time is also the destroyer of youth and its corollaries, beauty and innocence. This loss is particularly important to Williams because he believes that a person's youth should be a period of gaiety and pleasure, for it is the prime of life, the time when one is at his mental and physical peak.

²⁵Tennessee Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, Signet Book (New York: New American Library, 1959), p. 57.

²⁶Williams, Camino Real, p. 99.

²⁷Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. 90.

²⁸Williams, "Two on a Party," p. 62.

The characters in his plays either have enjoyed and appreciated their youth and now mourn its loss, or they have let it slip by unnoticed and spent it in unhappiness and now lament not having had a youth. The playwright himself fits into the second category. "I was born old," he says. "I had no youth, for my youth was unhappy and an unhappy youth is like no youth at all."²⁹ In this respect Williams is like his characters Alma Winemiller in Summer and Smoke and Hannah Jelkes in The Night of the Iguana. Alma's youth was sacrificed in order for her to play the role of a minister's daughter in a small Southern town. As a child she assumed adult responsibilities because her mother refused to accept them, the result being that Alma matured too quickly while her mother regressed to a childish emotional state. "In a way," Alma tells John, "it may have—deprived me of—my youth . . . (Williams' ellipses)."³⁰ As hostess of the rectory Alma was denied the ordinary pleasures of youth, a denial which she regrets and for which she blames Mrs. Winemiller. "They pity me—think of me as an old maid already!" she complains. "In spite of I'm young. Still young! It's you—it's you," she accuses her mother, "you've taken my youth away from me!"³¹ Unlike Alma's, Hannah's reaction toward her vanished youth is not one of reproach or even of regret; instead,

²⁹Quoted in Donahue, Dramatic World of Williams, p. viii.

³⁰Williams, Summer and Smoke, p. 17.

³¹Ibid., p. 31.

it is a kind of nihilistic acceptance or stoic indifference. ". . . I was one of those people who can be young without really having their youth," she remarks to Shannon, "and not to have your youth when you are young is naturally very disturbing."³²

Other Williams characters enjoyed their youth and exercised it well but recognize that it is now slipping away. To this group belong Val Xavier of Battle of Angels, Karen Stone of The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone, Brick Pollitt in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Chance Wayne and Princess Alexandra del Lago in Sweet Bird of Youth, and Mrs. Goforth and Chris in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore. Their philosophy, like Mrs. Marwood's in William Congreve's The Way of the World, is that "Youth may wear and waste, but it shall never rust in my Possession."³³ When they were young they realized, as Chance Wayne states, that "youth wouldn't last long,"³⁴ so they enjoyed it while it lasted. Reiterating essentially the same idea, Nonno, the aged poet in The Night of the Iguana, points out in one of his recitations that since the time of youth is short, people must enjoy it while they can.

³²Tennessee Williams, The Night of the Iguana, Signet Book (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 109.

³³William Congreve, The Complete Plays of William Congreve, ed. by Herbert Davis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 410.

³⁴Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 52.

Youth must be wanton, youth must be quick,
Dance to the candle while lasteth the wick. . . .³⁵

But the wick of youth is a short one which seems to burn at both ends. "Nothing goes that quick," Chance says in disbelief, "not even youth."³⁶ It is because the period of youth is such a pleasurable time that it seems to pass more quickly than any other period of life. Time seems to fly and youth is lost before it is realized. Youth is a paradise lost in Williams' work; in an early poem he expresses this attitude by metaphorically referring to youth as an island paradise.

Oh yes, we've lost our island.
Time took it from us. . . .³⁷

Chance Wayne's comment that "Nobody's young anymore"³⁸ applies to almost all of Williams' characters, and with the disappearance of their youth they become more and more aware of the aging process. Williams himself is sensitive to the problem of aging, and he says that he has "always written quite a bit about it."³⁹ One reason for his concern, he admits, is that he "is taken by surprise by how much time has passed and my being as old as I am."⁴⁰ Miriam, a character in "In the Bar of a

³⁵Williams, The Night of the Iguana, p. 67.

³⁶Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 84.

³⁷Williams, "A Separate Poem," in In the Winter of Cities, p. 126.

³⁸Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 37.

³⁹Williams, interview, The Playwrights Speak, p. 226.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Tokyo Hotel," accurately expresses Williams' and his other characters' attitude toward aging when she says that "To be old, suddenly old—no! Unacceptable to me on any terms."⁴¹ With some characters, of whom Blanche DuBois, Princes Alexandra, and Chance are classic examples, aging actually becomes a source of anxiety and alarm. Blanche, for example, after discovering that her "youth was suddenly gone up the waterspout,"⁴² becomes excessively conscious of her age. "—I'm fading now!" she tells Stella.⁴³ She tries to falsify her real age in order to deceive Mitch, but he eventually rejects her on the night of her birthday, a date which is an obvious reminder of her aging.

The work in which Williams most obviously is concerned with the loss of youth and with the destructiveness of time is Sweet Bird of Youth, the title of which comes from the early poem "The Eyes," in which he comments that "Youth is their uneasy bird. . . ."⁴⁴ To Williams youth is "sweet" in that it is a cherished and precious quality, but it is also a "bird" because it is a winged being whose swift flight through time is uncontrollable. The emphasis in this play on the value of the sweet bird and

⁴¹Tennessee Williams, "In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel," in Dragon Country (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 37.

⁴²William, Streetcar, p. 118.

⁴³Ibid., p. 79

Williams, In the Winter of Cities, p. 17.

on the destructiveness of aging is excessive. Both Chance and the Princess have lost their youth and they futilely seek to regain it on an Easter weekend, the time of resurrection and rebirth. These two characters feel the loss of beauty more intensely than most of Williams' other characters because they realize that youth and beauty are inseparable, and their only attribute was, as the Princess says, "BEAUTY!"

Princess Alexandra is a middle aged actress whose career as a sex goddess rested on her youth and beauty. "But I knew in my heart," she confesses, "that the legend of Alexander del Lago couldn't be separated from an appearance of youth. . . ." ⁴⁵ When she watched the premiere of her attempted comeback she saw how mercilessly the close-up sequences revealed the wrinkles of time on her face and realized that "I just wasn't young, not young, young." ⁴⁶ Her mourning for her lost youth is emphasized by the thematic musical composition which plays during various speeches, music which she describes as being "a sort of lament that . . . says 'Lost, lost, never to be found again'." ⁴⁷

But "The Lament" applies to Chance as much as it does to the Princess, for he has lost innocence as well as youth and beauty. He is similar

⁴⁵Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 104.

to Williams' other virile gigolos, including Val Xavier of Battle of Angels, Paola of The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone, and Chris of The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore. The characters Chance and Chris are particularly similar because both have passed their zeniths. This comment by Mrs. Goforth to Chris is equally applicable to Chance: ". . . you reasonably young people who used to be younger, . . . you get a bit older, and who doesn't get a bit older, some more than just a bit older. . . ."48

Chance realizes that he has become a bit older and that he cannot afford to age anymore. "I couldn't go past my youth," he admits, "but I've gone past it."49

The culmination of Williams' conspicuous emphasis upon the passage of time in Sweet Bird of Youth is near the end of the last act when the ticking of a clock is heard louder and louder on stage. The purpose of this audible device is to correlate cause with effect, time with downfall. Referring to an inner clock which corresponds to this ticking on stage, Chance says: "It goes tick-tick, it's quieter than your heart-beat, but it's slow dynamite, a gradual explosion. . . ."50

Williams emphasizes the destructiveness of time in Sweet Bird of Youth by associating time with castration. Chance's imminent castration

⁴⁸Williams, Milk Train, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁹Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 122.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 123.

at the hands of Tom Junior and his friends is merely a manifestation of the symbolic castration which he already has undergone at the hands of time. Time symbolically has castrated the Princess also, for she tells Chance that "Age does the same thing to a woman. . . ." ⁵¹ "She can't turn back the clock any more than can Chance," the playwright comments in a stage direction, "and the clock is equally relentless to them both." ⁵² Even Chance's childhood sweetheart, Heavenly, has had a hysterectomy, the female equivalent to castration. ". . . Dr. George Scudder's knife had cut the youth out of my body," she tells her father, "made me an old childless woman." ⁵³ Her father, Boss Finley, is also a castrated victim of time, as indicated by his mistress' graffiti: "'Boss Finley. . . is too old to cut the mustard'." ⁵⁴

There is no way to avoid this castration by time, and the Williams character realizes this fact. "I'm fully aware, of course," Miriam says in "In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel," that there's no magical trick to defend me indefinitely from the hideous product of calendars, clocks, watches." ⁵⁵ Eventually the product, time, catches up with all of Williams' characters, and they are faced with the situation of living without youth, beauty, and

⁵¹Ibid., p. 121.

⁵²Ibid., p. 122.

⁵³Ibid., p. 73.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁵Williams, "In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel," p. 13.

virility. The period after youth, as Williams writes in the poem "Those Who Ignore the Appropriate Time of Their Going," is "the time coming after that isn't meant to come after."⁵⁶ The Princess repeats this phrase in describing her retirement "to the moon," "that withered, withering country of time coming after time not meant to come after. . . ."⁵⁷ Soon after this retirement to the time coming after time not meant to come after comes the end of life itself, for the brevity of youth is a foreshadowing of the brevity of life.

The Brevity of Life

"'In the time of your life—live,'" Williams quotes William Saroyan. "That time is short and it doesn't return again," Williams remarks. "It is slipping away while I write this and while you read it, and the monosyllable of the clock is Loss, Loss, Loss. . . ."⁵⁸ Tom Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie expresses the playwright's reaction to the realization of the brevity of life when he imparts that "I shudder a little thinking how short life is. . . ."⁵⁹ To Williams, life is a short-term loan which is payable at

⁵⁶ Williams, In the Winter of Cities, p. 37.

⁵⁷ Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 37.

⁵⁸ Tennessee Williams, "On a Streetcar Named Success," New York Times, November 30, 1947, sec. II, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Williams, The Glass Menagerie, p. 77.

any time, and for Williams' characters "the short time limit runs out," he writes in "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow"; "it runs out on them and leaves them high and dry—."⁶⁰ Since life is an impermanent property, Williams sub-

mits, "we are all haunted by a truly awful sense of impermanence."⁶¹

Hannah Jelkes voices this opinion in The Night of the Iguana in commenting to Shannon that "Nonno and I have been continually reminded of the impermanence of things lately."⁶² Because human life is a temporary state and because it is affected by time, Williams views time as a diminishing factor which finally terminates a person's life. He often compares man to a clock which is gradually winding down. In "The Summer Belvedere" he refers to "the pendulum duties of the heart," and in "Carousel Tune" to men who "stop like a clock that's run down. . . ."⁶³ Each beat of the heart corresponds to the tick of a clock, both signifying the passage of time to Williams. With each heartbeat, man moves one second closer to the end of life,

for time's not cheated
a moment's quiet;
the heartbeats echo to
eternal riot.⁶⁴

⁶⁰Williams, "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow," p. 150.

⁶¹Williams, "Timeless World of a Play," sec. II, p. 1.

⁶²Williams, The Night of the Iguana, p. 111.

⁶³Williams, In the Winter of Cities, pp. 49, 95.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 109.

Because a person is bidding farewell to a part of his life as each second passes, Williams sees life as a series of goodbyes. "You're saying goodbye all the time, every minute you live," Joe says in "The Long Goodbye." "Because that's what life is, just a long goodbye!"⁶⁵ It is because man has time only for saying goodbye that Williams is preoccupied with the abstraction time. He believes that "We're working against time,"⁶⁶ as Mrs. Goforth says, and that man does not really know what life is or how to enjoy it because the final product of time, death, hovers over life like a vulture. Life is short because time devours it and death extinguishes it. As Big Mama in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof says:

Time goes by so fast. Nothin' can outrun it. Death
commences too early—almost before you're half-
acquainted with life—you meet with the other. . . .⁶⁷
(Williams' ellipses)

The "other," of course, is death.

Time's Product, Death

Williams is preoccupied personally with death because he knows that the older he becomes the closer he approaches death, and also because he is a hypochondriac with a heart murmur, an admitted neurotic

⁶⁵Williams, "The Long Goodbye," in Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 178.

⁶⁶Williams, Milk Train, p. 8.

⁶⁷Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. 117.

who believes that he is always on the verge of death. "I've always been obsessed that I'm dying of cancer, dying of heart trouble," he told one interviewer. "I think it's good for a writer to think he's dying. He works harder."⁶⁸

On the general level, Williams' preoccupation with death is a metaphysical concern. He explores the concept of death, searches for the meaning of death, and analyzes the impact and effects of death on the other persons. The relationship between time and death is that death is at the end of subjective time; after death everything is past. Because Williams does not believe in immortality, he views death in simple terms: it transforms being into non-being.

Williams sometimes uses death as a dramatic device in his works in order to reinforce his themes of the destruction of the sensitive by the insensitive and of the need for atonement and purification. In Battle of Angels, for example, an angry vindictive mob hangs the representative of life-through-love, the sensitive, primitive poet-figure who is uncorrupted by society, Val Xavier. Williams implies that in this Good Friday "crucifixion" Val, a Christ figure, is atoning for the sins of the world. In the one-act play "Auto-Da-Fe," Eloi Duvenet wishes to atone for the corruption and sin in the French Quarter of New Orleans where he lives. Because

⁶⁸Quoted in "The Angel of the Odd" (cover story), Time, March 9, 1962, p. 54.

he wants to "purify it with fire!,"⁶⁹ he sets his house aflame and locks himself in it. In another one-act play, "The Purification," Rosalio, who is guilty of killing his sister, seeks retribution and purification by stabbing himself. Earlier, when he killed his sister, a curse fell on the land in the form of a drought, but as he dies on stage the rains begin. In another of Williams' works, the short story "Desire and the Black Masseur," the frail protagonist, Anthony Burns, realizes that "the sins of the world are really only its partialities, its incompletions, and these are what sufferings must atone for,"⁷⁰ so he submits himself for atonement to a giant black masseur who violently beats and finally literally devours the little man. This short story, which reflects Williams' belief in the need for atonement because of man's incompleteness, is a realistic narrative forerunner of a later dramatic work, Suddenly Last Summer. In Suddenly Last Summer Sebastian Venable undergoes cannibalism atonement for his homosexuality. The guilt feelings which all of these characters, Val, Eloi, Rosalio, Anthony, and Sebastian, have are sexual, and their retributions are demanded by a kind of masochistic Puritanism.

In most of his plays, however, Williams uses death not only as a symbolic or thematic device, but also as a means of emphasizing the need

⁶⁹Williams, "Auto-Da-Fe," in Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 110.

⁷⁰Williams, "Desire and the Black Masseur," One Arm and Other Stories (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. 85.

to enjoy the brief time of life and of emphasizing the horror of knowing that life is a temporary state which is terminated by death. An assertion that this preoccupation with death occurs in almost every one of his works can be substantiated by viewing examples from each of his collections of poems, plays and short stories and from several full length plays.

In his earliest collection of one-act plays, American Blues, Williams has two works which explicitly deal with death. The first is "The Case of the Crushed Petunias" in which a young man representing LIFE, INCORPORATED, which is a rival firm of DEATH, UNLIMITED, suggests to Miss Dorothy Simple of Primanproper, Massachusetts, that they go to Cypress Hill, the cemetery, to listen to the advice of dead people, that advice being "Live!"; the young man's insistence upon enjoying every minute of life is vaguely reminiscent of Thornton Wilder's Our Town. The other play which deals with death in this collection is "The Long Stay Cut Short; or The Unsatisfactory Supper." At the end of this play the old family servant, Aunt Rose, dies and departs with the wind.

Another collection of short plays is Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton, in which six plays, including "Audo-Da-Fe" and "The Purification," concern death or the effects of death. One play in particular, "The Last of My Solid Gold Watches," involves old age and approaching death. Charlie Colton, who is seventy-eight years old, discovers that all of his old comrades are dead: "Marblehead" Langer, who died in a bathtub; Gus

Hamma, who burned himself to death; and Ben Summers, who simply died of "Morality." ". . . all of us ole-timers, Bob, are disappearin' fast!" he tells his young friend.⁷¹ In "Portrait of a Madonna," Miss Lucretia Collins has become a recluse since her mother died fifteen years ago. The effects of death are also a theme of "The Long Goodbye," a play in which a young man's mother, dying of cancer, recently committed suicide in order to avoid incurring a large medical bill. This is the only play in which Williams presents a positive view of death. The dead mother returns to her son to explain:

Some people think about death as being laid down in a box under earth. But I don't. To me it's the opposite, Joe, it's being let out of a box. And going upwards, not down. I don't take stock in heaven. I never did. But I do feel like there's lots of room out there and you don't have to pay rent. . . . There's freedom, Joe, and freedom's the big thing in life. It's funny that some of us don't ever get it until we're dead.⁷²

In "This Property is Condemned" a thirteen year old girl, Willie, describes her sister's morbid death from lung infection. She compares death in the movies to real death, the one "a beautiful scene" with violins and flowers, the other horrid and ghastly.

Williams' most recent collection of short plays, Dragon Country,

⁷¹Williams, "The Last of My Solid Gold Watches," p. 80.

⁷²Williams, "The Long Goodbye," p. 171.

also deals with death. In "In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel" (1969), Mark Conley, a painter whose creative struggle overcomes him, collapses and dies on the stage. In "The Mutilated" (1967), a man supposedly dies immediately before the scene begins, and the protagonist, Trinket, says: "The news of a death is shocking to anyone living. . . ." ⁷³ An early work entitled "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix" (1941), which is included in this collection, concerns the death of D. H. Lawrence. In "The Gnadiges Fraulein" (1967), the landlady of a rooming house complains of the "Dark Angel's" coming into her dormitory and carrying off one of her boarders each night. "The Frosted Glass Coffin" (1970), the title of which refers to the atmosphere of a retirement hotel which is "the last retreat of the old and dying," deals with "geriatric cases" who sit around the hotel lobby to wait for death. As one old man says: "The silent question is WHEN." ⁷⁴ In another play in Dragon Country, "Confessional," Leona, an old prostitute, mourns the "death day" of her homosexual brother. One of the characters in the bar where Leona is drinking is a disreputable doctor who describes death from an objective, medical point of view:

And death? —The wheeze of an oxygen tank, the jab
of a hypodermic needle to put out the panic light in
the dying-out eyes, tubes in the arms and the kidneys,

⁷³ Tennessee Williams, "The Mutilated," in Dragon Country (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 105.

⁷⁴ Tennessee Williams, "The Frosted Glass Coffin," in Dragon Country (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 205.

absorbent cotton inserted in the rectum to hold back the bowels discharged when the—the being stops.⁷⁵

The death motif appears in Williams' short stories as well as in his short plays. For example, in "Three Players of a Summer Game," the story on which Cat on a Hot Tin Roof is based, Brick visits his mistress, Isabel Grey, at her husband's death bed, a scene which is morbidly drawn out by Williams. Finally, Brick gives the husband a shot with a hypodermic needle and the man dies. "The Resemblance Between a Violin Case and a Coffin" is another story in Hard Candy in which a man, the owner of the violin case, dies. In the collection One Arm and Other Stories, the title story deals with a one-armed ex-boxer who murders a man and who is in turn executed for the crime; both the murder and the execution are described explicitly. "The Malediction" deals with Lucio, a lonely little man who takes the room of a Russian who recently died of tuberculosis. After learning of his imprisoned brother's death, Lucio commits suicide by drowning himself in the river.

Death also plays a part in most of Williams' full length plays. In Battle of Angels, for instance, Jake Torrance is a Pluto figure who is dying of cancer, Myra is fatally wounded by her husband, Cassandra is drowned in the river, and Val is hanged. In Summer and Smoke John

⁷⁵Tennessee Williams, "Confessional," in Dragon Country (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 169.

describes his mother's death; he decides to discontinue practicing medicine because of the constant closeness with death; Alma fears that she will not live through the summer; and old Dr. Buchanan dies on stage. In Camino Real, Byron describes Shelley's drowning and the burning of his corpse; the police shoot a desert wanderer at the water well; the Street-cleaners, who are death figures, pick up bodies on the Camino Real; and Kilroy dies in block fourteen. In The Night of the Iguana Maxine describes her husband's death and burial; Nonno relates that Hannah's parents were killed in an automobile accident; Hannah describes the House for the Dying" which she saw in Shanghai; and Nonno dies after completing his poem. There is even death in the comedy The Rose Tattoo; before the play opens Serafina's husband is slain while smuggling narcotics in his banana truck. The entire conflict of Suddenly Last Summer revolves around the way in which Sebastian died. In Kingdom of Earth Chicken, Lot's half brother, is waiting for Lot to die so that he can inherit the estate. Commenting on the condition of Lot's failing lungs, Chicken says: "One's gone, he told me, and the other one's going. Limit: six months. Now passed."⁷⁶ And in Sweet Bird of Youth each character is surrounded by death. The Princess mentions the death of one of her lovers, Franz Albertzart, and refers to a heart disease that places an early terminal

⁷⁶Tennessee Williams, Kingdom of Earth; The Seven Descents of Myrtle (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 34.

date on her life. Chance and George Scudder discuss the death of Chance's mother, and Chance tells the Princess that his fear of being killed in war, of "being blacked out like some arithmetic problem washed off a blackboard by a wet sponge,"⁷⁷ caused him to have a nervous breakdown when he was in the navy. Boss Finley describes his wife's death and also says that he probably will die of a coronary. Heavenly refers to the "embalmers" who took the life out of her body when she underwent her operation.

The three major plays in which Williams deals most consciously with death, however, are A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore. In Streetcar he uses death as a motivating force and shows the effects of loved ones' deaths on the heroine. When he wrote this play, Williams thought he was dying, for "without the idea of imminent death," he admits, "I doubt that I could have created Blanche DuBois."⁷⁸ He uses death as a motive which influences and at times determines Blanche's actions. The death of Allan Grey, her young homosexual husband, for example, becomes a source of constant guilt and mental suffering for her. Later the deaths of her relatives affected her psychological condition.

⁷⁷Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 53.

⁷⁸Tennessee Williams, "Happiness is Relevant," New York Times, March 24, 1968, sec. II, p. 3.

All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard! Father, mother! Margaret, that dreadful way! So big with it, it couldn't be put in a coffin! But had to be burned like rubbish! You just came home in time for the funerals, Stella. And funerals are pretty compared to death. Funerals are quiet, but deaths—not always. Sometimes their breathing is hoarse, and sometimes it rattles, and sometimes they even cry out to you, "Don't let me go." . . . I saw! Saw! Saw! . . . And old Cousin Jessie's right after Margaret's, hers! Why, the Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our doorstep!⁷⁹

Blanche's own psychological death is inevitable in this play because she is the last representative of a dying civilization. She senses the atmosphere of death that surrounds her and she unconsciously realizes that the blind Mexican vendor's cries "Flores paras los muertos" applies to her. The fact that Mitch's previous love affair ended in the death of the girl is a foreshadowing of the termination of his relationship with Blanche. Mitch is also in contact with death at his home, where his mother is dying.

Death is also an intruder into the Pollitt house in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Williams uses the news that Big Daddy is dying as a means of intensifying emotions and domestic problems in the Pollitt family. Big Daddy, who is dying of cancer, is "on the doorstep of death," as Maggie says. Big Daddy's thoughts on life, mortality, and death are evoked by his fear of dying, a fear that causes him to re-examine his life and to

⁷⁹Williams, Streetcar, pp. 26-27.

consider the dilemma of mankind. "Ignorance—of mortality—is a comfort," he tells Brick. "A man don't have that comfort, he's the only living thing that conceives of death, that knows what it is."⁸⁰ Although Big Daddy is the only one who contemplates the meaning of death, each character is affected by death. Brick is affected more than the others because he has been affected also by Skipper's death, one for which he feels partially guilty. "That boy," Big Mama says, referring to Brick, "is just broken up over Skipper's death."⁸¹ Other deaths mentioned in this play are those of Jack Straw and Peter Ochello, the previous owners of the plantation.

In The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore Williams presents the last two days of Mrs. Goforth's life. Mrs. Goforth, described by Blackie as a "dying monster", receives a visit from Chris Flanders, the "Angel of Death" who "has the bad habit of coming to call on a lady just a step or two ahead of the undertaker."⁸² Chris considers it his "professional duty to help old persons to accept death, and they reward him generously for his services. He describes the many clients who have employed his services, the first being an old man whom he led into the ocean to drown.

⁸⁰Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. 68.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 101.

⁸²Williams, Milk Train, p. 47.

Descriptions of death pervade the entire play: Mrs. Goforth describes her first husband's death which occurred while they were in the act of making love; she tells of her fourth husband's death in an automobile accident; she refers to many deaths in her memoirs; she receives the news of the deaths of three friends; and she describes the tombs of the Pharaohs in the pyramids. The play itself is Mrs. Goforth's "fierce contest with death,"⁸³ Williams comments, her battle against going forth.

That Williams is obsessed with man's battle against death is evident from the number of deaths which occur in his work and those to which he merely alludes, for in both cases he goes into the details meticulously, sometimes technically, and always morbidly. His obsession with death is a logical extension of his preoccupation with time because both he and his characters realize that the direction of time is negative and that the conclusion of this negative direction is death. This realization, therefore, motivates them to seek an escape from time and its final product, death.

Escapisms

In order to escape time and death, Williams' characters employ various escape devices. Some characters seek escape through fantasy, some through liquor and narcotics, others through physical flight, and still

⁸³Ibid., p. 104.

others through sexual relations.

Williams himself uses a combination of these devices. "Time rushes toward us with its hospital tray of infinitely varied narcotics," he states, "even while it is preparing us for its inevitably fatal operation."⁸⁴ The inevitability of time's passing and of death's approaching, he seems to say, drives man to escapisms, including not only narcotics per se but also fantasy, flight, and sexuality. One of Williams' main escapes, however, is writing.

At the age of fourteen I discovered writing as an escape from the world of reality in which I felt acutely uncomfortable. It immediately became my place of retreat, my cave, my refuge.⁸⁵

Later he states that the reason for his being a compulsive writer is that he feels as though he must be "creating imaginary worlds into which I can retreat from the real world. . . ."⁸⁶ In retreating from the physical world, Williams believes that he is approaching reality. "It is only in his work," he submits, "that an artist can find reality and satisfaction. . . ."⁸⁷

Other escape techniques which Williams acknowledges using are

⁸⁴Williams, "Timeless World of a Play," sec. II, p. 3.

⁸⁵Tennessee Williams, "Williams' Wells of Violence," New York Times, March 8, 1959, sec. II, p. 1.

⁸⁶From an interview with J. E. Booth and Lewis Funke, "Williams on Williams," Theatre Arts, XLVI (January, 1962), 73.

⁸⁷Williams, "Streetcar Named Success," sec. II, p. 3.

flight, alcohol, and drugs. He has a long history of resorting to physical flight in times of frustration and anxiety. After the success of The Glass Menagerie, for instance, he went to Mexico in order to avoid what he called the catastrophe of success. Later he went back to St. Louis "as a refugee from the shock of sudden fame, but the flight was not far enough to serve its purpose," he comments.⁸⁸ Another attempted flight involving a play was after the opening of Orpheus Descending when, hoping to avoid the unfavorable reviews, he booked a flight to Hong Kong, only to miss the plane.⁸⁹ As for his consumption of alcohol, Williams has freely admitted that he used to drink at least a pint of liquor a day and that when he felt an abnormal "sense of impermanence," he drank "martinis almost as fast as I can snatch them from the tray."⁹⁰ He has been known to take "goof-balls," as he calls them, and to wash them down with martinis.⁹¹ In the 1962 cover story on Williams, Time reported that he drinks at least a half of a fifth of liquor a day, takes half a Dexamyl to pep up, takes one and a half Seconals to ease his nerves, and two Miltowns to sleep.⁹² In

⁸⁸Tennessee Williams, "The Writing Is Honest," New York Times, March 16, 1958, sec. II, p. 1.

⁸⁹Stang, "20 Years After," sec. II, p. 3.

⁹⁰Williams, "Timeless World of a Play," sec. II, p. 1.

⁹¹Tennessee Williams, "Tennessee, Never Talk to an Actress," New York Times, May 4, 1969, sec. II, p. 16.

⁹²"Angel of the Odd," p. 54.

1969 he entered a St. Louis hospital "for treatment of the effects of prolonged use of a variety of sleeping pills. . . ." ⁹³

Williams' characters are as mobile and anesthetized as he is, since they often are reflections of their creator. But it is an oversimplification to state that each time a character takes a drink of liquor, for example, that he is trying to escape from the past, or time, or death. Stanley Kowalski, for instance, drinks because he enjoys drinking; it is part of his hedonistic personality. And even when a character is attempting an escape, it is not necessarily an escape from time or the past, but from reality, pain, or truth. Alma, for example, takes sleeping pills to escape from repression and restrictions, and Brick drinks to escape truth. But even when the reasons for escape superficially may not seem to be related to the causes implied, they often are. Alma's escape from repression is really an escape from the morals and institutions of the past, and Brick's escape from truth is closely associated with escape from the death of Skipper and the expected one of Big Daddy. The real motives for a character's escaping, then, often are founded in time, death, or the past, and the escape motif in relation to these phenomena is an integral part of Williams' characterization in many works.

Although this escape motif occurs in almost all of Williams' plays,

⁹³"Tennessee Williams III," New York Times, October 4, 1969, sec. I, p. 24.

it is particularly prominent in The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, and Sweet Bird of Youth. The escape motif forms both the thematic and the motivational basis of The Glass Menagerie, for each of its characters is seeking an escape from the present situation. Amanda escapes mentally into the past. Laura finds escape in her phonograph records and her glass collection, which are symbols that signify her mental escape and withdrawal. As Tom says of his sister: "She lives in a world of her own—a world of—little glass ornaments. . . ." ⁹⁴

The real escape artist in this play, however, is Tom Wingfield. He feels as though he is trapped in a coffin, and that he must either escape or die. He tells Laura of seeing a magician who escaped from a nailed coffin, and says: "There is a trick that would come in handy for me—get me out of this 2 by 4 situation!" ⁹⁵ The symbols of escape for Tom are the fire-escape, which he calls "a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth," ⁹⁶ and the portrait of the escaped father, the man who fell in love with long distance and never returned. Tom wishes to follow his father's fleeting footsteps. "I'm like my father," he tells Jim. "The bastard son of a bastard." ⁹⁷ Like his father, Tom begins to drink excessively. This fact about the father's drinking as an escape is autobiographical,

⁹⁴Williams, The Glass Menagerie, p. 59.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 32.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 3.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 77.

for Williams states that after his father stopped traveling in his job he became "a terribly unhappy man who could only escape his unhappiness through the bottle. . . ."98

But Tom Wingfield's drinking is only one of several means of escape; writing is another. Like Williams, Tom finds an escape in his writing, and "Shakespeare," as Jim calls Tom, eventually was fired at the warehouse for writing poems on shoe box lids. Still another means of escape for Tom is the synthetic escape of the movies which he goes to in order to experience vicariously the adventure and action for which he eagerly yearns. He projects himself into the role of the swashbuckling hero and identifies with the lover-adventurer on the movie screen. When his mother questions his going so frequently to the movies, he replies:

I'm going to opium dens! Yes, opium dens of vice and criminals' hang-outs, Mother. I've joined the Hogan gang, I'm a hired assassin, I carry a tommygun in a violin case! I run a string of cat-houses in the Valley! They call me Killer, Killer Wingfield, I'm leading a double-life, a simple, honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic czar of the underworld, Mother. I go to gambling casinos, I spin away fortunes on the roulette table! I wear a patch over one eye and a false mustache, sometimes I put on green whiskers. On those occasions they call me—El Diablo! 99

⁹⁸Quoted in Robert Rice, "A Man Named Tennessee," New York Post, May 4, 1958, drama section.

⁹⁹Williams, The Glass Menagerie, p. 28.

Although this description of himself is humorous, it is not completely in jest. Tom would actually like to become the fictional character which he has created. "You live in a dream," Amanda tells him, "you manufacture illusions!"¹⁰⁰ The illusions are prefabricated in the form of movies, and that is why he goes to them. But the movies are not enough, and Tom finally decides to act on his own. "I'm tired of the movies," he says, "and I am about to move!"¹⁰¹ So he physically leaves his home to wander about, to see the world, to sail the seas. "I didn't go to the moon," he tells the audience, "I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places—."¹⁰² But still Tom has not escaped because he is haunted by the past and is unable to blow out Laura's candles and his own memories.

In A Streetcar Named Desire Blanche is the character who employs escape devices. She flees from Laurel, Mississippi to New Orleans in order to get away from death, decay, and scandal. While still in Laurel she employed sexual promiscuity as a means of escaping the memory of her husband's death. "After the death of Allen—" she tells Mitch, "intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with."¹⁰³ Blanche also uses alcohol as an escapism because, as Mitchell

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁰³ Williams, Streetcar, p. 117.

Leaska maintains, the imbibition of alcohol allows a quick return to her romantic self-image, and it weakens her inhibitions derivative of her Victorian background so that she can indulge in sexual gratification.¹⁰⁴ Another means of escape for Blanche is illusion, manifestations of which are her deceitfulness and her aversion to strong light, both of which are attempts to escape from reality. "I don't want realism," she tells Mitch, "I want magic!"¹⁰⁵ The song which she sings while bathing is typical of her whole attitude toward life.

It's a Barnum and Baily world,
Just as phony as it can be—
But it wouldn't be make-believe
If you believed in me!¹⁰⁶

She creates make-believe worlds into which she can retreat and she expects other characters to believe in them, also. While some fantasies can be productive in that they maintain fruitful motivation, Blanche's fantasies are not only non-productive, they are detrimental because they are divorced from reality. The reason for her fleeing into a dream existence is her need to be a lady—admired, loved, and respected by gentlemen. In order to satisfy this need, she retreats into a psychological world, one

¹⁰⁴ Mitchell A. Leaska, The Voice of Tragedy (New York: Robert Spellers and Sons, 1963), p. 280.

¹⁰⁵ Williams, Streetcar, p. 117.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 99.

reminiscent of the aristocratic Old South, and her cavalier-hero in this myth is an old beau, Shep Huntleigh, a Texas millionaire who invites her on a Carribbean cruise. Stanley, however, realizes that Blanche's tale is a fictitious one. "There isn't a goddam thing but imagination!" he tells her.¹⁰⁷ Her imagination has transformed ego defense mechanisms into illusions, illusions into fantasies, and fantasies into psychosis. Her final escape is into the world of insanity.

In Sweet Bird of Youth both Chance and the Princess are trying to escape from the effects of time, but as Benjamin Nelson points out "there is no escape from the malignancy of time."¹⁰⁸ After her attempted comeback, the Princess took to "Flight, just flight," she says, and "wandered like a nomad," for "after failure comes flight."¹⁰⁹ Like other Williams characters in their attempts to escape from time and the past, the Princess moves in space, a dimension in which she can go backward, forward, upward, downward, or not move at all. She is seeking escape from time by moving into another dimension, by taking refuge in spatial flight, by trying to find the meaning in physical space which she cannot find in the nonspatial continuum of time. Another means of escape for the Princess is sexual

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin Nelson, Tennessee Williams: The Man and His Work (New York: Ivan Obolesnsky, 1961), p. 271.

¹⁰⁹ Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, pp. 38, 37, 104, respectively.

indulgence. "I have only one way to forget these things I don't want to remember," she tells Chance, "and that's through the act of making love."¹¹⁰ Both she and Chance also use alcohol as an escape. Before driving into St. Cloud, they bought three bottles of Vodka "to get us through it without us being dehydrated too severely. . . ."¹¹¹ Both of them also take goof-balls with Vodka, much as Williams admits doing. When Aunt Nonnie questions Chance about his taking a pill with alcohol, he replies: "Yes, I took a wild dream and—washed it down with another wild dream, Aunt Nonnie, that's my life now. . . ."¹¹² (Williams' ellipses). Goof-balls are not the only form of drug which this pair uses; they also smoke Moroccan hashish. They are at that point in life when "you die, or find something else," the Princess says. "This is my something else," she asserts, smoking her hashish. All of these escapisms are means of forgetting the fact that they are no longer youthful and innocent but are declining either in beauty or morality or both.

The escape motif plays a minor role in some of Williams's other works. In "Moony's Kid Don't Cry," an early one-act play, the protagonist decides to escape the responsibilities of family life by going to the North woods, but in the closing lines he changes his mind. Several

¹¹⁰
Ibid., p. 47.

¹¹¹
Ibid., p. 33.

¹¹²
Ibid., p. 81.

characters use narcotics, such as Miriam in "In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel" who smokes Red Panama, and two other heroines use moderate sedatives, Hannah's being poppyseed tea, and Alma's being sleeping pills. In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof Brick's psychological crutch is his liquor, which is his means of "dodging away from life."¹¹³ To Brick, life is a trap of mendacity, and "Liquor is one way out an' death's the other," he explains to Big Daddy.¹¹⁴ "A drinking man's someone," Brick says, "who wants to forget he isn't still young an' believing."¹¹⁵ So he drinks until he hears the click in his head which signifies that he has reached the point of peaceful amnesia. His friend Skipper was also a heavy drinker, and Maggie states that he was "a receptacle for liquor and drugs. . . ."¹¹⁶ To emphasize the importance of the escape motif in this play, Williams uses the liquor cabinet as a prop, and calls it a "little shrine to virtually all the comforts and illusions behind which we hide. . . ."¹¹⁷

In Summer and Smoke Williams presents another hero who drinks excessively, John Buchanan, who imbibes "Liquid dynamite" to ease his "demoniac unrest." Another character in Summer and Smoke, Mrs. Winemiller, finds escape from obsolete gentility in a peculiar form of neurosis. A similar situation in which a woman slips into neurotic fantasy is in "The Lady

¹¹³Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. 81.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 83.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 45.

¹¹⁷Williams, "Notes for the Designer," in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. xiv.

of Larkspur Lotion," where Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore, a destitute prostitute, imagines that she is a titled lady, a Hapsburg, with a Brazilian rubber plantation. There is an autobiographical touch to this play in that the prostitute is defended from persecution by a derelict writer who dreams of literary success. He defends both himself and Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore from the landlady, Mrs. Wire.

—suppose that I, to make this nightmare bearable for as long as I must continue to be the helpless protagonist of it—suppose that I ornament, illuminate—glorify it! With dreams and fictions and fancies! Such as the existence of a 780-page masterpiece—impending Broadway productions—marvelous volumes of verse in the hands of publishers only waiting for signatures to release them! Suppose that I live in this world of pitiful fiction!¹¹⁸

The reference to Broadway productions, which was more of a prophecy than a dream, and the fact that the writer introduces himself as "Chekhov! Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov!", who was an early influence on Williams, both point to the fact that the writer in this play is the aspiring young Williams. A final character who finds escape in imagination and occasionally in drink is Lawrence Shannon in The Night of the Iguana, whose life is split between the realistic and the fantastic. Like the imprisoned iguana and many of Williams' other characters, he is futilely trying to escape.

¹¹⁸Tennessee Williams, "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion," in Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 70.

The escape motif in these works is a part of and a result of the fact that Williams' characters are captured and tortured by time. The more accutely they realize that time is running out and that they are losing beauty, growing old, and approaching death, the more they try to escape and the faster they fall. "Time is passing," Williams wrote in an early version of Sweet Bird of Youth, "and we are all being pushed down the road to dusty death."¹¹⁹ It is this realization and all of its implications that motivates his characters. That the destructiveness of time is a major theme in Williams' work is undeniable; the real question is, how does it affect his dramatic art?

119 Quoted in Donahue, Dramatic World, p. 227.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARTIST EFFECT OF WILLIAMS'

TEMPORAL PREOCCUPATION

The manner in which an artist views time definitely affects his work, for time, as Hans Meyerhoff notes, "is inseparable from the concept of the self."¹ Meyerhoff further comments that there is a functional correlation and interdependence among time, self, and the work of art so that they mutually exhibit the same pattern of unity and identity.² To understand a writer's work, then, one must enter into and comprehend the structure and philosophy of his world, both of which are based to a large degree on his views of the past and of time.

In the dramatic works of Tennessee Williams time past and time passing play a principal role because he views life primarily in its relation to time; his view of time, therefore, is basic to his underlying philosophy of life. He views these temporal elements as determinants which influence not only the action, pattern of characterization, and philosophy of his plays, but human experience in general.

¹Hans Meyerhoff, Time in Literature (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 37.

Williams is intrigued by the interaction of time and human experience because there is no experience, mental or physical, that does not have a temporal component. In his works, which are studies of the erosive effects of time upon humanity, he has a sustained preoccupation with the decaying effect of time on man and with the individual's reaction to this decaying force. In order to dramatize time's wearing away of life, he condenses into a concentrated amount of time the attrition of the years upon the human personality. Williams' view of the impact and effects of time has been consistent throughout his dramatic career, from The Glass Menagerie to Dragon Country. In fact, the philosophies and values of his characters are shaped predominantly by their concepts of and their attitudes toward time passing and time past to such a degree that one can evaluate a Williams character in terms of the character's adaptation to the impact of time. But the relationship between time and characterization is simply a reflection of the playwright's general philosophy toward time.

Williams' philosophical attitude toward time is essentially existential. Like Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and other existentialists, Williams dwells on the principle of the temporality of life and perceives man as a time-haunted being. Man is trapped in a life-world which gradually is being destroyed by time, and it is because he realizes his situation, the fact that being is slowly but inevitably turning into nonbeing, that man experiences anxiety and loneliness. Man is

pitted alone against the destructive, irreversible force, time, and he must constantly strive for personal meaning. But time's flight toward death and nothingness takes away meaning and makes life futile, if not absurd.

Although Williams views time existentially, he employs it deterministically in his drama. He sees time as the primary environmental force over which man has no control, a force comparable to "Fate" because it predetermines a character's actions. His characters are not free agents, but victims of time; they react according to their past, their situation, their age, and their life philosophy, all of which concern time.

The role of time in Williams' plays is comparable to that of the Greek Fates, Atropos, Clotho, and Lachesis, the goddesses who governed human destiny by spinning their threads of life. For Williams, time replaces the Weird Sisters of Macbeth and assumes the role of Providence, Fate, or Destiny. Just as the Fates were armed with shears with which they could cut short a person's life thread, time in Williams' work is capable of severing relationships, maiming beauty, castrating youth, and annihilating life itself. Time seems to cut short the period of youth and to dispatch arbitrarily its assassin, death, at will. If time is Fate in Williams' drama, it is a malevolent Fate, for as time passes, the Williams character inevitably falls in stature.

Because the nature of this fateful time is essentially destructive, Williams' characterization follows a pattern of decline and degradation,

a pattern to which almost every one of his protagonists conforms. Finding a Williams hero or heroine in a superior position at the end of a play is almost inconceivable. Either the protagonists fall socially, financially, mentally, or physically, or else they die or are inescapably doomed. Examples of such fallen protagonists are numerous: Amanda Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie; Blanche DuBois in A Streetcar Named Desire; Alma Wine-miller in Summer and Smoke; Val Xavier and Myra Torrance in Battle of Angels; Brick and Big Daddy Pollitt in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof; Chance and the Princess in Sweet Bird of Youth; Shannon in The Night of the Iguana; Mrs. Goforth in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore; and Lot in Kingdom of Earth. This pattern of fallen characters is one which Williams created in his earliest writings, and it is one which has persisted throughout his dramatic career.

Although these characters are already worn out by time before they reach the beginning of a play, they have not been in inferior states all of their lives. Williams substantiates through dialogue the fact that these characters once were in superior positions—in states of innocence, of good health, of youth and beauty, of social and financial security, and of mental stability. Amanda, for example, in talking with her children and with the gentleman caller, relates the fact that she was once a beautiful Southern belle with social and financial security, but all of her expectations failed to materialize and she now lives in a St. Louis slum, deserted

by her husband, burdened with a crippled daughter, and dependent upon an unreliable and irresponsible son. Like Amanda, Blanche once had the security afforded by a Southern plantation society, and before her marriage and the deaths of her family members she lived a life of innocence and bliss. Time, however, affects not only her social and financial position, but also her morality and psychology, for with the passing years and the subsequent traumas, Blanche loses her innocence by turning to sexual promiscuity and alcohol and, in an attempt to justify and to escape from her moral degradation, she retreats into fantasies of the past and eventually loses contact with reality. Her fall in time is the most complete and the most tragic of all of Williams' characters because it is one in which the heroine begins with everything and ends with nothing, though she has fought desperately to maintain her qualities and faculties. Another heroine whose downfall is a moral one is Alma Winemiller, who reverses her role as a pious preacher's daughter to an easy prey for traveling salesmen. That time is associated closely with morality in this and other Williams plays is pointed out by Father Desmond Reid, who states that Williams' characters are not totally responsible for their "immoral" behavior because their antecedent events (the past) and degraded circumstances (time passing) lessen their culpability.³ In Sweet Bird of Youth the

³Desmond Reid, "Tennessee Williams," Studies: An Irish Quarterly (Winter, 1957), pp. 438-439.

Princess' degeneration is physical and artistic, as well as moral. Once a beautiful cinema star, she is now a decadent and aging "monster" who uses drugs, alcohol, and young men to forget what time has done to her. Although she is called back to Hollywood at the end of the play, she still cannot turn back the hands of time and her triumph undoubtedly will be shortlived. Another aging actress whose beauty has faded and whose life is terminating is Mrs. Goforth. Although like the Princess, she is financially secure, her material success merely emphasizes her emptiness and loneliness, for she dies an unloved and forgotten woman.

The male protagonists in Williams' plays decline as rapidly as do their female counterparts. Brick Pollitt, for instance, was once a collegiate football star whose career in professional football was "intercepted by time," so he became a sports announcer and finally a professional drinker. Big Daddy has worked his way up from hired hand to owner of a twenty-eight thousand acre Delta plantation only to find out that he is dying of cancer. Chance Wayne was a prospective young actor with a handsome appearance, but as time passed his chances waned and he is now an aging gigolo, a "criminal degenerate," and a receptacle for drugs and alcohol. The most devastating deterioration of a male protagonist in Williams' plays, however, is that of Shannon, whose remarkable background and impressive credentials attest to his previous social and moral superiority: ". . . the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, D. D., noted

world traveler, lecturer, son of a minister and grandson of a bishop, and the direct descendant of two colonial governors."⁴ But in the context of the play he has lost his former prestige and dignity, for he is now a guide for a travel agency, Blake Tours. Previously he had conducted around-the-world tours for Cook's Tours, an agency which catered to Wall Street Financiers, but he has dropped a level even in this profession, for he now is conducting a group of old maid schoolteachers from a Texas Baptist female college for Blake Tours, and, in evaluating the extent of his degradation, Shannon points out that "There's nothing lower than Blake Tours. . . ."⁵ At the end of the play, however, Shannon is even in a lower state; he passively stays with the widow Faulk as her lover to help her manage the hotel and to "take care of the women" guests there.

On a general level, Williams seems to indicate that the pattern of degradation and final disintegration of his characters is the pattern that modern civilization is following. The personal disintegration of his characters is the crisis of the world, and the manner in which his characters view time is a microcosm of the world. Williams is saying that time is running out not only for his characters but also for the human race.

Closely associated with this theme is Williams' preoccupation with the

⁴Williams, The Night of the Iguana, p. 90.

⁵Ibid., p. 13.

past, which he views as an attempt to demonstrate modern man's frustration and dissatisfaction with the present. This idea of a past-present conflict is especially evident in the early Southern gentlewomen plays in which the old, romantic way of life is brought into direct conflict with the urban, industrial way of life. The question the playwright poses is whether sensitivity, as represented by the agrarian past, must be eradicated by the present mechanized society. In effect, from the outcomes of these and later plays, Williams is saying that the cruelty and injustice of modern society destroys the sensitive, artistic nonconformist, and that unless this pattern is reversed, society will lose the saviors, the Val Xaviers, of the world.

It is interesting to examine how Williams' emphasis upon the importance of the past has affected his dramatic career. On the one hand, his personal past and the historical past of the South have furnished him with subject matter and have served as sources of creativity by presenting him with experiences, impressions, and ideas. He drew from the past both for his characterization and his themes, and his blending of the two created a new atmosphere in the American theatre of the 1940's and 1950's. But now his autobiographical approach to writing, which was employed with effectiveness in such early plays as The Glass Menagerie and Streetcar, has become more of a limitation than an attribute. Just as his early critics wondered if Williams had met any persons other than declining

Southern belles, one now wonders if he can portray any other types than the ones which he established early in his career and which he has employed numerous times. These established "types" include the fragile, pathetic Southern gentlewomen (Myra Torrance, Amanda Wingfield, Blanche DuBois, Alma Winemiller), the virile Lawrencean hero who is at times a rebel, a dreamer, or a failure (Val Xavier, Brick Pollitt, Chance Wayne), and at other times a brutal, insensitive animal (Stanley Kowalski), the desperate, sensuous, domineering woman (Maggie Pollitt, Princess Kosmonopolis, Cassandra Whiteside), and the degenerate artist (Karen Stone, Chris Flanders, Sebastian Venable). Not only does he portray these same established character types in his plays, but he also employs them in established themes which he found early in his career. These themes, however, are by no means limited, but are almost as encompassing as the scope of human existence. They include the decadence of Southern aristocracy, the conflict between the sensitive and the insensitive, the consequences of nonconformity, the conflict between illusion and reality, the search for beauty in an ugly world, the conflict between spirit and flesh, and the one which bridges all of the others, the destructiveness of time.

Williams' reliance upon the past for his inspiration, ideas, and characterization may inhibit his creativity and stifle his originality and genius as a playwright. He may be robbing himself of the full potential

of his dramatic intelligence by repeated use of the same material under various guises. His extensive reliance upon memory and subjectivity has resulted in repetition and recapitulation of old themes and character types. He "re-uses so much material," Gerald Weales states, "that the past and the present sometimes lie side by side in a single work" because of his "continual preoccupation with the same themes, the same kinds of characters."⁶ These recurring characteristics, Falk points out, make "the writing of Tennessee Williams a kind of study in parallels and repetitions and variations."⁷ The playwright himself realizes that he seems to be caught in an artistic squirrel cage and admits: "The more I go on, the more difficult it becomes not to repeat myself,"⁸ and "It's hard to get new subjects to write about."⁹

Even though Williams uses the same themes and character types repeatedly, they are broad and numerous enough to allow constant development and expansion in varied ways. Perhaps his real fault, contends Allan Lewis, lies not in pursuing the same themes but in failing to expand and

⁶Gerald Weales, American Drama Since World War II (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 19.

⁷Signi Falk, Tennessee Williams (New York: Twayne, 1961), p. 18.

⁸Quoted in Signi Falk, "The Profitable World of Tennessee Williams," Modern Drama, I (December, 1958), 174.

⁹Quoted in Lincoln Barnett, "Tennessee Williams," Life, February 16, 1948, p. 113.

enrich them.¹⁰ In the opinion of some critics, he has failed to maintain the artistic consistency of his previous poetic and dramatic excellence and has failed to create characters comparable to his early ones.

Part of Williams' inability to write as well as he once did may be that his creativity simply has waned. The pattern of decline which he employs in his characterization may ironically be applicable to him, also. His early and sudden rise to fame as a dramatic genius reached an early peak and has declined steadily over the past twenty years. Most critics believe that his earliest plays, The Glass Menagerie and Streetcar, are still by far his best ones, and that his only worthy achievements in more than two decades have been Suddenly Last Summer and The Night of the Iguana. Four more plays of only limited artistic accomplishment are Summer and Smoke, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Camino Real, and Sweet Bird of Youth, all of which are repetitious reworkings of earlier short stories and one-act plays; and he has had numerous dramatic failures, both literarily and financially, such as Orpheus Descending, Period of Adjustment, The Eccentricities of a Nightingale, and more recently The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, Kingdom of Earth, and Slapstick Tragedy.

It may be that time has caught up with Tennessee Williams, just as it does with his protagonists. As Chance Wayne says: Time—who could

¹⁰Allan Lewis, American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965), p. 65.

defeat it ever?"¹¹ Williams may well ask his audience, as does
Chance, not for understanding, "Just for your recognition of me in you,
and the enemy, time, in us all."¹²

¹¹ Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 123.

¹² Ibid., p. 124.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

A. Works

Congreve, William. The Complete Plays of William Congreve. Edited by Herbert Davis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Cooke, John Esten. Surry of Eagle's-Nest. New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1894.

Faulkner, William. Light in August. New York: Modern Library, 1959.

_____. The Sound and the Fury. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.

Glasgow, Ellen. "The Past." The Collected Stories of Ellen Glasgow. Edited by Richard K. Meeker. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963.

_____. The Sheltered Life. New York: Book League of America, 1932.

Gordon, Caroline. Old Red and Other Stories. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963.

Moore, Merrill. "The Noise That Time Makes" (poem). The Fugitive, IV (December, 1925), 112.

O'Neill, Eugene. Nine Plays. New York: Modern Library, 1959.

Proust, Marcel. The Past Recaptured. Translated by Frederick A. Blossom. New York: Modern Library, 1951.

Shakespeare, William. Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets. Edited by Hyder Edward Rollins. Vol. I. London: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1944.

- Warren, Robert Penn. "Blackberry Winter." The Circus & Other Stories. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1947.
- _____. Selected Poems: New and Old, 1923-1966. New York: Random House, 1966.
- Welty, Eudora. "Old Mr. Marblehall." Selected Stories of Eudora Welty. New York: Modern Library, 1966.
- Williams, Tennessee. "Auto-Da-Fe." Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays. New York: New Directions, 1945.
- _____. Camino Real. New York: New Directions, 1953.
- _____. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Signet Book. New York: New American Library, 1955.
- _____. "Confessional." Dragon Country: A Book of Plays. New York: New Directions, 1970.
- _____. "The Dark Room." American Blues: Five Short Plays. Acting Edition. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1948.
- _____. "Desire and the Black Masseur." One Arm and Other Stories. New York: New Directions, 1967.
- _____. "The Frosted Glass Coffin." Dragon Country: A Book of Plays. New York: New Directions, 1970.
- _____. The Glass Menagerie. New York: New Directions, 1966.
- _____. "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow." Dragon Country: A Book of Plays. New York: New Directions, 1970.
- _____. "In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel." Dragon Country: A Book of Plays. New York: New Directions, 1970.
- _____. In the Winter of Cities (poems). New York: New Directions, 1964.
- _____. Kingdom of Earth; The Seven Descents of Myrtle. New York: New Directions, 1968.

- Williams, Tennessee. "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion." Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays. New York: New Directions, 1945.
- _____. "The Last of My Solid Gold Watches." Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays. New York: New Directions, 1945.
- _____. "The Long Goodbye." Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays. New York: New Directions, 1945.
- _____. "The Malediction." One Arm and Other Stories. New York: New Directions, 1967.
- _____. The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore. New York: New Directions, 1964.
- _____. "The Mutilated." Dragon Country: A Book of Plays. New York: New Directions, 1970.
- _____. The Night of the Iguana. Signet Book. New York: New American Library, 1961.
- _____. "Portrait of a Girl in Glass." One Arm and Other Stories. New York: New Directions, 1967.
- _____. A Streetcar Named Desire. Signet Book. New York: New American Library, 1947.
- _____. Summer and Smoke. Acting Edition. New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1950.
- _____. Sweet Bird of Youth. Signet Book. New York: New American Library, 1959.
- _____. "Two on a Party." Hard Candy: A Book of Stories. New York: New Directions, 1967.
- Wolfe, Thomas. "Dark in the Forest, Strange as Time." From Death to Morning. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.

Wolfe, Thomas. Look Homeward, Angel: A Story of the Buried Life. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.

_____. "The Lost Day." The Hills Beyond. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964.

_____. "No Door" (short story). Scribner's Magazine, XCIV (July, 1933), 7-12, 46-56.

_____. Of Time and the River. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.

B. Articles and Essays

Bishop, John Peale. "The Discipline of Poetry." The Collected Essays of John Peale Bishop. Edited by Edmund Wilson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.

Strindberg, August. "The Author's Preface to Miss Julie." Seven Plays. Translated by Arvid Paulson. New York: Bantam Books, 1968.

Williams, Tennessee. "Concerning the Timeless World of a Play." New York Times, January 14, 1951, sec. II, pp. 1,3.

_____. "Happiness Is Relevant." New York Times, March 24, 1968, sec. II, pp. 1,3.

_____. "On the 'Camino Real'." New York Times, March 15, 1953, sec. II, pp. 1,3.

_____. "On A Streetcar Named Success." New York Times, November 30, 1947, sec. II, pp. 1,3.

_____. "Person to Person." Foreword to Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Signet Book. New York: New American Library, 1955.

_____. "Prelude to a Comedy." New York Times, November 6, 1960, sec. II, pp. 1,3.

_____. "Tennessee, Never Talk to an Actress." New York Times, May 4, 1969, sec. II, pp. 1, 16.

Williams, Tennessee. "Tennessee Williams on the Past, the Present and the Perhaps." New York Times, March 17, 1957, sec. II, pp. 1, 3.

_____. "Williams' Wells of Violence." New York Times, March 28, 1959, sec. II, pp. 1, 3.

_____. "The Writing Is Honest." New York Times, March 16, 1958, sec. II, p. 1.

Wolfe, Thomas. "The Story of a Novel." Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (December 14, 1935), 3 +.

_____. "The Story of a Novel: II." Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (December 21, 1935), 3 +.

_____. "The Story of a Novel: III." Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (December 28, 1935), 3 +.

SECONDARY SOURCES

"The Angel of the Odd" (cover story). Time, March 9, 1962, pp. 53-56, 59-60.

Aron, Raymond. "Relativism in History." The Philosophy of History in Our Time. Edited by Hans Meyerhoff. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959.

Barnett, Lincoln. "Tennessee Williams." Life, February 16, 1948, p. 113.

Bentley, Eric. The Dramatic Event. New York: Horizon Press, 1954.

Bergson, Henri. Creative Evolution. Translated by Arthur Mitchell. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1911.

Berkman, Leonard. "The Tragic Downfall of Blanche DuBois." Modern Drama, X (December, 1967), 249-257.

Bluefarb, Sam. "The Glass Menagerie: Three Visions of Time." College English, XXIV (April, 1963), 513-518.

Booth, J. E., and Funke, Lewis. "Williams on Williams." Theatre Arts, XLVI (January, 1962), 16-19 +.

Brown, John Mason. Dramatis Personae. New York: Viking Press, 1963.

_____. "People Versus Characters." Saturday Review, XXXI (October 30, 1948), 31-33.

Cargill, Oscar, et al., eds. O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism. New York: New York University Press, 1961.

Chiari, Joseph. Landmarks of Contemporary Drama. London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965.

Cirlot, Juan Eduardo. A Dictionary of Symbols. Translated from the Spanish by Jack Sage. New York: Philosophical Library, 1962.

Clurman, Harold. Lies Like Truth: Theatre Reviews and Essays. New York: Macmillan, 1958.

Coleman, James C. Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life. 3rd ed. Chicago: Scott, Foresman Company, 1964.

Coleman, Robert. "'Summer and Smoke' Has A Searching Eloquence." Daily Mirror (October 7, 1948), drama section.

Dickinson, Hugh. Myth on the Modern Stage. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969.

Donahue, Francis. The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964.

Falk, Signi. "The Profitable World of Tennessee Williams." Modern Drama, I (December, 1958), 172-180.

_____. Tennessee Williams. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961.

Freud, Sigmund. "Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis." The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Translated and edited by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud. Vol. XI. London: Hogarth Press, 1957.

- Freud, Sigmund. "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis." The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Translated and edited by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud. Vol. XXII. London: Hogarth Press, 1957.
- Ganz, Arthur. "The Desperate Morality of the Plays of Tennessee Williams." American Scholar, XXXI (Spring, 1962), 278-294.
- Garland, Robert. "Unneeded Foreword to Streetcar Theme." New York Journal American (October 7, 1948), drama section.
- Gassner, John. "A Streetcar Named Desire: A Study in Ambiguity." Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism. Edited by Travis Bogard and William I. Oliver. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- _____. "Tennessee Williams: Dramatist of Frustration." College English, X (October, 1948), 1-7.
- _____. Theatre at the Crossroads: Plays and Playwrights of the Mid-Century American Stage. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson, 1960.
- Gelden, Robert van. "Playwright with 'A Good Concert'." New York Times, April 22, 1945, sec. II, p. 1.
- Gilroy, Harry. "Mr. Williams Turns to Comedy" (Interview). New York Times, January 28, 1951, sec. II, p. 1.
- Goodman, Randolph. Drama on Stage. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson, 1961.
- Hoffman, Frederick J. The Art of Southern Fiction. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967.
- Jackson, Esther Merle. The Broken World of Tennessee Williams. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965.
- Jacobs, Robert D. "Faulkner's Tragedy of Isolation." Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South. Edited by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.
- Jones, Robert Emmet. "Tennessee Williams' Early Heroines." Modern Drama, II (December, 1959), 211-219.

Jung, Carl Gustav. Freud and Psychoanalysis. Collected Works. Edited by Herbert Read et al. Vol. IV. New York: Pantheon Press, 1957.

_____. Psychological Types. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946.

Kazan, Elia. "Notebook for A Streetcar Named Desire." The Passionate Playgoer. Edited by George Oppenheimer. New York: Viking Press, 1963.

Kennedy, Richard S. The Window of Memory: The Literary Career of Thomas Wolfe. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962.

Kernodle, George. "Time-frightened Playwrights." American Scholar, XVIII (Autumn, 1949), 446-456.

Krutch, Joseph Wood. "Drama." Nation, CLXVII (October 23, 1948), 473-474.

_____. Modernism in Modern Drama. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953.

Leaska, Mitchell A. The Voice of Tragedy. New York: Robert Spellers and Sons, 1963.

Lewis, Allan. American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre. New York: Crown Publishers, 1965.

Magid, Marion. "The Innocence of Tennessee Williams." Commentary, XXV (January, 1963), 34-43.

Mendilow, A. A. Time and the Novel. London: Peter Nevill, 1952.

Meyerhoff, Hans. Time in Literature. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955.

Millgate, Michael. "The Sound and the Fury." Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays. Edited by Robert Penn Warren. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

Nelson, Benjamin. Tennessee Williams: The Man and his Work. New York: Ivan Obolesnsky, 1961.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music with The Genealogy of Morals. Translated by Francis Golffing. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956.
- Nolan, Paul T. "Two Memory Plays: The Glass Menagerie and After the Fall." McNeese Review, XVII (1966), 27-38.
- Popkin, Henry. "The Plays of Tennessee Williams." Tulane Drama Review, IV (March, 1960), 45-64.
- Pouillon, Jean. "Time and Destiny in Faulkner." Translated by Jacqueline Merriam. Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays. Edited by Robert Penn Warren. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966.
- Rahv, Philip, ed. Literature in America: An Anthology of Literary Criticism. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.
- Reid, Desmond. "Tennessee Williams." Studies: An Irish Quarterly (Winter, 1957), pp. 431-446.
- Rice, Robert. "A Man Named Tennessee." New York Post, May 4, 1958 drama section.
- Riddel, Joseph N. "A Streetcar Named Desire--Nietzsche Descending." Modern Drama, V (February, 1963), 421-430.
- Rouse, Blair H. "Time and Place in Southern Fiction." Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South. Edited by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.
- Rubin, Louis D., Jr. "Thomas Wolfe in Time and Place." Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South. Edited by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.
- _____. Thomas Wolfe: The Weather of his Youth. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955.
- Sagar, K. M. "What Mr. Williams Has Made of D. H. Lawrence." Twentieth Century, CLVIII (August, 1960), 143-153.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.

- Sievers, W. David. Freud on Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama. New York: Hermitage House, 1955.
- Stallman, Robert Wooster. "The Poetry of John Peale Bishop." Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South. Edited by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.
- Stang, Joaane. "Williams: 20 Years After 'Glass Menagerie.'" New York Times, March 28, 1965, sec. II, pp. 1, 3.
- Stein, Roger B. "The Glass Menagerie Revisted: Catastrophe without Violence." Western Humanities Review, XVIII (Spring, 1964), 127-140.
- Tate, Allen. "The New Provincialism." Virginia Quarterly Review, XXI (Spring, 1945), 262-272.
- Taylor, Harry. "The Dilemma of Tennessee Williams." Masses and Mainstream, I (April, 1948), 51-56.
- "Tennessee Williams Ill." New York Times, October 4, 1969, sec. I, p. 24.
- "Tennessee Williams May Desert 'Southern Belles' for Mysticism." New York Times, August 2, 1962, sec. I, p. 16.
- "Tennessee Williams Turns to Roman Catholic Faith." New York Times, January 12, 1969, sec. I, p. 86.
- Tischler, Nancy M. Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan. New York: Citadel Press, 1965.
- Vowles, Richard B. "Tennessee Williams and Strindberg." Modern Drama, I (December, 1958), 166-171.
- Wager, Walter, ed. The Playwrights Speak. New York: Delacorte Press, 1967.
- Watts, Richard, Jr. "A Rather Gloomy Report on 'Summer and Smoke.'" New York Post (October 7, 1948), drama.

Weales, Gerald. American Drama Since World War II. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962.

Weales, Gerald. Tennessee Williams. Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 53. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965.